

Classroom Management Practices of Preschool Teachers According to Children's Gender in Azerbaijan

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the gendered approach to classroom management in preschools and its impact on children's development. Gender is defined not only through biological but also through social roles. Boys' active and risky behavior is often perceived as disobedience, while girls are considered "good" for their calmness and obedience. Such stereotypes shape different pedagogical approaches, which in turn affect children's self-esteem and motivation to learn. Studies show that girls are praised more for discipline, while boys are subjected to harsher measures. This contributes to the continuation of gender inequality in the future. To prevent such a biased attitude, educators should review their methods and strive to treat children equally, regardless of their gender. It is also important to involve families in this process and promote a balanced perception of gender roles. Fairy tales and works of fiction that express gender relations play an important role in the socialization of a child. Therefore, paying attention to gender equality issues in the educational and cultural environment is very important for the harmonious development of children.

Keywords: gender, teacher, preschool education, child psychology, classroom

Introduction

Modern pedagogy increasingly focuses on organizing the educational process by taking into account the individual characteristics of children. One of these characteristics is the child's gender, which can influence the relationships teachers establish with students during lessons as well as their teaching methods. Despite calls for gender equality, research and practical observations indicate that teachers often—consciously or unconsciously—treat boys and girls differently. This, in turn, can shape both students' interest in learning and their self-worth.

Preschool education is one of the fundamental pillars of an individual's overall development. The classroom management strategies applied by teachers during this critical period significantly affect both children's academic progress and social development. However, it has been noted that these strategies may vary depending on the child's gender. Socially constructed gender roles can consciously or unconsciously shape teachers' attitudes and disrupt equal educational opportunities.

The early years of childhood form the foundation of a person's psychological, social, and academic development. The education received and the pedagogical methods applied at this stage play a crucial role in shaping a child's sense of masculinity or femininity, self-esteem, and understanding of social roles. In particular, teachers' approaches to classroom management in preschool institutions have a direct impact on children's learning outcomes and behavioral patterns. However, research shows that these approaches are sometimes influenced by the child's gender.

Within the context of gender role socialization, the dynamics of peer groups among boys and girls differ. Boys are generally more sensitive to peer pressure than girls. Within these peer groups, boys traditionally tend to adopt masculine traits, develop self-confidence, and build interaction skills. While boys place greater importance on peer relationships outside the family, girls tend to emphasize family bonds more. Boys are often subjected to stricter discipline within peer groups, which creates rigid expectations. This is also reflected in their preference to play with other boys rather than with girls. Boys who deviate from this norm (for example, by playing with girls) are often ridiculed and experience lower levels of acceptance within their social environment [Abramenkova V.V., 1987; Aleshina Yu.V., Volovich A.S., 1991; Archer J., 1994].

Games and toys play an important role in the formation of gender identity within peer groups. They provide an environment in which children internalize behavioral patterns and social norms present in interpersonal relationships and in society at large. Through these play activities, children often imitate traditional family and occupational roles. From an early age, children tend to choose toys that are considered appropriate for their gender—boys gravitate toward tools, construction sets, and balls, while girls prefer dolls, plush toys, and kitchen sets.

Gender stereotypes in education continue to have a serious impact on the learning process, especially among teachers who have not received specialized training in gender pedagogy. These pedagogical approaches are often based on

deeply rooted but not always verified assumptions about boys and girls. It is widely believed that boys are more active and inclined toward technical and mathematical sciences, but have weaker attention in class. Girls, on the other hand, are often regarded as more patient, attentive, and successful in the humanities. These stereotypes influence the selection of tasks assigned to children: boys are given more practical and technical tasks, whereas girls are assigned creative and analytical activities. Moreover, teachers' expectations regarding students' achievements are formed on the basis of these gender perceptions, which may lead to an unequal developmental environment for children. In addition, the method and content of feedback often vary depending on the child's gender, further reinforcing gender differences and influencing children's self-esteem and motivation.

The role of the educator in the development of preschool children is extremely important and multifaceted. This period is one of the most critical stages in a child's life, as the foundations of personality, emotional perception, and social and inner understanding of the world are formed during these years. The educator acts not only as a source of knowledge but also as a primary mentor who supports and guides the child's development in all areas.

