The Reproduction of Gender Discrimination and the Daily Practices of Primary Schools in Turkey[1]

Türkü Kılavuz

Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey

F. Ayşe Balcı Karaboğa

Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the role of primary schools in reproducing gender discrimination based on teachers' views. In the study, the discriminatory factors arising from "the everyday practices in the classroom and in the school, the curriculum, and the individual characteristics of the students" were discussed from the perspective of views regarding gender. Interviews were conducted with 13 teachers from 6 schools with different socio-economic characteristics in the central districts of Mersin in the 2017-2018 academic year in the study. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis method. As a result of the study, regardless of socio-economic characteristics, primary school education and gender relations are in a cyclical structure as mechanisms that affect each other, and teachers can convey discriminatory codes to students by being affected by their own student experiences and the traditional gender perspective of the society in which they were raised. On the other hand, it was revealed that teachers associate the source of the gender discrimination with out-of-school factors and are not aware of their responsibilities in this issue. In general, it can be said, based on the results of the study, that the processes and practices in primary school create gendered prejudices in

the minds of students and gender discrimination is maintained throughout primary school education.

Keywords: *Gender, reproduction, gender disparities, gender in primary schools*

Introduction

Unlike biological sex, gender is a concept used to describe how societies discriminate and identify men and women, and the social roles they assign to them (Ecevit, 2011) and it refers to inequality in sociological terms. As a social identity feature, gender contains segregated and hierarchical social relations. Men are advantaged in terms of being defined by the higher positions of social life and benefiting from public opportunities. According to the traditional understanding of gender I all over the world, more passive and submissive roles are seen as appropriate for women while more assertive and dominant roles are attributed to men. The concern of this paper is how these roles are reproduced in many areas of social life and particularly through schooling.

Within the framework of gender roles, a gender order (Connell, 2016) is formed in society. This order determines the positions of women and men in social life, their representation, what they can and cannot do and even their perspectives on life. Butler (1999) on the other hand, states that gender cannot be strictly limited to two categories as men and women; that gender is constructed through cultural actions and acquired later in social life. Although Butler challenges the sex/gender category, she is aware of the powerful effects of labeling a person as a man or a woman in society (Francis, 2006). Gender order refers to the unequal and unjust way social life is organized based on gender.
Bourdieu (2014) states that "schemas belonging to the gendered unconscious" (p. 131) are reproduced together with learning based on one's experiences.

Namely, according to Bourdieu, gender stereotypes imposed by society are reinforced through one's life. Connell (2016), also, argues that gender, arising from socially produced gender differences, involves an institutionalized understanding "shaped by the cyclical practices of the reproductive system" (p. 210). Being the chief of these institutions, the schools have become areas where gender patterns are certainly defined.

In the educational environment, gender patterns are sometimes perpetuated through the curriculum and sometimes through interactions between individuals. Therefore, education constitutes an important area in terms of maintaining gender codes. The primary school age, which is one of the periods in which students get acquainted with the concept of school and are most vulnerable to environmental effects, is one of the most important periods in which children learn and internalize gender roles (Sayılan, 2012; Skelton, 2006; Todor, 2010). In this respect, primary schools are more critical in forming gender stereotypes than the higher levels. The primary school education is also very precious in terms of the potential of education to raise awareness of gender equality.

Most of the studies on gender issues in the field of education revealed that there is a discrimination based on gender in the education process. It was observed in these studies that the problem of gender discrimination in education is generally limited to an isolated investigation the content of textbooks, classroom interaction, discipline, discriminatory language use in terms of gender, segregation in social activities, and academic achievement differences (Alexander, Wilcox and Woods, 2009; Babaroviç, Burusic and Seric, 2011; Esen and Bağlı, 2002; Hall and Sandler, 1982; Gümüşoğlu, 2008; Sanford, 2002; Stake and Katz, 1982; Schwendenman, 2012). Therefore, we offer a

holistic perspective to better understand the reproduction of gender discrimination in education, which is the main point of this study. Studies indicate (Deniz, Ernas and Aksoy, 2014; Skelton, 2006; Younger and Warrington, 2008) that discriminatory approaches and behaviours can be influenced by family and social environment, but mostly internalized with school education, and in this process, gender codes push female students to secondary position while male students learn to take more active roles in society. One of the most important arguments on this subject is the role of teachers in reproducing gendered understanding. Esen (2013) indicates that teachers, who are the backbone of school education, reproduce gender discrimination through classroom activities, language, expectations, and behaviour since they can be carriers of gender stereotypes unwittingly (p. 767). Accordingly, the main point of this study is to examine the reproduction of gender discrimination in primary schools in Turkey based on teachers' views. As the study also focuses on teacher experiences, it may create an opportunity for teachers, who are the practitioners of the process, to realize the importance of their own behaviour in the reproduction of gender discrimination. Within the scope of the research, the aim is to examine gender discrimination in education from a broad perspective by considering the *individual characteristics* of the student such as academic achievement and absenteeism, and to investigate the factors that reveal gender discrimination through *daily practices in classroom and school processes* and to determine the role of the *curriculum* in the reproduction process.

Reproduction of Gender Discrimination in Education

The phenomenon of social reproduction, is a foundation of Bourdieu's sociology, as argues how the maintenance of social inequalities through education take place. One of the most important components of the cultural reproduction process is the reproduction of gender. According to Bourdieu, the

contrasts between masculine and feminine behavior patterns represent a socially imposed categorization. This categorization is reproduced through education (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 131; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2015, p.73). In this sense, Bourdieu (2014) argues that gender inequality cannot be considered independent of hegemonic relations in society and that the educational process has an important function in the transmission of masculine hegemony.

Esen (2013, p.761) also emphasizes that gender and its accompanying power relations are felt in all institutions of society, but the family and school environment have a special place in the socialization process. As a result, school education and social environment is in a cyclical relationship affected by each other. All processes of the school, such as school policies, curricula, classroom practices, are compatible with the values of society stratified by gender (Esen, 2013, p.761). Therefore, educational environments play an important role in both the construction of the individual's gender and the maintenance of the gender culture of the society.

