

## HAS THE ROLES BEEN CHANGED? PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S VIEWS ABOUT SOCIAL GENDER ROLES

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### ABSTRACT

The World is changing very rapidly so did the views, perceptions and roles in gender based activities and responsibilities, new terms such as gender fluency, gender variant, transgender etc. has been seen in latest research and articles. The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of children in early childhood on gender roles. To that end, first of all, children's perceptions were scrutinized in view of gender constancy and invariance according to age and gender. Secondly, the perceptions of children were examined in terms of gender-based division of labor and gender-based occupations were examined. Attaining 4 different free preschool institutions in the central district of Kocaeli province 251 children who are 3, 4 and 5 years old participated in the study, all having parental permission. The measurement tools used in the study were developed by the researchers. Firstly, gender specific accessories and toys to be used in relation to gender constancy, the daily routines that people frequently perform and occupations were determined. Twelve different animals were selected to prevent the emergence of gender-based bias in children on daily works and occupations. These animals were matched with the predetermined 6 daily works and 6 occupations and they were depicted in pictures while performing daily works and occupations. In addition, the identified accessories, toys and situations are depicted in black and white to prevent the formation of color wise gender-based bias. According to the findings of the study, it was seen that children in the 3-year-old group had lower gender conservation gains compared to children amongst the other-age groups. It was seen that in all of the three age groups, regardless of their gender, the majority of children expressed gender-based judgmental views about daily routines and occupations.

**Keywords:** Gender, Gender-based roles, Early childhood

### INTRODUCTION

The concepts of sex and gender, which are often confused, are two different concepts with different meanings. While gender is a psychological and social phenomenon that identifies cultural relationships and expectations related to biological gender in a social context, sex is a biological phenomenon distinguishing men and women. (Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Lindsey, 2015). Unlike sex which is attributed to a newborn, gender is acquired in the course of time and it is about how a person is perceived by society because of their gender; it defines how a woman or man should look, think, feel, dress, move and perceive the world in which they are born. Therefore, it differs culturally and varies according to place and time (Helman, 1990; Oakley,

2016; Lindsey, 2015; Giddens, 2008). Although these two concepts are semantically different, they cannot be separated completely. This is because, usually, what a culture expects from a man and a woman (gender) is not different from observations about the physical characteristics of women and men (sex). In this respect, cultural structuring of gender includes biological gender in a sense (Dökmen, 2010). Therefore, cultural aspects are important factors in shaping the views of the new generation.

With the changing world, gender terminology and studies such as gender fluency, gender bias, etc. have begun to be seen widely and approaches to gender have been updated accordingly. Children's perspectives will also be able to give us an idea of how the impact of these updates has had on them. For this reason, it could be crucial to reveal whether there is any difference in perspectives despite the new gender terms and practices that have entered the literature in the intervening years.

According to cognitive theory, gender roles are gained through a kind of understanding and assessment which is possible when children reach a certain level of cognitive development. According to Kohlberg, gender role development and attitudes are reflections of natural cognitive development and are seen at the same level as cognitive development rather than a psychological and chronological development. Kohlberg states that children's gender identity and gender role attitudes, while focusing on observable events and physical characteristics initially, shift to more abstract ones with increased cognitive skills (Thompson, 1981). For this reason, children first recognize and differentiate genders, and place themselves in the appropriate gender category. In the next stage, children start to deduce that gender is unchanging and persistent. In the third stage, they start to get the notion that superficial physical and behavioural changes cannot change biological sex (Emmerich, Goldman, Kirsch & Shatabany, 1976). According to cognitive theory, an individual can only behave according to his or her gender after all. Once they begin to adopt the right gender role, they do not need different reinforcement for certain behaviours. Cognitive theory argues that children not only learn to behave in a manner appropriate to their gender, but also learn about appropriate gender role biases (Vatandaş, 2011). This learning process is shaped by adult's views and modelling roles.

