

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**SciVerse ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 46 (2012) 5924 – 5927

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES 2012

Preschoolers' Views About Gender Related Games and Toys

Elif Celebi Oncu ^{a*}, Esra Unluer ^a^aFaculty of Education, University of Kocaeli, Kocaeli, 41380, Turkiye

Abstract

This study aims to investigate views of preschoolers' on gender related games and toys. Sixty children (29 girls; 31 boys) attending two different preschools took part in the study. Before the study, two characters –one of them was girl and the other was boy- were created and preschoolers were introduced to both of them. This study were carried out by placing these characters respectively on the drawings on acetate sheets. At the first stage, drawings of a girl and a boy accepting a gift package from an adult were shown to children. After showing each drawing, children's views about what could be in the gift package, were asked. At the second stage of the study, drawings of two girls, two boys, a girl and a boy at home, class and playground were presented and children were asked about games that children in the drawings could play together. In this study, role of gender in children's views of games and toys were investigated in terms of age and sex.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Uzunboylu

Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: Gender, Games, Toys, preschool

1. Introduction

Children can distinguish between males and females as early as the age of two. By age of three or four, they can easily absorb cultural expectations of their sex role (Bee, 2005). Research has shown that often, boys play rough-and-tumble games with other boys, and girls will play more quietly, although the two sexes frequently play together at this age. Boys' preferences of play and games is generally characterized by larger groups, less proximity to adults, more public play, more fighting and physical contact, more dominance attempts and the establishment of a hierarchical "pecking order". Girls' preferences of play and games is generally characterized by smaller, more intimate groups, closer proximity to adults, a strong convention of turn taking and more mutuality in play and conversation (Pillitteri, 2009; Thome, 1993).

Children prefer playing with children of the same sex, thus they are learning "gender appropriate" games (the boys tend to play games involving running or throwing a ball at recess; the girls tend to stay close to the teacher, talking of playing games such as jumping rope or hops-cotch).because of their cognitive development, they are also becoming more aware of potential models of their gender with whom to identify (Berns, 2009).

* Elif Celebi Oncu. Tel.: +0-262-303-2444

E-mail address: ecelebioncu@yahoo.com

Gender role socialization takes place in the microsystems of family, peer group, school, community and media. On the other hand in modern communities, gender roles have started changing, for example establishment of female football team etc. Fagot (1995) reported that mothers and fathers do treat sons and daughters differently. Mainly, parents prefer buying gender related toys for their sons and daughters. For example, generally for boys; trucks, war toys and sport equipment; for girls; dolls, dollhouses and books etc. are bought (Berns, 2009; Ruble, 2006).

In this study, role of gender in children's views of games and toys were investigated in terms of age and sex.

2. Method

A total of 60 preschool-aged boys (n =31, 4 years n=5, 5 years n=8 and 6 years n=18) and girls (n = 29, 4 years n=6, 5 years n=10 and 6 years n=13) participated. The children were Caucasians, educated in preschools and their age ranged from 48 to 71 months with a mean age of 50,5 months, serving middle-class populations. Data were gathered by two interviewers, and each tested approximately equal numbers of boys and girls on each section of the study.

2.1. Materials

The materials were prepared specially for the present study. A booklet was prepared by the researchers with A5-sized paper and transparencies. In this booklet three different kinds of scenes were depicted in the drawings (at home, at school, at playground), also an adult figure holding a gift package in his/her hands were depicted. Also a 10x4 cm 2 girls and 2 boys figure were prepared as rod puppets.

2.2. Testing Procedure

The researchers worked individually with children. The children were shown drawings one by one. At first the researchers introduced the characters in the booklet and talked about the drawings with children. After that the researchers showed the first page of the booklet. Researcher put two girl figures on the first page boys and girls put the rod puppet on the picture of home environment, and asked which children could play this game. Later, these two puppets were removed, and then put in the order of two boys and two girls, and the questions were repeated. The same process was repeated for the next two pages in the booklet. In the second stage, the last page of the booklet was shown. In this page an adult holding a gift package in his/her hands were depicted. First a girl figure, then a boy figure were put in the picture and children were asked what would be in that gift package.

3. Findings and Result

Findings of this study are shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Role of Gender in Children's Views of Games at Home

	Girl-Girl						Boy-Boy						Girl-Boy					
	4		5		6		4		5		6		4		5		6	
	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
F*	50,	50,	60,	87,5	30,7	61,1	0,	0,	20,	12,5	0,	5,5	25,	0,	20,	0,	30,7	16,6
M*	0,	25,	0,	0,	0,	11,1	16,6	60,	50,	37,5	7,1	38,8	50,	20,	10,	0,	7,6	55,5
N*	50,	25,	40,	12,5	69,2	27,7	83,3	40,	30,	50,	92,8	55,5	25,	80,	70,	100	61,5	27,7

*F: Female, M: Male, N: Neutral

Children's answers about their game preferences at home environment can be seen in Table 1. 6 years old girls' answers about girl to girl game preferences were mainly neutral games (69,2%). 4 and 6 years old girls (83,3% and 55,5%) and 5 and 6 years old boys (50% and 55,5%) generally expressed that boy to boy games were neutral games

and 4 years old girls and 6 years old boys mainly expressed girl to boy games were male games (50% and 55,5%) at home environment. Singer and Singer (1990) observed that girls are increasingly likely to play with traditionally boys' toys and parents are increasingly willing to purchase such toys for them.

