



## Sex stereotypes of seven-eight year old girls and boys living in urban and rural areas

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### Abstract

The present study aims to investigate into the roles of living in rural or urban areas, gender, and education level of mother in the development of sex stereotypes of seven-eight year old children about their sex traits and also into whether girls and boys are different from each other in terms of knowing about male and female stereotypes.

The statistical data of 'Sex Role Stereotype Measure II' was processed by methods of Analysis of Variance. The data gathered from villages and cities, female and male's differences and mother's educational differences were analyzed and the statistics were discussed.

The data indicated that children from cities were more sex-stereotypical than children from villages. It was determined that the male students from villages and cities were found to be more sex-stereotypical than female students. In addition to this, it was determined that sex role stereotypes of the children increased if there was more of a mother's educational level or influence.

**Key Words:** Environment, village, city, sex role stereotype.

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## 1. Introduction

Development of an individual depends on cultural development and his or her acquiring cultural values adopted by the society he or she lives in is achieved through socialization. Socialization process starts with a child's understanding of the limits between him/herself and the environment he or she lives in and discriminating his/her self from the that of the environment (Tezcan, 2005).

Family is primarily important in the socialization process of an individual. Family inoculates an individual with the rules and values of the society he or she lives in by using reward and punishment mechanisms and thus it ensures the individual's development in the direction desired by the society. Child's family and the environment in which he or she lives guides him or her to behave in accordance with the sex type he or she has and expect him or her to behave in accordance with the sex type he or she has. This causes sex stereotypes to establish in the child starting from early ages. The environment in which a person lives includes his or her family, friends, school, teachers and mass media means. Attitudes of family, teacher and peers also have influence on the child's finding what is natural and real (Wortham, 2002; Gander& Gardiner, 2004). Moreover, mass media means, too, have influence on people's thoughts and behaviors and provide various stereotypes about men and women. These stereotypes reflect images of men and women and various relationship types present in the society, and even most of the times, refresh them by emphasizing known stereotypes (Bulut & Fincancioglu 2000). Also according to Pike and Jennings (2005) commercials, present gender stereotypes and many media messages tend to reinforce gender roles.

According to William and Best (1975), general thoughts acquired about men and women are called "stereotypes about sex" and these stereotypes are defined at two different levels. Bem (1981) explains about these levels: First of these are the "stereotypes about sex-roles" which include thoughts on a lot of roles and activities considered appropriate for men and women. The second are the "stereotypes about sex-traits" which include psychological and behavioral characteristics believed to describe a sex more or less compared to the other.

According to Bem (1981), the acquisition of abilities, personal characteristics, behaviors and self-concepts in accordance with sex types is defined in psychology as "process of sex-typing."

The child learns about what it is to be a girl or a boy firstly from his or her family, and thus, first sex stereotypes start to form in family (Witt, 1997). The growing child develops behaviors similar to those exhibited by the people around him or her as a result of the interaction with them, and thus social individuals, other than separate ones, grow both different from one another and also similar to one another in many respects (Kagitcibasi, 1999). Therefore, the behaviors children learn differ from one society to another. The child learns about the behaviors imposed by the way of life he or she lives (Tezcan, 2005). That is to say, the influence of a family living in a village on the socialization of the child is different from that of the one living in a city.

In rural areas, boys and girls acquire their gender identity at early ages. Since girls have close relationship with their mothers and boys with their fathers, girls get prepared for life and learn to take on responsibilities by imitating their mothers and boys their fathers. However, in city family, mothers and fathers establish close relationships with their children and show interest to them by behaving more independently compared to their elders without abstaining from anybody (Yorukoglu, 2004). According to Cüceloglu (2002), in Turkey, sex stereotypes are more apparent especially in rural areas. The best examples of this can be found in the words such as “long haired but short minded”, “do not interfere in a man’s affair with dough on your hands”. However, in cities, as a result of education and processes of industrialization and urbanization, these stereotypes have undergone changes.

Sirvanli-Ozen (1992) found in a study on mother’s working status and sex-roles adopted by parents and development of sex-stereotypes concerning the child’s sex-traits that there was no significant difference between sexes in terms of sex stereotypes and boys compared to girls had more stereotypes. Moreover, girls and boys were found to know more about male stereotypes than female ones.

The results of a study carried out by Baykal (1988) on Turkish university students indicated that the education level of mother had no effects on the stereotypes that male and female students had about their gender and female students compared to male ones were found to have a more stereotypical view of sex-roles. However, although Temel (1991) found in a study made with 14–18 aged adolescents living in an orphanage and with their families that there was no relationship between the education level of mother and adolescents’ sex stereotypes, he also found no difference between girls and boys, in contrast to what Baykal (1988) found, in terms of having more stereotypical views of sex-roles.