According to the theory of social development, when children realize that they have common behaviours with individuals of the same gender, they enter into a learning process by observing individuals of the same sex (Martin, 1983). In this process, the child learns gender identity through the combination of reward, punishment, direct instruction, and modelling behaviours appropriate to the gender role through cognitive learning, socialization and experience (Liben & Bigler, 2002; Bandura, 1986).

Children tend to display appropriate behaviours defined for their gender in their culture and community (Berenbaum, Martin & Ruble, 2008). Social roles are most evident in the family. Therefore, the acquisition of gender roles starts in the family. Afterwards, it is seen that most of the ideas and beliefs of children are affected by the people around them as their world expands, depending on factors such as friends and schools. These gender patterns become established and stereotyped beliefs as children grow up and as a result they become part of the child's self-perception (Witt, 1997). From the moment they are born, children are exposed to gender-specific behaviour and expectations of social factors such as family and teachers (Tisak, Tisak & Laurene, 2012).

Gender roles start with gender socialization processes after birth and are learned through the transfer of masculine and feminine beliefs and values shared culturally to children and young people (Archer & Lloyd, 2002; Bem, 1993). Looking at the historical process, it is known that gender-based practices show a gradually decreasing momentum, but when an in-depth examination is carried out, it is seen that these stereotypes keep to remain but in different forms (Dökmen, 2010). In spite of the greater tendency towards gender equality in labour and towards changes that encourage society to be more politically correct, some professions are still seen to be dominated by men or women (Gabriel & Schmitz, 2000).

Every society has its own socio-cultural values that distinguish and rule the roles of men and women shape communities, process and guide the individuals. These values generate the roles of how men and women should behave, act and become what responsibilities should they take on (Gültekin, Güneş, Ertung & Şimşek, 2013). The term of social gender roles, is mainly used for reflecting gender stereotypes and/or gender diversities Children began to learn and determinate cultural meaning of gender after their acceptance by the society as girl or boy. Cultural meaning of gender can also be determined as gender roles. Children learned to discriminate many objects, toys, games, professions and even personal characteristics as gender appropriate or not in their socialization process (Zeybekoğlu, 2013).

All around the world, the fact that women, rather than being just mothers and housewives, have started to work outside home, to participate in trainings on equal terms with men, to participate in management both in the family and community have led to the strengthening of them increasingly in the society. Thus, apart from the traditional housewife roles, women have had professions like men and gained their economic independence and the right to make decisions (İnanç & Üstünsöz, 1998). In spite of all these developments, it is seen that male and female roles, especially in domestic domain, show more resistance than other roles, and gender judgments regarding occupations keep continuing (Gök Akgül, 2013; Vatandaş, 2011).

The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of children in early childhood on gender roles despite the new developments on gender bias views and gender fluency tendency. In this context, first of all, children's perceptions on gender constancy and invariance according to age and gender variables were scrutinized. Secondly, the perceptions of children in relation to gender-based division of labor and gender-based occupations were examined.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The study involves a total number of 251 children with the ages 3 (n = 93, 37.1%), 4 (n = 59, 23.5%) and 5 (n = 59, 23.5%) from 4 independent preschool institutions in the central district of Kocaeli, all with permissions taken from their families. 117 children (46.6%) are boys and 134 (53.4%) are girls. While 76 (30.3%) of the mothers of the children are working women, 175 (69.7%) of them are housewives.