The discriminatory attitude that permeates the curriculum, textbooks, teacher behaviours and daily practices of schools in the education system, serves to reproduce the gender hierarchy. Gender codes and stereotypes are reinforced through teacher-student interactions and daily practices in the classroom during primary school, which is the most fundamental period for the child to learn gender roles. In this regard, particularly primary school teachers play an important role in the development of stereotypical gender roles. Even though teachers do not explicitly make gender discrimination in lessons, they serve to *naturalize* the gender discrimination with their unwitting behaviours such as the seating arrangement in the classroom, the way they interact with the students, the examples they give in lessons, their orientation in accordance with gender stereotypes, and the language and discourse they use. In this way, the function

of normalizing and reproducing gender inequalities which are experienced in all areas of social life, is fulfilled through schooling.

Gender at Schools in Turkey

Common cultural features in Turkey are in line with traditional gender stereotypes. Religious beliefs and conservatism constitute the basis of gender inequality in Turkey. Schools are the main institutions where these characteristics are passed on to new generations. Learning shaped around the gender hierarchy in the classroom affects the rest of the students' lives and leads to social segregation. When the in-class processes are examined in depth, many practices of gender discrimination are seen. For instance, a sharp gender-based distinction is observed in educational institutions where the physical order in the classroom is formed by gender.

Polat (2010) states that the aim of doing this kind of physical design in classroom is to prevent male and female students from getting closer to each other. However, this ungrounded approach not only reproduces gender discrimination but also negatively influences the relationships between men and women in social life. Besides, during teacher-student interaction, teacher behaviours applying to participation in lessons, giving voice and giving feedback, and making eye contact, can have a significant role in the formation of students' gender codes.

The gender-based division of labour in the classroom also leads students to internalize their gender identity. In these divisions of labour, cleaning and tidying can sometimes be assigned to girls, while muscle-dependent jobs such as carrying desks and other stuff can be given to boys. In this way, students are reminded that duties including domestic roles belong to women and outdoor work belongs to men. Meanwhile, the discourses that make up the

discriminatory ideology in daily language also maintain gender norms in schools. In her study, which examined the effect of gendered language on students, Çınga (2004) found that teachers unwittingly used heavily gendered language. Often unaware of these communicative forms, teachers subordinate female students and contribute to inequalities. The gender role expectation of teachers in the classroom is also built upon the dominant gender culture in society. These expectations are that female students generally exhibit desired behaviours (emotional, kind, and docile), while male students have more active, independent, sociable, and competitive characteristics in line with the traditional gender role perception. All these classroom practices, which take an extensive place in restricting and categorizing behaviours in the educational environment, mediate the reproduction of gender stereotypes. These are routinely reinforced and thus, reproduced.

Gender discrimination in education can occur not only in the classroom environment but also in a wider range of processes that take place within the school. Tan (2008) explains that the school environment is "dominated by a culture of patriarchal, gendered role patterns and practices that cannot be named since they are implicit but are normalized even when visible" (p. 74). In this context, the suggestions and advice of teachers to male and female students on how to behave, and their professional orientation towards the social division of labour are fed by the gender norms of the society which reproduce the existing one. Apart from this, the socialization forms of students, the places where they spend time in the school, and the games and toys can differ between boys and girls. Therefore, forms of socialization in the school environment become areas where gender-related differences are reinforced.

Another factor in which the gendered norms and values of society are conveyed to children is the understanding of discipline in school. Studies in the Turkish

literature reveal that the type of discipline problems, the frequency of the problem, and the teacher or administrator's response to the problem behaviour vary depending on the gender of the student (Akpınar and Özdaş, 2013; Güçlü, 2004).The differentiation of manner in warnings male and female students receive, as well as the fact that female students' dress, hair and skirt lengths are subject to external control by authority figures such as principals and teachers, is closely related to the reproduction of the norms that create gender discrimination in social life. In addition to this, the distribution of feminine and masculine roles in the administrative or teaching staff within the school, and the assignment of managerial positions to men reinforce patriarchal conditions and implicitly demonstrate to students that power and authority belong to men while abidance and acceptance belong to women. Therefore, these situations, which are included within the in-school processes, result in the reproduction of gender discrimination.

The curriculum, which is an extension of the cultural structure, is a part of the mechanism by which the dominant values in society are reproduced. The ideological content of the standardized curriculum is explicitly or implicitly conveyed through textbooks, learning outcomes, and by the way the lesson is taught. In this regard, Hill (2016) points out that cultural reproduction occurs especially through the hidden program. In the school environment, teachers can carry secret messages, with their traditional attitudes and behaviours, to students about gender, and mediate students to prepare informally for gender roles. Sayılan (2012) argues that prevailing gender stereotypes are reproduced in the cultural climate of the school. The masculine approach, which emerges in the role models offered to students in the school, in the language used, in the warnings and directions, serves to reproduce gender discrimination as a part of the hidden program. On the other hand, textbooks, which are one of the main

sources of education, help the conveyance of the dominant gender understanding.

Many studies conducted in Turkey reveal that visuals in textbooks segregate men and women according to traditional gender stereotypes (Esen and Bağlı, 2002; Gümüşoğlu, 2008; Özdemir and Balcı Karaboğa, 2019). The gendered nature of the textbooks becomes visible in the number of women and men in visuals, the places they are in, the jobs they do, the differentiation in their professions, and the expressions that reflect inequality. In this way, the information forms in the textbooks and the latent learning that takes place during the education process contribute to the preservation and reproduction of the social order by confining students to stereotyped gender roles.

It is necessary to mention the academic achievement and school attendance, which can be defined as individual characteristics of the student, as well as in-class and in-school processes to understand the reproduction of gender discrimination in the school environment. Students' academic achievement and gender-based differences in the teachers and families' expectation of success are among the factors that make the discrimination experienced in educational environments become more visible. For example, stereotypes developed in line with the traditional understanding of gender build up beliefs that female students can be successful in verbal and social areas while male students in mathematics fields.