However, in a study made by Karasaracoglu (1998) on sex stereotypes, it was found that sex stereotypes of children varied according to the education level of mother and the age of children. Moreover, it was found that children know better about the stereotypes pertaining to their gender.

In another study carried out by Erdogan (1999), it was found that children's sex identity acquisitions increase with increasing age and they become more aware of their sex roles and start to exhibit behaviors appropriate for girls and boys.

Barutcu (2002) found in a study on the stereotypes of six year old children about their sex traits that although there were no differences between the stereotypes of girls and boys about their sex traits, the means of the male stereotypes of girls and boys were determined to be higher than those of the female stereotypes of them. Moreover, social adjustment levels of mothers were found to have influence on the stereotypes of girls. Although no difference was determined between the educational status of mothers and the female stereotype and male stereotype scores of girls and boys, a difference was found between the total stereotype scores of girls.

When studies made on the matter were examined, it was observed that there were limited number of studies made on village and city. Although Turkey is a traditional society, a country is in a struggle for westernization. Despite the fact that some changes such as economy, urbanization, and increase observed in schooling rate are felt in every part of the society, they occur more slowly in parts attached to their traditions for dear life. Despite this, changing values in a society cause female and male stereotypes to change as well. Studies made on sex stereotypes might especially help educational institutions to understand the developmental characteristics of children. Thus, educationalists and psychologists can understand children's problems better and help them in a healthier way, and can help families to become more aware of this matter.

The present study is expected to provide parents and educationalists with information about sex stereotypes present in our society imposed on children and to make children more conscious of the behaviors and attitudes they continue to exhibit. Moreover, a study made within this frame is also expected to guide centers for psychological counseling and guidance and parent counseling centers. The present study aims to investigate into the roles of living in rural or urban areas, gender, and education level of mother in the development of sex stereotypes of seven-eight year old children about their sex traits and also into whether girls

and boys are different from each other in terms of knowing about male and female stereotypes. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following questions:

1. Are there differences between the sex stereotypes of seven-eight year old children living in rural and urban areas?
2. Do sex stereotypes of children living in rural and urban areas vary depending on their gender?
3. Do sex stereotypes of seven-eight year old children living in rural and urban areas vary depending on education level of their mothers?
4. Are girls and boys living in rural and urban areas different from each other in terms of knowing about male and female stereotypes?

## 2. Method

In this study, the survey model, which aims to describe a present situation as it is, was used.

### 2.1. Participants

The population of the study includes first and second grade seven-eight year old girls and boys studying at the public primary schools within the borders of the Bursa province during the 2006–2007 academic year.

The sample included 200 seven-eight year old children (100 girls and 100 boys) selected through random sampling from seven public primary schools.

Table I: Participant Children

The Environment Living in	Number of Children					
	Girl		Boy		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Rural Schools	48	48	52	52	100	100
Urban Schools	52	52	48	48	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100	200	100

### 2.2. Measure

In the study, in order to measure sex stereotypes of children, the “Sex Stereotypes Measure II”, developed by Williams and Bennett (1975) and finalized by Best et al. (1977), was used. Sex Stereotypes Measure II was adapted into Turkish by Sirvanli-Ozen

(1992) by making culture-specific modifications. Adjectives and stories translated into Turkish were evaluated by a board composed of specialists and the measure was finalized. In the pilot study of the measure made in the Turkish sample, the test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .74 and the split-half reliability was found to be .73 (Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992). Moreover, the fact that other researchers in Turkey have used the measure in their studies also increased the reliability of the measure (Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992; Karasaracoglu, 1998; Barutcu, 2002; Basal, 2004).

Sex Stereotypes Measure is the one including the administration of adjectives expressing sex-traits stereotypes and represented in 32 short stories accompanied by female/male silhouettes. Female and male silhouettes are placed in the middle of the cards of 25x 35 cm<sup>2</sup> in the length of 17,5 cm. Silhouettes are drawn in black on a blue surface, their facing directions and body standing forms are given differently in each picture. While the woman was on the right and the man on the left in 16 of the 32 cards, the woman was on the left and the man on the right in the other 16. The genders of the silhouettes are described with their wearing trousers or dresses and having long or short hair. 16 of the 32 adjectives representing sex-traits stereotypes indicate female stereotype adjectives and the other 16 indicate male stereotype adjectives. These sex stereotype adjectives are administered to children in 32 stories.

The “Male Stereotype Score” of a participant child is calculated by looking at the number of the times he or she thinks the adjectives in 16 stories including male sex stereotypes represent the male, and the “Female Stereotype Score” is calculated by looking at the number of the times he or she thinks the adjectives in the other 16 stories including female sex stereotypes represent the female. If a child identifies one more than half of the 16 adjectives, that is at least nine adjectives, correctly, this indicates that child has a stereotypical view, but if he or she identifies less than half of the adjectives correctly, it indicates that child has stereotypical views contrary to the traditional ones. The sum of the female and male stereotype scores belonging to a child compose “Total Stereotype Score” for that child. During the administration process of the measure, the answers of the children are recorded on “Sex Stereotype Measure Recording and Scoring Form”.