Table 2. Role of Gender in Children's Views of Games at the School

	Girl-Girl						Boy-Boy						Girl-Boy					
	4		5		6		4		5		6		4		5		6	
	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %
F*	66,	60,	50,	25,	53,8	61,1	16,6	0,	30,	0,	7,6	22,2	0,	0,	0,	25,	7,6	5,5
M*	0,	0,	0,	25,	0,	16,6	50	60,	70,	90,	84,6	61,1	40,	40,	10,	25,	15,3	33,3
N*	33,	40,	50,	50,	46,1	22,2	33,3	40,	0,	10,	15,3	16,6	60,	60,	90,	50,	84,6	61,1

Children of all gender and age groups expressed that girl to girl games were female games, two boys played male games and a girl and a boy played neutral games at the school environment. These results were consistent with Lindsey and Mize's (2001) study in which girls engaged in more pretense play with peers than boys did, whereas boys engaged in more physical play with peers than girls did. The majority of studies in this area have examined sex differences in children's toy and activity preferences. Results of these studies have demonstrated that during the preschool years, children exhibit definite preferences for gender role stereotyped toys and activities and tend to reject cross-sex stereotyped toys and activities (Connor and Serbin, 1977, Huston and Carpenter, 1985).

Table 3. Role of Gender in Children's Views of Games at the Playground

	Girl-Girl						Boy-Boy						Girl-Boy					
	4		5		6		4		5		6		4		5		6	
	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %
F*	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	5,5	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,
M*	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	11,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	5,5	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,
N*	100,	100	100	100	100	89,	100	100	100	100	100	89,	100	100	100	100	100	100

In Table 3; role of gender in children's views of games at the playground can be seen. Interestingly almost every child in the study replied that the games played in the playground were mostly neutral games. 6 years old boys expressed that girl to girl games could be female games (11%) and boy to boy games were responded as equally male (5,5%) and female (5,5%) games. As playgrounds include play materials for both sexes, children can frequently play neutral games.

Table 4. Role of Gender in Children's Views of Toy

	Girl								Boy									
	4		5		6		4		5		6		4		5		6	
	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %	Girl %	Boy %
F*	33,3	40,	90,	62,5	53,8	72,2	5,5	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	
M*	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	0,	5,5	20,	80,	62,5	69,2	77,7						
N*	66,6	60,	10,	37,5	46,1	27,7	66,6	80,	20,	30,7	30,7	22,2						

4 years old boys and girls expressed that there were neutral toys (66,6% and 60%) and 5-6 years old boys and girls expressed that there may be a female toy in the girl's gift package. 4 years old girls and boys expressed that there were neutral toys (66,6% and 80%), 5-6 years old boys and girls expressed that there may be a male toy in the boy's gift package. Robinson and Morris's (1986) study stated that majority of all toys requested by both boys and girls were gender typed as a Christmas gift. Bauer's (1993) study showed that boys preferred playing more with masculine toys than any other toys. Simply labeling an object "for boys" or "for girls" is enough to make a

difference. In addition sex-stereotyped play which reflects social influences, for example parental and/or peer modeling, increases with age (Moller, Hymel and Rubin, 1992).

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, generally female and male children were found to think that they should play gender appropriate games. Also younger children (4 years old), preferred choosing neutral toys on the other hand most of the children preferred choosing gender appropriate toys. The reason for these results is the parental attitudes towards gender roles of their children and their games preferences. In order to find out the reason for these results a further research in which views of parents will be included can be conducted.

References

- Bauer, P. J. (1993). Memory for gender consistent and gender-inconsistent event sequences by twenty-five-month-old children. *Child Development*, 64, 285–297.
- Berns, R.M. (2009). *Child, Family, School, Community: Socialization and Support* (Eighth Edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth
- Connor, J.M. & Serbin, L.A. (1977). Behaviorally- Based Masculine and Feminine Activity Preferences Scales for Preschoolers: Correlates with Other Classroom Behaviors and Cognitive Tests. *Child Development*, 48, 1411-1416
- Fagot, B. I. (1995). Psychosocial and cognitive determinants of early gender-role development. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, VI, 1-31.
- Huston, A.C. & Carpenter, C.J. (1985). Gender differences in preschool classrooms: The Effects of Sextyped Activity Choices. In L.C. Wilkinson & C.B. Marrett (Eds.), *Gender-Related Differences in the Classroom*. New York: Academic Press.
- Moller, L., Hymel, S. & Rubin, K.H. (1992). Sex typing in play and popularity in middle childhood. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 26
- Lindsey, E. W. & Mize, J. (2001). Contextual Differences in Parent-Child Play: Implications for Children's Gender Role Development. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 44
- Pillitteri, A. (2009) *Maternal and Child Health Nursing: Care of the Childbearing and Childrearing Family*, London: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Robinson, C.C. & Morris, J.T. (1986). The Gender Stereotyped nature of Christmas Toys Received by 36-, 48-, and 60 month old children: A Comparison between Nonrequested and Requested Toys. *Sex Roles*, 15, 21-32.
- Ruble, D. N., Martin, C. L., & Berenbaum, S. (2006). Gender Development. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3, personality and social development* (6th Edn.). New York: Wiley
- Singer, DG, & Singer, JL (1990). *The House of Make-Believe: children's play and the developing imagination*. Cambridge, MA,: Harvard University Press.
- Thome, B. (1993). *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.