These social acceptances, which also form the basis of professional segregation in social life, decrease the motivation and self-confidence of female students in maths fields. In addition, students' school attendance also offers implications about understanding of gender. It is reported in studies conducted in Turkey that gender is an important factor in school attendance and gender-based stereotypes

complicate the school attendance of female students (Haberli and Güvenç, 2012; Öksüz and Balcı Karaboğa, 2017). Female students can be given the task of looking after their siblings and helping with the household chores as an extension of gender. The absence of female student, who take on these roles, from the educational process is among the substantial examples of gender discrimination.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study, which focuses on the factors reproducing gender discrimination in primary schools in Turkey from the teacher's perspective, is to identify problem areas of discriminatory gender role reproduction, and to contribute to promoting gender sensitivity and strengthening an egalitarian gender perspective in the society.

Method

Since the major purpose of the research is concerned with the processes that reproduce gender discrimination in primary schools from the perspective of teachers in primary schools, this study was structured and designed according to qualitative research methods. "A major feature of qualitative methods is their facility to describe and display phenomena as experienced by the study population, in fine-tuned detail and in the study participant's own terms. It therefore offers the opportunity to 'unpack' issues, to see what they are about or what lies inside" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 27).

This research was conducted in the 2017-2018 academic year with the participation of 13 classroom teachers from public primary schools with different socio-economic characteristics in central districts of Mersin. There are a total of 138 public primary schools in the central districts of Mersin: 52 in Akdeniz, 24 in Yenişehir, 41 in Toroslar and 21 in Mezitli. Mersin Provincial

Directorate of National Education resources and the teachers who were acquainted with the socio-economic characteristics of the region were referred to determine the schools where the study would be conducted.

Teacher appointments in the Turkish Education System are generally made starting from the Eastern Region and other rural areas of the country. In the city centres, there are teachers with higher professional seniority. The city of Mersin, where the study was conducted, has a cosmopolitan structure that receives immigrants from many regions, especially the Eastern provinces, due to its economic characteristics such as agriculture and industry. Therefore, people from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds live in the city. Hence, Mersin is an important city that reflects the cultural characteristics in Turkey. Besides, the regions in the city where people of lower, middle, and upper socio-economic levels live are significantly differentiated in terms of education level, class, and cultural characteristics. It is thought that the social environment of the school will reflect on the gender relations in the school. Therefore, the participants were chosen from schools with different social composition. The interviews were conducted with 13 volunteer teachers from 6 schools selected from rural, lower, and middle socio-economic regions.

In the process of determining the participants, attention was paid to the criteria that teachers had worked for at least 4 years and experienced teaching in all grade levels of the primary school. The socio-economic level of the schools, whether the schools were in the city centre or rural areas, and the gender of the participants were also taken into consideration as much as possible. In this case, both the criterion and maximum variation sampling were used. Semi-structured interview technique was used in the study. The interview questions used in the study were determined based on the literature review conducted prior to the research. The main themes that may affect gender discrimination in primary

school and the dimensions of the study were clarified with a holistic perspective within the framework of the information obtained by the literature review. In addition, the data were collected by obtaining information about the participant teachers' personal life stories, educational backgrounds, and demographic characteristics at the introduction of the interviews.

After getting the application permission from the local administrative authorities of the Ministry of National Education, a pilot study was conducted in two schools for the development of data collection tool and to examine the comprehensibility of the interview questions. As a result of the pilot study, the order of the questions in the interview form was changed. After the interview form was made ready, the meeting dates were planned by contacting the schools where the study would be conducted. The interviews were carried out via voice recording, with the permission of the teachers. At the end of the process, these records were digitalized and prepared for analysis by the researchers.

In analysing the data, previously determined themes for the sub-problems of the research were followed. In shaping the themes organized under four titles as "*gender discrimination in classroom processes*", "*gender discrimination in school processes*", "*curriculum and gender discrimination*", "*student characteristics that may be effective in gender discrimination*", participant expressions were also effective besides the main and sub-dimensions determined during the literature review. The data were coded within the framework of the determined themes. At the end of this process, participant expressions were gathered under the relevant themes. The number of the statements generated by the participants throughout the interviews was taken as the basis rather than the number of the respondents in calculation of the frequencies and percentages. Statements thought to be significant in the study are marked for direct quotations. And last, the findings were interpreted in the

light of the literature and direct quotations were given to reflect the views of the participants. In direct quotations from the participants, lower socio-economic level schools are symbolized with the letter "A", middle socioeconomic level schools with "B" and rural schools with the letter "C". In addition, participant number and gender were included in this code. At this stage, the findings in the literature were also used to better explain the cause-effect relationship between the findings to make a better comparison.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, the gender discrimination in primary schools was discussed under four main themes and thirteen sub-themes based on teachers' views. These main themes and their sub-themes are *(i)in-class processes* as "seating arrangement", "interaction", "distribution of tasks", "gendered language use" and "gender role expectation", (*ii*) *in-school processes* as "guidance", "socialization-use of space and games", "discipline" and "managerial role models", *(iii) curriculum* as "hidden curriculum" and "textbooks", *(iv) student characteristics* as "academic achievement" and "absenteeism". The findings were detailed with the percentage information of each theme and quotations from the participants' expressions and discussed with the interpretations made in line with the literature.

Gender Discrimination in In-class Processes

Students can be subjected to gendered codes through daily practices and experiences carried out unconsciously in the classroom. To bring a more holistic perspective to the reproduction of gender discrimination in the classroom, this part of the study focused on teachers' views on seating arrangement, interaction, distribution of tasks, gendered language use and gender role expectations, and in-class processes and practices reproducing gender discrimination were explained.

Gender in Seating Arrangements

According to the findings of the study, homogeneous (arranged by gender) seating arrangements in the classroom are formed sometimes by student preference, sometimes by the request of the parents and sometimes by the teacher. The statements of the participants regarding the seating arrangement were 13% as "I let them sit as they wish", 16.5% "I made boy and girls sit together", and 22.5% "I complied with the parents' request". Again, in 35% of the statements, it was stated that "girls want to sit with girls; boys want to sit with boys", 9.4% "it is normal for students to sit apart", and 3.2% "female students sit in the front rows and close to the teacher". In some of the expressions of the participants, it was stated that the seating arrangement is more conservative, especially in rural areas, and the demand comes generally from the parents of female students.