### **Measures**

The measurement tools used in the study were developed by the researchers. As Table 1 indicates, firstly, gender specific accessories and toys which were commonly used in relation

to gender constancy and the jobs and occupations that people do frequently in daily life were determined. Twelve different animals' figures were selected for the measurement cards in order to prevent the formation of gender-based bias in children on daily routine works and occupations. Finally, twelve different animal figures were matched with the predetermined 6 daily routine work and 6 occupations. Pictures of animals performing daily jobs and occupations were by a cartoon artist, with the guidance of the researchers. In addition, the predetermined accessories, toys and situations are depicted by the artist in black and white to prevent the formation of gender-based bias via colours. In the second stage, the opinions of six experts with PhD degrees in preschool field were taken and the measurement tool has been finalized in line with the opinions of the experts. Experts were asked to state their opinions about the items in the scale as 1- Appropriate, 2- Needs to be removed 3- Needs to be revised. The results of the Lawshe analysis were taken into account in deciding whether the items evaluated would be included in the scale while estimating the content validity. In line with the expert opinions, the Content Validity Rate (CVR) of each item was found to be 0.58 (The minimum CVR ratio that should be according to six experts is 0.56). According to Lawshe's analysis, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was found to be 0.86. Since  $CVI \geq CVR$ , the content validity of the entire scale was statistically significant.

List of gender specific accessories and toys using in relation to gender constancy and animals performing daily jobs and occupations

Genderconstancy	Animal	Daily Jobs	Animal	Occupations
Women Earring	Men Ties	Stork Cooking Donkey Cleaning (mopthe flor)	Rabbit Bear	Pilot Doctor
Doll	Toy Car	Bear Placingdishes in thedishwasher Turtle Fence painting Mouse Driving Octopus Repairing a chair	Leon Monkey Dog Fish	Tailor Nurse Fireman Teacher

### **Procedure**

Before the study, parental improvement forms were gathered from the kindergartens and those whose parents gave permission were chosen for the study. Demographic information of children was obtained from their classroom teachers. The two researchers conducted their interviews individually in the schools the children attended, in quiet rooms that would not distract children and interviews were recorded in video. At the beginning of the interview, the children were asked about their gender. The pictures of boys and girls were shown and the children were requested to tell their genders. The study continued with children who expressed correctly their gender and the gender of children in the pictures shown. The interviews took place in three stages. The children were shown pictures in relation to gender stability and gender consistency conservation, gender-based division of labor, and occupations, respectively in the three stages and they were asked to answer the questions relating to the pictures.

### **Gender stability and gender constancy conservation**

At this stage, children were asked whether they would prefer to be a father or a mother when they grew up, regarding gender stability. Then, for gender consistency in variation, they were shown black and white pictures of earring, tie, doll and car, respectively. The questions 'If a boy wears an earring, does his gender change?', 'If a girl wears a tie does her gender change?',

‘Does a boy’s gender change if he plays with a toy baby?’ and ‘Does a girl’s gender change if she plays with a toy car?’ were asked to the children along with the related pictures.

### Gender-based division of labor

At this stage, six different animal figures that perform six routine works that people do in daily life were shown to the children sequentially. The children were asked whether the gender of these animals are male or female.

### Gender-based occupations

In the last stage, six different animal figures performing six different professions were shown to the children, sequentially. The children were asked sequentially about these figures as the following; “Imagine that the bear in this card is a doctor. Do you think which could be this bear’s gender-female or male?”

## RESULTS

The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of children in early childhood on gender roles. In this context, first of all the study focused on children’s perceptions relating to gender stability and gender constancy conservation according to their age and gender factors. Since all children participated in the study gave the appropriate answer to the question about gender stability, no table was presented for that question.

**Table 1** Findings of gender constancy according to age variable

		Change		Not Change		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Earring	3 age	53	57.0	40	43.0	7.57	2	.02*
	4 age	22	37.3	37	62.7			
	5 age	40	40.4	59	53.5			
	Total	115	45.8	136	54.2			
Tie	3 age	61	65.6	32	34.4	11.3	2	.00*
	4 age	25	42.4	34	57.6			
	5 age	44	51.8	55	55.6			
	Total	130	51.8	121	48.2			
Doll	3 age	56	60.2	37	39.8	8.70	2	.01*
	4 age	23	39.0	36	61.0			
	5 age	42	42.4	57	57.6			
	Total	121	48.2	130	51.8			
Toy Car	3 age	60	64.5	33	35.5	11.0	2	.00*
	4 age	25	42.4	34	57.6			
	5 age	42	42.4	57	57.6			
	Total	127	50.6	124	49.4			