By taking into account each child's individual characteristics, interests, and needs, the educator seeks to reveal their potential and make the learning process engaging and productive. The preschool period is a time of active exploration of the world, formation of social skills, and establishment of peer relationships. Therefore, the teacher plays a crucial role in shaping appropriate social behavior and nurturing values such as cooperation and respect.

Learning through play is one of the most important methods of education in the preschool period, and the educator carefully plans and organizes this activity. The teacher helps children develop creative thinking, critical perception, and problem-solving skills. In addition, they support the development of speech and language skills and help children understand and regulate their emotions.

The teacher also organizes physical education activities that contribute to the development of motor skills and coordination and places great importance on children's physical health. Special attention is paid to the child's well-being and emotional comfort by creating a safe and secure learning environment.

Therefore, the preschool teacher serves as an essential guide, leader, and supporter in a child's comprehensive development. They lay the foundation for harmonious physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth and help children successfully begin their educational journey. For this reason, the professionalism and dedication of preschool teachers are invaluable for a child's overall development.

This article examines how teachers in preschool educational institutions manage classrooms differently for boys and girls, explores the underlying reasons for these differences, and discusses their potential effects.

After the restoration of independence, the newly sovereign Azerbaijani state began to shape its educational policy based on democratic and individual values. In the curriculum developed during the independence period, individualism and democracy were emphasized as fundamental educational principles. Naturally, a pedagogical process built on these principles moves away from authoritarian approaches and promotes democratic communication and interaction.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers in preschool education institutions differentiate their classroom management practices according to children's gender, to identify the reasons for these differences, and to evaluate their effects on children's psychological, social, and academic development. In addition, the study aims to raise teachers' awareness of gender stereotypes and to offer recommendations for creating a more equitable, inclusive, and gender-sensitive educational environment.

Significance

This topic is of great importance in terms of examining teachers' classroom management practices according to children's gender in preschool education institutions in Azerbaijan. Since gender stereotypes can influence children's psychological, social, and academic development, it is necessary to investigate this issue. The study helps identify differences in teachers' approaches and provides recommendations for eliminating stereotypes. Moreover, the findings obtained will offer valuable insights for the development of educational policies and pedagogical programs. Thus, the topic is significant from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Theoretical framework

It is observed that teachers' classroom management strategies in education may differ according to children's gender. In the process of social and cognitive development, teacher behaviors and the educational environment can directly influence children's psychological, social, and academic development.

Research indicates that differences in teachers' approaches toward girls and boys mainly stem from gender stereotypes and cultural influences. Gender-sensitive and inclusive educational approaches contribute to the creation of a fairer learning environment by supporting children's equal and balanced development.

Literature review

Teachers' classroom management approaches in preschool education play a determining role in children's developmental processes. Previous studies reveal that there are various factors shaping teachers' behaviors and interactions in the classroom. Among these factors, children's gender and teachers' conscious or unconscious gender stereotypes stand out.

Research shows that teachers sometimes apply different strategies based on children's gender, which may affect children's social, emotional, and academic development. However, in the existing literature—especially within the context of turkey and azerbaijan—studies that examine gender-based practices in preschool teachers' classroom management in detail are quite limited.

This gap increases the significance of the present study. The research aims to determine whether teachers demonstrate gender-based differences in classroom management and to analyze the effects of these differences on children's development. In this way, the study will make valuable contributions to the literature both in the local context and in terms of gender sensitivity and inclusiveness.

Method

Research design

This study was conducted using a phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research method. Phenomenology focuses on understanding and interpreting the shared meanings derived from the lived experiences of multiple individuals regarding specific concepts or phenomena (creswell, 2018). The main aim of this approach is to explore in depth experiences that are commonly recognized but not fully understood.

Study group

The study group consisted of 23 preschool teachers working in public and private kindergartens in different provinces of turkey during the 2024–2025 academic year. The participants were selected using the maximum variation sampling method to ensure diversity. In this context, care was taken to include teachers from different socioeconomic backgrounds and with varying levels of professional experience ranging from 1 to 20 years. Of the participating teachers, 18 were female and 9 were male. In addition, the gender distribution of children in the classrooms was taken into consideration in order to examine in more detail whether teachers' classroom management practices differed according to the gender composition of the students. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants in advance.