One teacher described their earlier assignment to a village in Northeastern Turkey.

> It was a village in Rize. Parents of female students objected to seating boys and girls together. I had to comply with their wishes (A4-Male).

Rize is a province in the eastern black sea region in Turkey. Referring to the subject, the teacher talks about his life in the province where he worked in previous years. An example of this was reported by the mentioned news (https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/ilkokulda-kizli-erkekli-oturma-krizi-40009458). This fact is more common in rural areas where religion is more influential.

When the teachers were asked about the seating arrangement, they stated that they also preferred to sit with their fellows of same gender in their daily lives and it was quite natural for the students to be segregated by gender. This situation shows that the physical isolation that initiated in primary school is

reflected in the social life of adults. On the other hand, whether the student's seat in the classroom is close to or far from the teacher, at the front or back desk also provides important data on gender. It was seen in some of the expressions of the participants that there are hardworking and smart students at the front desk, and generally the girls sit in the front and closer to the teacher. This situation reminds of the typology of "smart, well-behaved students with desirable characteristics" in line with gender expectations.

Similar findings have been reported both in Turkish and international literature. Esen (2013) points out the existence of gender segregation in the seating arrangement in classrooms in her study which examines gender through student experiences. On the other hand, in his study through which he gradually gave gender sensitivity training to the participants, Robertson (2010) revealed the importance of heterogeneous seating arrangements by stating that the positioning of students in the classroom affects in-class activities and academic success. Similarly, the results of this study depict that sitting close to the teacher positively affected desired behaviours and academic achievement.

Gender in In-class Interaction

According to the findings of the study, the factors that reinforce gender stereotypes emerge with the natural forms of interaction within the classroom. Of the participants' expressions, 9% is about the effect of gender in teacher-student interaction, 19% about the dominance of boys, 28% about girls exhibiting desired behaviours, and 44% about gender differences in peer interaction. Most of the participating teachers stated that, although they work in different socio-economic regions, boys can be more dominant in classroom interaction as follows:

> I don't know but boys are more active, that is, they can raise their fingers even if they do not know. They are more confident (B3-Male).

Participants often stated that boys are more confident and comfortable in the classroom. Another striking finding in the study is that although the teachers mostly talk about the dominance of male students, they do not make any attempt to balance the interaction rates of the two genders. This means that teachers fail to notice the importance of their role in this process.

On the other hand, it was revealed by some of the participant expressions that female students exhibit more desirable behaviours, their positive interactions in the classroom are better than male students, and male students' negative behaviours were outnumbering the girls. When the participants were asked why male students exhibited more negative interactions, they referred this to out-of-school reasons such as family, environment, and society. Therefore, they evaluated this situation independently from the learning gained through school life. In their meta-analysis study examining the interactions of male and female students in the classroom, Jones and Dindia (2004) divided teachers' interactions in the classroom environment into three categories: positive, negative, and total. As a result of the study, they found that teachers interacted more negatively and totally with male students, and that female students are at the forefront in positive interactions. This situation, which is consistent with the research findings, can be explained by the fact that gender stereotypes impose more compatible and desired behaviours on girls.

Gender in Distribution of Tasks

The quality of the tasks assigned to students in the classroom and their variation by gender affects students' perspectives on social life and contributes to their internalization of traditional gender roles. In this context, 34.4% of the

participants' expressions are about the quality of the tasks, 24.1% are about the type of tasks students want to take, 20.6% are about the reasons of discrimination in the distribution of tasks, and 20.6% are about the perception of teachers. Most of the participants stated that the quality of the tasks is differentiated according to the gender of the student. For example, some participants stated that, on the assumption that males are stronger, that they preferred to assign strenuous tasks to male students and the tasks related to cleaning, order, and responsibility to female students in the classroom:

> When it comes to carrying desks and lifting heavy things, boys immediately do those kinds of things. Girls are more delicate, doing non-muscular tasks... Like keeping the class clean, organizing it (C3-Female).

> For example, we organize our class. Girls are more capable of it. If there will be an activity in the lesson like as cutting and pasting, I would rather assign such tasks to girls. Boys are good at mind games such as riddles, puzzle, etc. I say "You (*boys*) do the puzzle, (*girls*) cut and paste them" (A2-Female).

Another crucial finding that reveals teachers' views on the subject is that teachers act with the instinct of protecting female students in both in-class and out-of-class assignments. The perception that girls are vulnerable individuals in need of protection according to gender stereotypes leads teachers to assign out-of-class tasks to male students. This is stated in the teachers' expressions as follows.

> Sometimes we are out of board marker in class. I send male students to fetch it. I do not send a female student. It feels more like the boys can protect themselves. So, we do things like that sometimes without realizing it (A4-Male).

> I usually send boys to get photocopies. I pay attention not to let girls out of the classroom too much just in case something may happen to them (A2-Female).

It is understood from the statements above that teachers' views on gender are influential in the tasks shared with students. It can be said based on the findings of the research that implicit messages about the social division of labour are given to students and traditional roles are reproduced along with the distribution of tasks in the classroom.

Gendered Language Use

Gendered discourses, which are often used unconsciously in daily spoken language, have a significant effect on students' acquisition of gender stereotypes. We see here that discriminatory factors in peer communication were observed by 13% of the participants. and the unifying discourse by 16% of the participants while the discriminatory discourses have a remarkable ratio, which is 71%. Participants articulated that discriminatory language between students mostly occurs during breaks, and students may be labelled, nicknamed, or mocked about their gender.

For example, there are labels like "Girl Ahmet, Girl Mehmet" or "Zeynep like a boy". Just to offend (A5-Female).

When we look at the distribution of participant expressions, on the other hand, it is seen that there are unifying (positive) statements with a rate of 16%. For instance, a participant stated that she tried to behave equally to male and female students.

> Actually, I don't make much discrimination between a boy and a girl. I don't remember that I said in the classroom "You are a girl, and you have to do these behaviours, you are a boy, and you have to do this" (B4-Female).