\*  $p < 0.05$

When Table 1 was examined, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the opinions of the children by age factor on boys wearing earrings, girls wearing ties, and boys playing with baby dolls and girls playing with toy cars ( $p < 0.05$ ). The majority of children in the 3-year-old group stated that if boys wear earrings (55.2%) and girls wear ties (58.0%), their gender will change. Similarly, children in the 3-year-old group thought that playing with the

opposite sex toy would change the gender compared to the children in the other groups. Some children in the 3-year-old group (3.2%) stated that under those four cases the gender would change and it would be “funny” while some 5-year-old children (12.2%) stated that the gender would not change but it would be “shameful” to do so.

**Table 2** Findings of gender constancy according to sex variable

		Change		Not Change		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Earring	Boy	58	49.6	59	50.4	1.24	1	.26
	Girl	57	42.5	77	57.5			
	Total	115	45.8	136	54.2			
Tie	Boy	61	52.1	56	47.9	.01	1	.91
	Girl	69	51.5	65	48.5			
	Total	130	51.8	121	48.2			
Doll	Boy	59	50.4	58	49.6	.43	1	.51
	Girl	62	46.3	72	53.7			
	Total	121	48.2	130	51.8			
Toy Car	Boy	61	52.1	56	47.9	.20	1	.64
	Girl	66	49.3	68	50.7			
	Total	127	50.6	124	49.4			

\*  $p < 0.05$

As Table 2 indicates, there was no significant difference in the opinions of the children, according to their gender, on boys wearing earrings, girls wearing ties and boys playing with dolls and girls playing with toy cars ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 3** Findings of gender roles according to age variable

		Men		Women		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Cooking	3 age	21	22.6	72	77.4	1.61	3	.65
	4 age	12	20.3	47	79.7			
	5 age	16	16.2	83	83.8			
	Total	49	19.5	202	80.5			
Cleaning	3 age	15	16.1	77	82.8	7.36	4	.11
	4 age	5	8.5	54	91.5			
	5 age	6	6.1	93	93.9			
	Total	26	10.4	224	89.2			
Placing dishes in the dishwasher	3 age	39	41.9	54	58.1	3.84	3	.38
	4 age	21	35.6	38	64.4			
	5 age	33	33.3	66	66.7			
	Total	93	37.1	158	62.9			
Painting	3 age	79	84.9	14	15.1	6.73	2	.03*
	4 age	56	94.9	3	5.1			
	5 age	79	79.8	20	20.2			
	Total	214	85.3	37	14.7			
Driving	3 age	79	84.9	14	15.1	3.19	2	.20
	4 age	56	94.9	3	5.1			
	5 age	79	79.8	20	20.2			

	Total	214	85.3	37	14.7			
Repairing	3 age	83	89.1	10	10.9			
	4 age	55	93.2	4	6.8	2.46	3	.48
	5 age	94	94.9	5	5.1			
	Total	232	92.4	19	7.6			

\* p<0.05

Table 3 indicates that there was a significant difference in the opinions of children about the gender of the turtle painting a fence, according to their age (p <0.05). There was no significant difference in the opinions of the children regarding the gender of the animals doing other daily activities according to their age (p>0.05). When the percentages are considered, it was seen that a very high ratio of the children expressed cooking, cleaning and placing dishes in the dishwasher as the work of women and repairing, painting and driving the car as men's work.