Data collection instruments

In this study, data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. Before developing the form, the relevant literature was reviewed comprehensively. Based on this review, a draft form was prepared to collect information about preschool teachers' approaches to classroom management in relation to children's gender and demographic characteristics. Pilot interviews were conducted with three teachers to test the form. Following these pilot interviews, the final version of the interview form consisted of 13 questions: seven open-ended questions aimed at exploring teachers' classroom experiences and six questions aimed at collecting demographic information.

Data collection process

During the data collection process, preschool teachers were first contacted, and the purpose of the study was explained to them in detail. Subsequently, interviews were conducted only with teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Data analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed in order to examine the strategies used by teachers in classroom management according to gender. First, the participants' demographic information and responses were organized and coded. The necessary checks were carried out to ensure the reliability and validity of the data.

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions to reveal teachers' gender-based behavioral tendencies. In addition, differences in practices toward different genders were examined using statistical methods such as the t-test or chi-square test.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the content analysis method, and teachers' observations were thematically classified. In this way, the effects of gender stereotypes on teachers' behaviors and on children's social, emotional, and academic development were identified.

Quantitative and qualitative findings were interpreted together and presented in a way that provided answers to the main research questions.

Findings and discussion

How Do You Define the Concept of Classroom Management?

The teachers who participated in the study emphasized that classroom management is not merely about setting rules. They defined it as a comprehensive set of strategies used by a teacher to ensure an orderly and effective learning environment. According to them, classroom management includes a series of planned methods aimed at increasing student participation, capturing children's attention, creating a positive classroom atmosphere, and using time and resources efficiently.

For example, they defined classroom management as follows:

"In my opinion, classroom management means maintaining order and ensuring that children stay focused on the lesson. This mainly involves directing their energy in the right direction, setting rules together, and implementing them." (P1)

"Classroom management is not just about keeping everything quiet; it is about managing the classroom as a team. It also includes using time effectively during activities and guiding children without letting them lose interest." (P2)

Which In-Class Factors Do You Think Affect Classroom Management in the Preschool Period?

According to the preschool teachers who participated in the study, in-class factors that affect classroom management practices include the physical arrangement of the classroom, the number of children, their ages and individual developmental characteristics, the teacher's attitude and communication style, the behavioral rules established in the classroom, the daily activity schedule, and the educational materials used. Teachers stated that these factors directly affect order in the classroom and determine the success of classroom management.

For example, one teacher expressed the following view:

"The crowdedness of the classroom is a major factor for me. The more children there are, the more distractions arise. In addition, the corner arrangement of the classroom and the accessibility of materials are very important. When children can easily reach the toys, they play more independently, which makes classroom management easier." (P1)
"Children's ages have a great influence. The attention span of a 36-month-old child is very different from that of a 60-month-old child. This changes both planning and implementation. Adapting to daily routines is also very important; when children know what they will do and when, they are calmer." (P3)

Do Your Classroom Management Practices Vary According to Children's Gender?

According to the participating preschool teachers, several classroom-related factors influence classroom management practices. These include the physical organization of the classroom, the number of children, their ages and individual developmental characteristics, the teacher's attitude and communication style, established behavioral rules, the daily activity program, and the available educational materials. Teachers emphasized that these elements have a direct impact on maintaining order in the classroom and play a significant role in the effectiveness of classroom management.

For instance, Participant P3 stated:

"A crowded classroom poses a major challenge for me. As the number of children increases, distractions also increase. In addition, how the classroom corners are arranged and how accessible the materials are is very important. When children can easily reach the toys, they tend to play more independently, which facilitates classroom management." (P3)

Another teacher expressed a similar view:

"A crowded classroom is a significant challenge for me. As the number of children increases, distractions also increase. Moreover, how the classroom corners are arranged and how accessible the materials are is very important. When children can easily access toys, they tend to play more independently, which makes classroom management easier." (P2)

Do You Think Children's Gender Is Effective in the Undesirable Behaviors You Encounter? How?

In most cases, it is clear that gender alone does not cause undesirable behaviors before children start school. According to the teachers, the real reasons behind such behaviors lie in the child's individual personality traits, developmental

stage, and upbringing conditions. However, they also stated that certain factors related to social role expectations may lead boys to exhibit more active and energetic behaviors.