Another important finding of the study is that expressions that can be accepted as discriminatory language are mostly used. The tone of voice, forms of address

and direct discourse of the participants when they speak to the students reflect the gender codes.

> You speak to the girls more delicately and kindly. You know, they look more delicate. You feel a little more comfortable with the boys (A1-Female).

Considering the research findings, the gendered elements in the colloquial language are sometimes seen indirectly with the tone of voice and addressing as in the above statements while sometimes it takes place directly in the warning statements or advice of the teachers.

> For example, we have girls who say I am very strong, and I am like a boy. In such cases, I warn to make them return to normal. I say, "you are a girl, you need to be more delicate, and girls are kind" (C3-Female).

Swann (2003) and Stevens (2016) emphasized that the patriarchal approach is made felt more especially by female students through daily discourse in the classroom and the school language leads students to gender discrimination. The findings of this study refer to the similar results revealing that daily discourses had an important place in the reproduction of gender.

Gender Role Expectation

Gender itself is a concept that expresses cultural expectations. The gender role expectations of teachers towards students in daily life in the classroom are mostly parallel to the way in which the concepts of femininity and masculinity are interpreted in society. Accordingly, 52% of the statements are about differentiation in behaviour expectation by gender, 22% are about the reasons for this differentiation, and 26% are about situations other than traditional gender role expectation. Most of the participants stated that the behaviours they expect from their students differ according to gender:

> I point out that the girls must have a lady's attitude and I say that boys should also be brave. Of course, I think they should know that the girl is a girl, and the boy is a boy (A5-Female).

It is indicated in international studies that, behaviours such as activeness, mischief, breaking the rules or assertiveness are perceived as characteristics of male students, and more docile and delicate attitudes are ascribed to female students (Benz, Pfeiffer, and Newman, 1981; Todor, 2010). Similar findings were also found in this study. When the participants are asked the reasons for the differences in gender role expectation, it is seen that gender role expectation is associated with the social structure and family, regardless of school. This situation also suggests that teachers are not aware of their role in the process.

On the other hand, examples other than the usual gender behaviours were included in 26% of the participants' expressions. Teachers find it difficult to adopt behaviours outside of gender expectations.

> I have a female student, behaving like a boy. She also exhibits violence, somersaults, and kicks ... So, we tell her to be more ladylike. She is like a boy. It seems strange to me (B5-Male).

> Boys are normally more aggressive, more courageous. But boys are gradually becoming like girls, for example, being more afraid falling to the ground or something at games. We usually expect such things from girls. Because what we call a "girl" expects such affection (A2-Female).

In the above statements, the metaphors "like a girl" and "like a boy" draw attention. It can be said that the participants divided the behaviours of boys and girls with sharp boundaries and that they disagree with behaviours that go beyond these stereotypes. This is an indication that teachers are influenced by the gender culture in which they grow up.

Gender Discrimination in In-school Processes

Discrimination factors occurring outside the classroom often play an important role in shaping students' perceptions of gender. These include the guidance roles of teachers, the way students socialize, differentiation in the use of space in the school and the type of games, the discipline methods of teachers, differences in students' behaviour towards discipline, the unequal distribution in the administrative staff of the schools and the impressions of these distributions in the perception of students. Those are discussed with a holistic approach in this section.

Gender in Guidance Roles of Teachers

Teachers are not mechanical trainers for students but role models and guides, modelling normative behaviour with the language they use during the day, their professional guidance, warning methods, behaviour styles and such others. Therefore, gender role patterns of the teacher are very influential with students. Gender in motivation method was mentioned by 10% of the participants, guidance about gender roles by 30%, gender in vocational guidance by 30%, and guidance and gender in the selection of reading materials, by 30%.

According to the participants, different approaches are exhibited by gender in giving feedback to the students and motivating them. Some of the participants' statements regarding this are as follows:

> For example, we do this (punch) with our male students. And this (sign of liking) with the girls. You are super, I mean, even the gesture changes. I definitely noticed it now (B2-Female).
>
> The reward would be a baby, for example. But I was choosing according to the student. I say the girls will get this and boys will get this. For example, a soccer ball in the colours of the team he wants for the boys, a doll for the girls (A2-Female).

It is an indication of traditional gender culture that the positive feedback given to male students is a "punch" that evokes the symbol of power, and that the awards given to girls are selected from toys reminiscent of women's duties within the society and home. The fact that the teacher noticed this differentiation during the interview reveals that the reproduced schemes of gender are unwittingly absorbed in social life.

On the other hand, the guidance of teachers about gender roles also includes discriminatory elements. Participants explained their approach towards students who moved beyond the traditional gender role as follows:

> I had a male student who was exhibiting feminine behaviour. When I talked to the family, I learned that he sometimes played with babies at home and washed the dishes with his mother; of course, we took an action and intervened. This child should behave like a man (A5-Female).

> We have girls who are like boys. In such cases, I intervene without being noticed. You know, I give the role of a mother to a girl with such masculine attitudes. Or I say you're a princess (C3-Female).

In the statements above we see how teachers lead students to traditional gender roles with a gender-based discriminatory understanding. These orientations, which are sometimes realized through advice and sometimes through games, stem from the codes that teachers have acquired from their social environment and their own school life. That is because the cultural characteristics of the society and teachers' own student experiences are an important factor in the formation of traditional gender stereotypes. Yaşın Dökmen (2018) also emphasizes that gender roles are maintained by passing them down from one generation to another. This cultural transfer leads to the continuation of

traditional gender understanding in vocational guidance as well as the behavioural guidance of teachers.

> We discuss professions. For example, there is a very affectionate girl, very patient. She wanted to be a cop, I said she would be a teacher. She said, "ok then, I will be a teacher" (A2-Female).

> For instance, I cannot think of a male nurse. We are not used to it (B5-Male).

As seen in the examples, the participants may have gendered prejudices in choice of profession and thus, they can produce templates about the social division of labour in their students' minds. Zaidman (2015) states that traditional acceptance of social division of labour is maintained from the start of formal schooling, and that, although female students are often more successful in education levels, they are often prejudicially directed to professions such as service, education and healthcare that are compatible with women's family roles.