**Table 4** Findings of gender roles according to sex variable

		Men		Women		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Cooking	Boy	24	17.9	110	82.1	.491	1	.29
	Girl	25	21.4	92	78.6			
	Total	49	19.5	202	80.5			
Cleaning	Boy	11	9.4	106	90.6	1.59	2	.45
	Girl	17	12.7	116	86.6			
	Total	28	11.2	222	88.4			
Placing dishes in the dishwasher	Boy	40	34.2	77	65.8	.77	1	.38
	Girl	53	49.6	81	84.4			
	Total	93	37.1	158	62.9			
Painting	Boy	105	89.7	12	10.3	2.97	1	.08
	Girl	110	82.1	24	17.9			
	Total	215	85.7	36	14.3			
Driving	Boy	108	92.3	9	7.7	3.19	1	.05*
	Girl	114	85.1	20	14.9			
	Total	222	88.4	29	11.6			
Repairing	Boy	110	94.0	7	6.0	.78	1	.37
	Girl	122	91.0	12	9.0			
	Total	232	92.4	19	7.6			

\* p<0.05

When Table 4 points to the fact that there was a significant difference in the opinions of the children, according to their ages, regarding the sex of the mouse depicted while driving (p <0.05). A higher rate of girls defined driving as a boy's job as compared to the boys. However, there was no significant difference in the opinions of children regarding the gender of other animals doing daily works (p > 0.05). When the percentages were examined, it was found that a high rate of children consider cooking, cleaning, placing dishes in the dishwasher as women's job and repairing, painting and driving as men's jobs.

**Table 5** Findings of gender-based occupational roles according to age variable

		Men		Women		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Rabbit (Pilot)	3 age	76	81.7	17	18.3	2.66	2	.26
	4 age	50	84.7	9	15.3			
	5 age	89	89.9	10	10.1			

	Total	215	85.7	36	14.3			
Bear (Doctor)	3 age	73	78.5	20	21.5			
	4 age	40	67.8	19	32.2	2.16	2	.33
	5 age	73	73.7	26	26.3			
	Total	186	74.1	65	25.9			
3 age	35	37.6	58	62.4				
Leon (Tailor)	4 age	27	45.8	32	54.2	2.06	2	.35
	5 age	47	47.5	52	52.5			
	Total	109	43.4	142	56.6			
	3 age	36	38.7	57	61.3			
(Nurse)	4 age	20	33.9	39	66.1	.90	2	.63
	5 age	32	34.7	67	67.7			
	Total	88	35.1	163	64.9			
	3 age	70	81.7	17	18.3			
Dog (Fireman)	4 age	50	84.7	9	15.3	14.46	2	.00*
	5 age	61	73.8	38	38.4			
	Total	187	74.5	64	25.5			
	3 age	70	81.7	17	18.3			
Fish (Teacher)	4 age	39	66.1	20	33.9	5.34	2	.06
	5 age	49	49.5	50	50.5			
	Total	133	53.0	118	47.0			
	3 age	70	81.7	17	18.3			

\* p<0.05

As Table 5 indicates, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the views of the children on the picture of the dog with the fire-fighter profession according to their age ( $p < 0.05$ ). Children in the 5-year-old group (38.4%) stated that the fire-fighter was a girl. However, there was no significant difference in the opinions of children regarding the gender of the other professions according to their age ( $p > 0.05$ ). When the percentages in the findings were examined, it was seen that the children mostly refer to the profession of pilot, doctor, fireman and teacher as male, and the profession of nurse and tailor as female.

**Table 6** Findings of gender-based occupational roles according to sex variable

		Men		Women		$\chi^2$	sd	p
		n	%	n	%			
Pilot	Boy	100	85.5	17	14.5	.00	1	.93
	Girl	115	85.8	19	14.2			
	Total	215	85.7	36	14.3			
Doctor	Boy	87	74.4	30	25.6	.00	1	.93
	Girl	99	73.9	35	26.1			
	Total	186	74.1	65	25.9			
Tailor	Boy	52	44.4	65	55.6	.09	1	.76
	Girl	57	42.5	77	57.5			
	Total	109	43.4	142	56.6			
Nurse	Boy	35	29.9	82	70.1	2.54	1	.11
	Girl	53	39.6	81	60.4			
	Total	88	35.1	163	64.9			
Fireman	Boy	89	76.1	28	23.9	.28	1	.59
	Girl	98	73.1	36	26.9			
	Total	187	74.5	64	25.5			