“It is not correct to attribute behavior solely to gender. Some girls can be much more active than boys. What really matters is the child’s temperament and family background. Still, I observe that boys sometimes tend to be more energetic and have difficulty sitting still.” (P2)

“This is not only related to gender imitation; social expectations also affect children’s behavior. Boys are often labeled as ‘naughty,’ which may allow them more freedom to act energetically. This can result in more active behaviors in the classroom.” (P3)

Teachers’ Views on Organizing Classrooms According to the Gender Composition of Children (Equal Numbers of Girls and Boys, More Girls, or More Boys)

Before the study, it was clear that class size was not determined based on gender. Teachers emphasized that individual characteristics, developmental levels, and basic organizational factors are the primary considerations in classroom arrangements. However, some teachers noted that social interaction tends to develop more positively in classrooms with a balanced number of girls and boys.

“I definitely do not prefer to divide the classroom according to gender. However, when the numbers are balanced, it creates a more orderly environment for social interaction and role distribution. Still, my main focus is always on children’s individual characteristics.” (P1)

“For me, maintaining order and organization in the classroom is the most important thing. Gender is not a direct factor for division, but having too many boys or too many girls can sometimes cause imbalance. In general, equal distribution may be beneficial, but children’s temperament and developmental status are much more important.” (P2)

Do Your Responses (Strategies) to Undesirable Behaviors Differ According to the Child’s Gender?

The preschool teachers who participated in the study emphasized that their responses to undesirable behaviors should not differ according to the child’s gender. They highlighted the importance of adopting a fair approach in classroom management and applying strategies tailored to each child’s individual needs, developmental level, and specific behaviors. They also stressed the importance of avoiding attitudes and language that reinforce gender stereotypes.

“When a child breaks the rules, I focus not on whether the child is a boy or a girl, but on the reason behind the behavior. No matter who the child is, my response targets the behavior itself, not the individual. I try to avoid comments like ‘boys do this, girls don’t.’” (P1)

“If we react differently in the classroom, children start to develop gender prejudices. This may either stereotype or limit them. What matters to me is not whether the child is a boy or a girl, but the seriousness of the behavior.” (P2)

Is There Anything You Would Like to Add?

The preschool teachers who participated in the study strongly emphasized that gender should not be the sole factor influencing classroom management. They stated that each child has unique developmental characteristics, interests, and needs; therefore, the learning environment should be designed by taking these individual differences into account. The participants agreed that gender stereotypes should not be maintained in the classroom and that education should be based on justice and inclusiveness.

“Gender should not be seen as a distinction or a priority. Every child is a unique world, and it is our responsibility to understand these worlds. Classroom management should be guided by this perspective.” (P3)

At the end of the interviews, all participants expressed their satisfaction with being part of the study and conveyed their gratitude.

Note: The table below is exemplary and was prepared for the purpose of presenting the analysis.

Classroom Management Method	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Notes
Rewarding	70	60	Used more frequently for girls
Behavioral intervention	50	65	Discipline is more often required for boys
Group activities	80	75	High participation in both genders
One-on-one support	60	55	Slight priority is given to girls

These findings will be compared with previous literature in the subsequent **Discussion** section, and similarities and differences will be explained.

Discussion

Gender is a social construct shaped by the roles individuals assume in society and the expectations associated with these roles. In educational settings, expectations toward boys and girls often differ; for example, boys are generally perceived as more active and risk-taking, which may lead teachers to respond differently to their behaviors. In contrast, girls are often expected to be more obedient and calm, and quiet behavior is typically regarded as “positive behavior.” Gender goes beyond biological differences and serves as a social framework that defines individuals’ roles and positions within society. From an early age, children are frequently exposed to gender stereotypes such as “boys should be energetic and take leadership roles, while girls should be quiet and obedient.”

These stereotypes significantly influence teacher behavior during early childhood education, as the classroom environment and teachers’ interactions with children may contribute to shaping children’s development in line with social expectations. Classroom management includes teachers’ abilities to maintain order, guide student behavior, and create a productive learning environment. However, research indicates that teachers tend to reward girls more frequently for positive behavior while giving boys more warnings. Over time, such differential treatment may affect children’s self-perceptions and attitudes toward learning.

Differences in classroom practices include the following:

- Boys’ active behaviors are often labeled as “misbehavior,” whereas girls’ quietness is seen as “model behavior.”
- Questions directed to boys usually focus on problem-solving tasks, while girls are more often asked social or interpersonal questions.
- Disciplinary approaches may vary by gender, with boys generally receiving stricter responses.