Another point that emerges in the research is about the reading choices of the students. Teachers stated that students' preference for books varies according to gender; female students favoured fancy, colourful books, and male students preferred books about adventure and space. Teachers either took a passive role or contributed to the reproduction of gender culture by giving students books that reinforce their gender codes. In her research about the reflections of teachers' gender perceptions on the classroom environment, Schechter (2013) found that teachers were fed by traditional gender culture from lesson planning method to student behaviour and this situation unwittingly contributed to the reproduction of gender discrimination. In addition, Blackman (2003), in the study examining gendered primary school education in America, states that teachers treat boys and girls differently and that schools actively reproduce

gender discrimination. In this sense, it can be said that the findings of the study are consistent with the literature. According to the findings of the study, in their guidance role, teachers can be said to lead students mostly to gender discrimination with an understanding that is far from realistic gender consciousness.

Gender in Socialization, Use of Space and Games

Students earn gender identity with the codes they acquire from the socialization process. The opinions of the participants regarding this sub-theme are about the students' choice of game (44%), participation in social activities (30%) and role of the teacher in the socialization process (26%). Based on the findings, the game preferences of the students and the places where time is spent during breaks in school differ according to gender.

According to the expressions of the participants, boys mostly prefer the school garden where they can play actively, while girls prefer areas such as classrooms and canteens where they can chat. It is also stated that girls generally prefer playing house and boys prefer ball games. Differentiation by gender in the selection of games and toys, which is one of the most important elements of socialization in childhood, causes individuals to internalize traditional codes when they are young, and brings along the segregation in their social roles in their future lives.

Another finding of the study refers to the inequalities in the participation of boys and girls in social activities outside the school. According to the participants' statements, some parents of female students do not give permission to participate in social activities outside the school. This situation results from a patriarchal understanding that allows girls to socialize in a limited way only in safe areas and cause them to be perceived as needing protection. Teachers'

guidance for both students and parents are important in this sense. Indeed, another finding of the study is about the role of teachers in the differentiation of students' socialization and game choices.

> They differ in the first place as girls and boys in the game selection. Boys definitely want to play football. The girls do not know what to do among themselves and they keep throwing the ball at each other. When you form mixed groups, they learn to enjoy the game, but only after the intervention of the teacher (A5-Female).

In the study examining the source of the difference between boys and girls, Shapiro (1992) emphasized the importance of childhood by stating that it is very difficult for stereotypes acquired at young ages to change in adulthood. Accordingly, teachers have a great role in matters such as differentiation during games or inequality in participation in the social activities.

Discipline and Gender

According to the discipline understanding of the schools, everyone must keep up with the rules that have been maintained for generations, such as behaviour forms, dressing, hair style, skirt length and many others in line with gender expectations. In this context, 40% of the participants' statements regarding disciplinary practices are gender-oriented statements in undisciplined behaviour, 27% are opinions regarding the reasons for the violations and 33% are gender-oriented statements in warning methods.

The participants stated that male students violated discipline more than female students and they are more inclined to demonstrate behaviours of violence, mischief, and divergence both in the classroom and during breaks. It is understood from the expressions of the participants that this situation is perceived as a biological feature.

> Generally, the boys break the rule. This is instinctively in their nature. They are prone to running wild (A3-Female).

Some participants attribute boys' having more discipline problems to family attitude. It was mentioned that families direct their boys to violence in order not to be oppressed, advising them as "you hit him/her back, too". Like these findings, it is stated in the literature that the family is an important factor in terms of disciplinary behaviours (Güçlü, 2004). This situation results from the gender culture of the society. Stronger and more aggressive traits are attributed to the boys in traditional culture while girls are given more delicacy and vulnerability. Accordingly, another finding of the study shows that teachers' approaches to boys and girls who have disciplinary problems differ due to traditional gender culture.

> I don't know if it is positive discrimination, but, for example, if a boy and a girl commit the same kind of wrong behaviour, I cannot show the same reaction to boys and girls. In other words, girls seem to me like children who need to be more protected, delicate, and treated with more care (A4-Male).

Studies in the international literature indicate that there are different rules and expectations for male and female students (George, 2015; Morris, 2005). In this sense, based on the literature and findings of the study, it can be said that teachers' attitude as to the discipline is unequal to the detriment of boys.

Gender in Administrator Role Models

Since school administration is a task mostly given to male teachers in today's patriarchal conditions, implicit messages are conveyed to students about the managerial qualities and gender roles. The participant expressions related to this are about the gender distribution of the school's administrative staff (35%), the gender in teachers' perception of administration (35%), and the gender codes

conveyed by the administrator role models to the students (30%). The principals were male in all schools where the research was conducted. Despite this, some of the participants stated that they had never questioned the administrative staff of the schools before, and they started to think about this issue for the first time with the question asked during the interview.

> I have never thought of that. For the first time, I see the administration as of men now (C1-Female).

> I hadn't thought about this before. I didn't think why the principal was male (A1-Female).

According to the above statements, depending on the patriarchal structure of the society, teachers did not pay attention to the fact that, there were mostly men in the senior management positions, or they took it for granted. It was revealed in another finding that men are ascribed to the administrative staff by both teachers and students. It can be said that this situation points to the link between management codes and traditional gender roles.

> If you ask me, I don't want to work under the lady principal, either. I advocate equality, but I never want to work under a female manager. What my friends told about lady principals reinforced my mind that women should not be an administrator (B3-Male).

Based on the participant expression, it can be said that teachers are influenced by the cultural structure of the society and contribute to the maintenance of the gendered perspective. This situation not only affects the perception of teachers but also creates important codes in students' minds regarding gender roles.

> In my opinion, the students are given the message that men rule everywhere. The message that men direct the school, family, etc (B2-Female).

Although there are many studies on gender discrimination in administration in the literature (Shakeshaft, 2006; Simpson; 1997; Tan, 1996), there is no study on how the inequality in administrative staff will reflect on students' gender perception. However, it can be said according to the findings of this study that patriarchal values are implicitly transferred to students who are faced with gendered job distributions in administrative staff, which contributes to the reproduction of gender.