Teacher	Boy	62	53.0	55	47.0			
	Girl	71	53.0	63	47.0	.00	1	.99
	Total	133	53.0	118	47.0			

\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 6 indicates the fact that no significant difference was found in the opinions of the children, according to their genders, relating to what genders the occupations were ascribed ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the perceptions of children in early childhood in view of gender conservation, gender based division of labor and occupations were examined. Firstly, the gender conservation gains of children were examined and it was found that the younger children stated that the use of belongings of the opposite gender would cause gender change in individuals. Gender conservation is seen as a process that starts at approximately 2-3 years of age and it is completed at an average age of 7 (Martin and Halverson, 1983; San Bayhan & Artan, 2004). The fact that the acquisition of gender conservation starts approximately at these ages can be an answer to reason why the 3-year-old children have lower gender conservation gain than the children in the other age groups. Similarly, in other studies, it was observed that gender conservation gain was significantly higher in children aged 4 and 5 compared to younger children (Hallim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda Shrout & Amodio, 2017; Zmyj & Bischof-Köhler, 2015).

Some 5-year-olds stated that, unlike the other two age groups, the gender would not change under the given four cases but would be “shameful” (12.2%). In Turkey, as a requirement of the faith of Islam, wearing clothes and accessories of the opposite sex is not an acceptable situation (Yalcin, 2016). Super ego in children starts to form at approximately 3-4 years of age and continues to develop with the understanding of morality that they learn from their family or community over the next few years (San Bayhan & Artan, 2004). The moral response of 5-year-olds, as compared to 3 and 4-year-olds, can be explained by their longer interaction with the culture in which they live. Furthermore, according to Fagot (1976), Fagot and Leinbach (1985), Downs and Longlois (1988), a man's crying, wearing feminine clothes and playing with dolls are frowned or condemned by his parents and peers.

No significant difference was found in the acquisition of gender conservation gains of girls and boys. In other words, the opinions of the children in both groups about playing with the toys of the opposite sex were similar. However, Hallim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda Shrout and Amodio (2017) found that boys gained gender protection earlier than girls and Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Zosuls, Lurye and Greulich, (2014) found that girls gained gender protection earlier than boys. Different results in the researches may be due to the characteristics of the groups studied.

Secondly, when the findings on the children's perceptions relating to the gender-based division of labor were examined, it was found that significant difference in the views of the children on the genders of the fence-painting animals according to their age, and on the gender of the driving animal according to gender variable. No significant difference was found between the groups of age and gender in the daily routine work other than driving. This finding is also consistent with other research conducted both in Turkey and in other countries around the world. (Ata Dogan, Atis-Akyol & Guney, 2018; Sirvanlı Ozen, 1992; Arabacıoğlu &

Kahraman, 2017; Williams Bennett & Best, 1975). When the percentages of the study were examined, it was seen that a high number of the children stated cooking, cleaning and placing dishes in the dishwasher to be female works, and repair, painting and driving to be male works. Looking at the Turkish traditional family structure, it is seen that men do jobs such as repair, garden care, and women do the jobs assigned to them such as cooking, dish washing and house cleaning (Şafak, Çopur & Özkan, 2006). In the study conducted by Vatandaş (2011) with adult men and women, it was observed that a high rate of men and women stated cooking, dishwashing and cleaning to be female works and renovation and repair works to be male works.