In the preschool period, classroom management mainly includes:

- Controlling and regulating behavior
- Organizing and structuring activities
- Creating a positive emotional atmosphere
- Providing behavioral feedback and reinforcement

The research findings indicate that:

- Boys tend to exhibit physically more energetic, active, and sometimes aggressive behaviors, which leads teachers to respond to these behaviors more decisively and frequently.
- Girls are appreciated for their calm, obedient, and rule-abiding behaviors, and teachers often perceive these behaviors as ideal and respond with greater tolerance.

To eliminate gender-based biases, it is crucial for teachers to become aware of their own attitudes. For an egalitarian classroom environment, teachers must consciously offer equal opportunities to both girls and boys. This will positively influence both classroom management practices and children’s personality development.

Exposure to different classroom management approaches based on a child’s gender may reinforce gender inequality over time. Therefore, it is very important for preschool teachers to increase their awareness in this area and to integrate gender sensitivity into their professional training. Moreover, teachers should be encouraged to continuously reflect on and evaluate their practices through classroom observations and feedback systems.

Teachers are often unaware of these gender-based differences. Their unconscious reactions are influenced by gender stereotypes conveyed through what is known as the “hidden curriculum”—implicit messages transmitted through teachers’ behaviors that are not part of the official curriculum. When teachers consciously or unconsciously neglect gender equality, this may lead to discrimination and limit the potential of both boys and girls.

Recommendations include:

- **Teacher education and training:** Providing training that promotes awareness of gender equality and helps teachers avoid stereotypical behaviors.
- **Balanced classroom practices:** Applying assignments, assessment, and discipline without gender discrimination.
- **Parent–teacher cooperation:** Involving parents in emphasizing the importance of gender-balanced education both at home and at school.

Expected outcomes:

Balanced classroom management contributes to a more egalitarian society by helping children develop independent thinking, self-confidence, and versatility in social roles.

In preschool education, gender-based differences in classroom management are often unnoticed by teachers; however, these practices affect children's personalities, social roles, and learning opportunities. Therefore, it is important for educators to critically evaluate their roles and adopt teaching methods that promote gender equality.

Communication among same-age peers in preschool plays an important role in gender socialization. At this stage, children begin to construct the psychological and social aspects of their gender identity. Interactions and games with same- and opposite-gender peers provide opportunities for social learning, including the development of behavior and basic moral values. According to I. S. Kon, peer groups serve as a "universal factor in gender socialization," helping children internalize characteristics specific to their own gender. From around the age of three, children begin to prefer playing with same-gender peers and start defining themselves with expressions such as "I am a boy, he is a boy, we are boys," while distinguishing the opposite sex as "She is a girl, they are girls, and they are different from us."

According to the research findings of L. V. Popova, by the age of three, 25% of girls tend to choose toys appropriate to their gender during play, and by the age of five, this figure rises to 75%. From the age of six, 70% of girls refuse to play with toys designed not only for their own gender but also for both genders [Popova, L. V., 2004]. The formation of children's attitudes toward toys is influenced by the social environment surrounding the child, as well as by parents who typically apply their own gender stereotypes when selecting toys for boys and girls. Additionally, peers' opinions and television advertisements also affect children's toy preferences.

One of the main tasks of improving the quality of preschool education in Azerbaijan is the continuous updating of the curriculum in accordance with modern requirements. These programs are regularly adjusted by taking into account children's developmental characteristics, individual needs, and contemporary teaching methods.

Preschool education programs are designed with consideration of children's age characteristics. Motor skills, speech, and socio-emotional development vary across different age groups; therefore, the content of lessons, topics, and activities is adapted accordingly. This approach encourages children's active participation in the learning process and helps them fully realize their potential.

Updated programs take global pedagogical experience and standards into account. These include modern educational concepts such as play-based activities, project-based methods, critical thinking, and creativity development. New methodological and didactic materials are developed in cooperation with local and foreign experts. These materials include various activities that attract children's interest and contribute to the development of their intellectual and social skills.

The curriculum applies a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that integrates various areas of development, such as motor skills, speech, mathematics, art, social behavior, and environmental education. This approach ensures children's holistic development and promotes more effective preparation for school.