Curriculum and Gender Discrimination

The curriculum ensures the continuity of the gendered culture as one of the means of reflecting traditional gender discrimination in society on to the schools. In this section, *the acquisitions implicitly acquired with school life*, *the discriminatory factors in the content and visuals of the textbooks* in the explicit curriculum, and the reflections of this situation on students' perceptions of gender are discussed together.

Hidden Curriculum and Gender

In the education process, students encounter an unwritten curriculum as well as an explicit one and achieve various learning outcomes. Many factors such as seating arrangement, interaction and communication patterns, division of labour in class, and behavioural orientations, all of which were examined in the previous sections, are covered by the hidden curriculum. Regarding the hidden curriculum that mediates the informal preparation of students for gender roles, opinions of the participants are about gender discriminatory implicit messages (48%), gender in material selection (33%), and the reasons for gender differentiation (19%).

The findings about the hidden curriculum complement all sub-dimensions of this study, revealing that teachers unwittingly exhibit attitudes to support

gender-based processes in rewarding, material selection and guidance. Some of the practices teachers unintentionally implement are giving a doll to a girl, a toy-car to a boy, directing students to behaviours in accordance with traditional roles, encouraging students to social division of labour in classroom assignments, and using gendered codes in colloquial language.

According to another finding of the study, traditional gender codes can be implicitly transferred to students through educational materials. Some of the participants emphasized that there is a spontaneous differentiation among the students in the material selection. It can be alleged based on the findings that boys and girls make choices appropriate to the roles imposed on them through the social environment when choosing educational materials or reading books.

> Girls, for example, look at the cover and get whatever gets their attention, like a bird or a baby. Boys mostly take things that appeal to them. For example, a car (B2-Female).

On the other hand, when participants were asked about the reasons for gender-based differentiation in material selection, it was understood that the problem was linked to out-of-school reasons such as biological characteristics and family, and teachers neglected their responsibilities in this matter. It is stated in the studies conducted in the international literature on this subject that, through the hidden curriculum, gender values are instilled in students and gender stereotypes are developed by taking biological gender differences as a criterion (Miller, 2008; Sadker, Sadker and Klein, 1991). In this sense, it can be said that the research findings are consistent with the literature.

Gender in Textbooks

Textbooks, which are one of the most basic materials in education, can instil gender values in students explicitly and implicitly with both curriculum

information and texts/visuals. In these content and visuals, women are mostly reflected as more passive and weaker, and men as active and strong. The participants stated that they find the textbooks equitable in terms of gender (33%), did not notice the gender discrimination in textbook (40%) and the visuals in the textbooks have gender discriminatory features (27%).

In most of the participants' expressions, either the representation of men-women in the textbooks was found to be equal in quantity and quality or it was stated that this issue had not been noticed before.

> I don't remember, I didn't count, but I didn't see any inconvenience in terms of gender (A1-Female).

> I see it very balanced. I usually look at the names, and they are balanced in numbers (B5-Male).

Contrary to the research findings, it is stated in the literature that textbooks offer content in a way that reproduces traditional gender stereotypes on issues such as the domestic division of labour, gender roles, gender characteristics, etc. (Gümüşoğlu, 2016; Yürek and Balcı Karaboğa, 2018; Özdemir and Balcı Karaboğa, 2019). In this respect, it is quite significant that the research findings are not consistent with the literature. Teachers, being influenced by the society they grew up in and the education they received, may not be able to recognize the discriminatory elements in the content and visuals, and consequently, they can convey information that will reproduce traditional gender values to students. However, some teachers stated that the content and visuals in the textbooks include elements of gender discrimination.

> I find it horrible. I mean, there is a photo about family life. The mother is dealing with something in her hands in the kitchen; father is sitting (B1-Female).

According to the findings of the study, gender stereotypes can be reflected through family-themed visuals and occupational presentations in the textbooks. Some of the participants stated that the number of women and men in the visuals in the books, the places they are pictured in, the activities they are engaged in and the professions they perform differ in favour of men. Karaboğa (2020), who reached a similar finding, also reveals that the visuals in the textbooks contain items suitable for gender roles. Therefore, according to all these findings, it can be said that gendered discriminatory codes are transferred through textbooks and some of the teachers contribute to the reproduction of the process since they do not have gender awareness.

Student Characteristics That May Be Effective in Gender Discrimination

Differentiation conditions arising from student characteristics should be determined to bring a more holistic perspective to the subject of gender discrimination. This situation is most clearly seen in the school environment in terms of *academic achievement* and *absenteeism*. In this section, students' academic achievement and absenteeism are discussed in the context of gender from teachers' point of view.

Academic Achievement and Gender

Although there is no direct relationship between academic achievement and gender, stereotypes developed in line with the traditional understanding of gender produce a kind of consent that female students can be more successful in verbal areas and male students can be successful in numerical areas. Regarding this, the differentiation in academic achievement by gender was articulated by 52% of the participant, the reasons for the differentiation by 33%, and the views on academic achievement and gender relationship according to grade level by 15%.

When the opinions of the participants are examined, it is seen that the achievement and self-confidence of the boys in the mathematics lesson and the interest of the female students in the Turkish lesson were mostly mentioned. On the other hand, it was stated that female students are at a better level than male students in matters such as the way of studying, discipline, and responsibility in addition to differentiation between boys and girls according to the type of lesson.

> Achievement...there are also smart boys. But girls are better in the way of studying. Boys generally have good math intelligence; girls have better verbal intelligence (B2-Female).

According to the findings, it can be said that most of the teachers accept the traditional assumptions that boys are successful in numerical fields and girls in verbal fields. However, it is stated both in Turkish and international literature that the most important factor increasing the success for both verbal and numerical courses is not gender, but attitude and responsibility towards the course (Babaroviç, Buruseric and Seric, 2011; Dursun and Dede, 2004). When the research findings and studies in the literature are compared, it is thought that, although academic achievement is not directly related to gender, it affects the belief of success due to gender stereotypes, and it conditions female students to be successful in verbal lessons and male students in numerical lessons.