Hence, it is inevitable for Vatandaş's (2011) findings of the study on adults in Turkey to have similarities with the findings of this study. The cultural and social environment around a child, has also an expectation from him/her to behave and act appropriately according to their gender, and therefore social institutions impose the child gender roles and identity (Gursimsek & Gunay, 2005). Cunningham (2001) found a positive correlation between mothers' perception of gender roles and their children's gender based behaviours. Parental values, perception and expectations about gender roles, directly or indirectly affects children's gender based perceptions. Also a general survey about Turkey conducted in years of 2014-2015 by Turkish Statistical Institution, revealed that an average time per person for daily activities and responsibilities in domestic work according to gender supports findings of present research. This survey indicated that, women daily spent their time for domestic work is averagely about 3 hours 31 minutes, on the contrary men's daily times spent for the domestic work was only 46 minutes. Also women were found to take responsibilities in daily domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, washing dishes, setting the table etc. men were found to take responsibilities in repairation, painting and paying the bills.

Games and toys that prepare the child for life play an important role in learning the roles ascribed to his or her gender. For this reason, families generally prefer toys that are suitable for the gender of children from a very young age. This has been clearly demonstrated in many studies (Weisgram & Bruun, 2018). It is inevitable that children playing with toys appropriate for their gender from a young age will have a significant impact on the stereotypes of children pertaining to gender roles.

In nearly every society we can find some professions and jobs suitable especially for women or men. For centuries stereotypes in gender, lead men to public arena and professional life, science, technology, for example the words are still using for defining the professions like fireman, policeman, businessman etc... Women on the other side were seen as housewives, mothers, child carers and they were capt only in houses and restricted. Unfortunately the stereotypes on gender issues effected the selection of professions for women. (Tarhan, Çetin Gündüz & Kılıç, 2014). Finally, when the findings related to the gender-based occupational roles of the children were examined, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the children, according to their age, on the fire-fighter's gender. The children in the 5-year-old group stating the gender of the fire-fighter animal to be female was higher than the children in the 3 and 4-year-old groups. However, there was no significant difference in the opinions of children regarding the gender of the animals performing other professions according to their age and gender. When the percentages in the findings were examined, it was seen that the pilot, doctor, fireman and the teacher animals were expressed to be male while the nurse and tailor animals, to be female. In also other studies conducted in Turkey, nursing and tailoring are seen among the most feminine occupations (Vatandaş, 2011; Yağan Güder & Güler Yıldız, 2016; Karabekmez, Yıldırım, Ozyılmaz Akamca, Ellez & Bulut Uner, 2018).

When those researches are examined, it is seen that children express stereotypical opinions about occupations (Yağın Güder & Güler Yıldız, 2016).

Murray (2004) posited in his study that although the children, whose both parents are working, have stereotypical views, they have lesser stereotypical views on women and men than the children whose fathers work solely. The fact that the mothers of the majority of the children participating in our study is not working may be the reason why the children see the majority of the occupations as male profession. In the study conducted by Şirvanlı Özen (1992), it was found out that the occupational status of the mother did not affect the children's stereotypes about gender characteristics. The fact that there is no change in the stereotypes of children according to their gender may be due to their similar interpretation of their observations around them, displaying developmental characteristics appropriate to their age. Such studies in Turkey, indicated that, there isn't any difference between girls and boys in view of their gender stereotypes (Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992; Seral, 1998). Even as time passes our research had indicated that there were still no further improvement in children's views about gender stereotypes.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the perceptions of children in early childhood in relation to gender conservation, gender based division of labor and occupations were examined. Firstly, gender stability and gender constancy conservation in children were examined. All of the children were seen to have gained gender stability. While there was no significant difference in the acquisition of gender conservation according to gender; it was observed that young children did not gain gender conservation. Secondly, when the opinions of the children on the gender-based division of labor were examined, it was seen that a high ratio of children stated cooking, cleaning, placing the dishes in the dishwasher were for women and repair, painting and driving were for men. Finally, when the findings related to the gender-based occupational roles of the children were examined, it was seen that the genders of the animals depicted as pilot, doctor, fireman and teacher were male and the genders of the tailor and nurse animal was female. As a result, it was observed that unfortunately there was no change in the stereotypes of the children relating to the gender-based division of labor and gender-based occupations.

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