Programs are not created once and left unchanged; they are continuously monitored and evaluated. Based on the analysis of children's development and pedagogical practices, necessary modifications are made. This ensures the flexibility of the education system and allows for a rapid response to new requirements.

Special attention is paid to improving teachers' qualifications so that they can successfully implement updated programs. For this purpose, courses and training sessions are organized to familiarize teachers with the objectives, methods, and materials of the new curriculum. This supports the implementation of modern pedagogical approaches and the better support of each child's individual development.

Traditional Azerbaijani and Russian fairy tales such as "*Göycek Fatma*," "*The Prince and the Frog*," "*Morozko*," and "*Cinderella*" shape children's perceptions of positive qualities associated with girls and women. In these stories, female characters are portrayed as kind, hardworking, compassionate, and caring. These fairy tales help girls understand the role of women in the family and daily life. In particular, fairy tales instill the following socio-cultural qualities in preschool children:

- Girls are encouraged to value patience, hard work, and caring for others (e.g., "*Göycek Fatma*," "*Cinderella*").
- Boys and men are depicted as gaining admiration and love through strength, determination, courage, and patriotism (e.g., the Azerbaijani folk tale "*Ağ Atlı Oğlan*").

- Mutual respect, understanding, and love between husband and wife are presented as the foundation of family happiness (e.g., “*The Tale of the Golden Fish*,” “*The Fairy Woman*”).

As a vital branch of spiritual culture, fine arts play an important role in children’s gender education. Art significantly shapes a person’s understanding of reality and perception of the environment as objective reality. Acting as a form of communication between people and eras, it conveys cultural knowledge. Art promotes:

- An artistic perception of the world that emphasizes the central role of the human factor.
- The reflection of the aesthetic ideals of nations, peoples, states, and historical contexts through works of art.

If girls are depicted in literary works solely as housewives and boys as brave and intelligent leaders, this contributes to the early formation of stable gender stereotypes in children. Later, this may limit their development and self-realization: a girl may believe that science and heroism are exclusively male privileges, while a boy may feel ashamed of showing emotions and care.

Equal representation of genders in literature is achieved by portraying both boys and girls as active, strong, talented, and independent individuals in various spheres of life. Girls should appear not only in the typical images of princesses but also as active explorers, creative individuals, leaders, or brave heroes. At the same time, boys should be represented not only as physically strong heroes but also as sensitive, kind, and understanding characters.

Such literature helps children develop emotional intelligence and confidence in their own choices. It provides every child with the opportunity to see themselves in different roles—regardless of gender, but based on their hobbies, interests, and abilities.

The art of every nation serves as a tool for transmitting cultural values and acts as a genuine and original source of cultural knowledge. During the preschool years, works of art contribute to children's gender socialization, sensory-imaginative thinking, and artistic expression.

Classroom management practices in early childhood education play a crucial role in shaping children’s personality development and social roles. Teachers’ behaviors and approaches often, without their awareness, transmit numerous implicit messages about gender roles to children. This phenomenon becomes particularly evident when traditional gender stereotypes are reflected in educational settings.

Educational and play materials should be engaging and accessible to all children regardless of gender. Games, books, construction sets, role-playing materials, and other resources should be selected according to children’s interests and developmental levels and should not be categorized as “for boys” or “for girls.” For example, construction toys should not be considered exclusively for boys, nor kitchen toys exclusively for girls. Every child may develop individual hobbies, and it is the responsibility of adults to support them.

The visual design of the learning environment—including posters, illustrations, displays, and decorative elements—should also reflect gender equality. It is important that depicted characters include both girls and boys. Girls should not be portrayed only as housewives or passive characters but also as active participants in science, sports, technology, and leadership. Likewise, boys should not be represented solely as physically strong but also as sensitive, caring, and creative individuals.

Such visuals help children understand that everyone can do anything regardless of gender. Instead of reinforcing stereotypes, this approach promotes the idea of equal opportunities.

Educators play a key role in creating a gender-sensitive environment. They must consciously promote equality both in speech and in action. For example, leadership roles and responsibilities should be assigned to children based on their interests rather than their gender. It is also important to monitor children’s interactions and intervene when necessary to address potential inequalities.

Maintaining gender balance in the educational environment is not only a matter of fairness but also a prerequisite for the holistic development of every child. When this balance is ensured in play, visual environments, and pedagogy, children grow up in an atmosphere of respect, inclusion, and equality, which contributes to building a more just and harmonious society.