When the participants were asked the reasons for the differentiation in academic achievement by gender, family characteristics, environmental factors and biological reasons were seen to stand out. It is understood from the expressions of the participants that boys stay outdoors more, make calculations using mathematics when necessary, and thus both their self-esteem increases and their skills for mathematics lesson improve. On the other hand, it was stated that girls

acquired skills compatible with gender roles mostly with the mother in a more restricted environment. However, some of the participants stated that academic achievement and gender relationship may vary in favour of girls after primary school because boys are predominant in primary school. Contrary to the opinions of the participants, it is argued in the international literature that the primary school has a feminine structure, and therefore, girls are more successful in primary school (Skelton, 2006). It can be said at this point that the opinions of the participants and the literature do not match with each other.

Absenteeism and Gender

In the education process, students may be absent from school sometimes due to the cultural structure of the school district, the economic inadequacy of their families, or traditional gender role expectations. Therefore, gender-based discrimination may occur in terms of active participation in education. The participants' expressions in relation to this are about the reasons for absenteeism for the girls (48%), the reasons for absenteeism for the boys (24%), and the relationship between school district and absenteeism (28%).

According to the participants, the reasons for the girls' absence are mostly due to traditional gender role expectations. It is understood from the statements of participants that girls are obliged to be absent due to family and social gender roles such as sibling care and helping the mother. As to the opinions regarding the reasons for the absenteeism of the boys, it was mentioned that they were absent from school for reasons such as playing ball outside and being naughty. When the participants compared the reasons for absenteeism of the students, they stated that the female students were absent due to the roles imposed on them and the male students because of their desire to play. Therefore, according to the statements of the participants, it can be said that the decision not to attend the school was made by the boys themselves and the families of the girls.

However, sometimes due to economic insufficiencies, boys may also be absent to contribute to the income of the house. Köse (2014) argues that when families have low-income levels, students work as seasonal workers and therefore they may be absent. It can be said based on this information that, besides the gender of the students, the financial situation of families can also play an important role in absenteeism.

Another finding of the study is about the relationship between school district and absenteeism. It was strikingly stated in participant expressions that the roles of girls are more pronounced in rural areas.

> Yes, it differs more in the East. The girls are not coming to school. She comes one day but is absent for three days. In other words, when they were in the East, they would go to the field, or look after children (B2-Female).

Based on this information, it can be argued that gender roles have a significant place in the absence of students, although there are regional and cultural differences. This situation, which is an indicator of the gender culture of the society, refers to restricting the education rights of especially female students.

Results

Primary school is one of the most critical periods in which gender stereotypes are formed in individuals. The results of this study conducted in Mersin, Turkey, demonstrate that the teachers who are important actors of this process can unwittingly give messages to students about gender in many areas. Traditional consent that causes discrimination comes to the forefront in teachers' views on classroom and in-school processes, curriculum and student characteristics that may be effective in gender discrimination. It can be said, according to the study, that the factors that emerge depending on the traditional

gender culture of the society and that reproduce gender discrimination in the school environment are taken for granted by many teachers. The gendered approach, which is manifested in the processes and practices in primary school education, has penetrated teachers' personality as an implication of the gender perception. However, the gender of the teachers and the socio-economic characteristics of the schools they work did not make a difference in the findings of study. In general, it was observed that most of the teachers who participated in the study had a poor awareness of gender. Therefore, the research findings show that masculine gender relations are maintained through school, supporting Bourdieu's theory of reproduction.

It is seen that teachers are influenced by the dominant gender culture of the society in in-class processes of seating arrangement, interaction, distribution of tasks, gender discriminatory language use and gender role expectations from students. In these processes, teachers either contribute to the reproduction of gender discrimination either indirectly with a passive role or directly with their behaviours and attitudes. In addition, schools bear the traces of the masculine culture with the guidance roles assumed by teachers, the disciplinary methods they employ, the way students socialize, the differentiation in their game choices, and the distribution of male intensive school management staff. For example, the behaviours that teachers advised the students impose on boys that they should be naughtier and more sociable while girls should be more docile and timid. This situation reflects the traditional gender perspective of the society. Similar results were reached for the curriculum, which is one of the main mechanisms that naturalize and reproduce the gender hierarchy. By means of both the implicit program and the gender discriminated elements in the textbooks, discriminatory messages that underline the domestic division of labour and the place of women in society are conveyed to students, and cultural codes about gender are created in students' minds. On the other hand, the

gendered attitudes towards student characteristics that include factors such as academic achievement expectation from boys and girls and absenteeism also reflect the gender culture of the society. Traditional prejudices that condition girls to be successful in verbal fields and boys to be successful in numerical fields, and girls being obliged to be absent due to family responsibilities prove the gender differences.

As a result, it was revealed with this study that the discrimination based on gender in the primary school education process was shaped in consequence of stereotypes developed in line with gender roles, and findings were reached supporting the assumptions of the reproductive theory. One of the most significant results of the study is that, through the practices often carried out unwittingly by the teachers, students were guided to behave in accordance with the roles expected by the society. It was ensured with the study that the participants could partially examine the gender discrimination experienced in the primary school environment and it was also observed that the teachers find the subject natural due to reasons such as biological differences and inherent traits and they are not aware of their responsibilities in this issue. In the light of all these results obtained from the study, it can be argued that the gender structure and education are in a reciprocal interaction with each other, and the reproduction of gender discrimination is realized through school education. The most critical role belongs to the teachers in this process. Therefore, the need for teachers with gender sensitivity is gradually increasing in education which is one of the basic means of cultural transformation.

Notes

[1] This article is based on a master's thesis prepared by Türkü Kılavuz and supervized by Prof. Dr. F. Ayşe Balcı Karaboğa at Mersin University Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of Educational Administration

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Author Details

Corresponding Author: Türkü Kılavuz is based at Mersin University Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of Educational Administration, Mersin, Turkey. ORCİD:0000-0003-0578-6607

Telephone:05364577430 E-mail: <u>turkukılavuz@gmail.com</u>

F. Ayşe Balcı Karaboğa is based at Mersin University Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Administration, Mersin, Turkey. ORCİD: 0000-0003-3958-6582