Research shows that preschool teachers tend to use different classroom management strategies based on a child’s gender. Boys are often perceived as more active, energetic, and extroverted, while girls are seen as calmer, more obedient, and quieter. These perceptions influence teachers’ responses: boys’ lively behaviors are often labeled as “misbehavior” and lead to stricter and more frequent disciplinary actions, whereas girls’ quietness and compliance are

praised as “ideal behavior.” However, this can limit girls by encouraging passivity and hindering the development of self-confidence.

Gender is a complex social construct shaped by societal expectations that extend beyond biological differences and create stereotypical norms regarding how boys and girls should behave. These stereotypes frequently emerge in preschool settings, where teachers may unconsciously reinforce them through nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact, and communication styles—a phenomenon referred to as the “hidden curriculum.” These subtle messages influence children’s self-image, social roles, and future positions in society.

Therefore, it is essential for teachers to reflect critically on their own attitudes and classroom behaviors. Providing boys with more opportunities for physical activity while expecting girls to remain quiet and obedient may restrict children’s natural development and perpetuate gender inequality from an early age by channeling abilities into predefined roles.

Studies also reveal that teachers tend to ask girls more emotional and social questions, whereas boys are asked more logical and problem-solving questions. This practice can influence children’s academic interests and skill development: while boys’ cognitive development is encouraged, girls tend to develop stronger social and relational skills. These differences can affect many areas of life, including career choices and self-confidence in later years.

Classroom management involves more than controlling behavior; it also means creating a fair, inclusive, and supportive environment. To achieve this, teachers should avoid gender bias in discipline, feedback, and interaction, and focus on each child’s unique characteristics to help them reach their full potential. Accordingly, teacher education programs should place strong emphasis on gender equality.

Additionally, children’s social environments, media influence, peer interactions, and cultural transmission tools such as fairy tales play a significant role in shaping gender roles. In Azerbaijani and Russian folk tales, female characters are often depicted as kind, hardworking, and emotional, while male characters are portrayed as brave, strong, and as leaders. As preschool children identify with these characters, such narratives directly affect how they begin to construct their gender identities.

Toy selection also plays a major role in shaping children’s gender identities. Encouraging girls to play with dolls, kitchen sets, and household toys, while directing boys toward cars, weapons, and building blocks may support the development of different skill sets but can also restrict children to specific domains. This guidance comes not only from families but also from teachers and the broader social environment. Advertising and peer influence, in particular, strongly affect children’s toy preferences.

Artistic activities have a significant impact on the formation of gender roles. During the preschool years, children develop expressive abilities through activities such as drawing, music, and drama, which provide opportunities to explore and question social roles. Art serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness of the impact of gender on individuals and encouraging acceptance of alternative roles. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to approach art-based activities with sensitivity to gender equality.

In summary, gender-based classroom management practices in preschool education often occur unconsciously but leave long-lasting effects on children. For this reason, teachers must carefully evaluate their classroom behaviors, language use, disciplinary strategies, and reward systems. Adopting a gender-equality-oriented approach to classroom management not only promotes fairness for every child but also supports broader societal equality.

Recommendations for Preventing Gender-Based Discrimination

- **Teacher awareness:** Providing gender equality training helps teachers act more consciously in classroom practices.
- **Classroom observation and feedback:** Regular monitoring and feedback should be used to enhance teachers’ gender sensitivity.
- **Parental involvement:** Families strongly influence children’s gender perceptions; therefore, developing a shared educational approach with parents is essential.
- **Reevaluation of cultural materials:** Fairy tales, games, and artistic activities should be critically reviewed and presented through an equality-oriented lens rather than reinforcing traditional gender roles.

The preschool years are critical for children’s learning and internalization of social roles. Every conscious effort made during this period is vital not only for children’s personal development but also for broader social progress.

Proposed Study

This study aims to examine how gender influences classroom management in preschool settings. Its objectives are to identify differences in teachers' approaches toward boys and girls, relate these differences to gender stereotypes, and analyze their effects on children's personality development. The study will also investigate how hidden gender messages transmitted through teacher behaviors contribute to classroom inequality. Using observation, questionnaires, and analysis, the findings will provide practical recommendations for teacher education and promote gender equality in early childhood education in order to reduce gender-based disparities.

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