The measure was tried to be administered to the children individually in an empty room by going to the selected public primary schools on the dates of administration determined before. To prevent any bias that can be resulted from the administration, the

administration of the measure to all the children was made by the researcher. It took an average of 15-20 minutes to administer the measure to each child.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The sex stereotypes of the children participating to the study were tried to be evaluated comparatively by considering the factors such as the environment that they live in, their genders and the educational status of their mothers.

Since the groups included equal number of subjects and generally more than two groups were compared, One-Way Analysis of Variance was used, and to find which of the groups are significant, the Tukey's-HSD test was used. In statistical comparisons, the significant level was taken as .05.

### 3. Results

The statistical data indicating the total scores obtained by the participant children from the "Sex Stereotypes Measure" with respect to the environment in which they live, gender and mother's educational status are given in Table II.

Table II: The Statistical Data of Sex Stereotype Scores With Respect To The Environment in Which They Live, Gender and Mother's Educational Status

		<i>Total Scores</i>			<i>Female Scores</i>			<i>Male Scores</i>		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Environment		100	19,5	0,33	100	9,63	0,2	100	9,87	0,21
	Urban	100	21,51	0,39	100	10,69	0,24	100	10,82	0,23
Gender	Girl	100	20,36	0,36	100	10,35	0,21	100	10,01	0,21
	Boy	100	20,65	0,39	100	9,97	0,24	100	10,68	0,24
Educational Status	Elementary	116	19,65	0,31	116	9,78	0,18	116	9,87	0,2
	Secondary	12	20,3	0,94	12	9,5	0,58	12	10,83	0,62
	High School	52	21,75	0,59	52	10,88	0,37	52	10,86	0,34
	University	10	22,3	0,85	10	10,85	0,59	10	11,45	0,39

As seen in Table II, the means of the total Sex Stereotype scores were found to be 19.50 for the children living in rural areas and 21.51 for those living in urban areas and it was observed that the mean of the total sex stereotype scores of those living in urban areas was higher compared to those living in rural areas. The means of the female stereotype scores of the children participating to the study were calculated as 9,63 for those living in rural areas and 10,69 for those living in urban areas and the means of the Male Stereotype



Scores were found to be 9.87 for the children living in rural areas and 10.82 for those living in urban areas. Consequently, it was observed that the male and female stereotypes of the urban children were higher than those of the rural children. But the means of the Total Sex Stereotype scores of the girls participating to the study were found to be 20.36 and those of the Total Sex Stereotype scores of the boys were found to be 20.65. In sum, no difference was observed between the sex stereotype scores of the girls and those of the boys.

The means of the Female Stereotype scores of the participant girls were determined to be 10.35 and those of the Female Stereotype scores of the participant boys were found to be 9.97. In other words, the Female Stereotype Scores of the participant girls were observed to be higher than those of the Female Stereotypes of the participant boys. Besides the means of the girls' Male Stereotype Scores were found to be 10.01 and those of the boys' Male Stereotype Scores were found to be 10.68. In other words, the means of the boys' Male Stereotype Scores were determined to be higher than those of the girls' Male Stereotype Scores.

As the means of the participant children's total stereotype scores were determined to be 19.65 for those with elementary school graduate mothers, 20.30 for those with secondary school graduate mothers, 21.75 for those with high school graduate mothers, and 22.30 for those with university graduate mothers. In sum, the Total Sex Stereotype Scores of the participant children increased as the educational statuses of their mothers increased. The Female Stereotype Score Means of the participant children with elementary school graduate mothers were found to be 9.78, those of the ones with secondary school graduate mothers were found to be 9.50, those of the ones with high school graduate mothers were found to be 10.88, and those of the participant children with university graduate mothers were determined to be 10.85. The participant children's Female stereotype Scores increased depending on the education level of mother.

The means of the male stereotype scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were determined to be 9,87, those of the male stereotype scores of the children with secondary school graduate mothers were found to be 10,83, those of the male stereotype scores of the children with high school graduate mothers were found to be 10,86, and those of the male stereotype scores of the children with university graduate mothers were determined to be 11,45. The total stereotype scores increased depending on the education level of mother.



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The results of the Variance Analysis applied to the Sex Stereotype scores are given in Table III.

Table III: Variance Analysis of Sex Stereotype Scores With Respect To The Environment in Which They Live, Gender and Mother's Educational Status

	<i>Source of Variances</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Total Scores	Environment	202,01	1	202,01	15,05*
	Gender	4,21	1	4,21	0,29
	Educational Status	229,17	3	76,39	5,69*
Female	Environment	56,18	1	56,18	1,34*
	Gender	7,22	1	7,22	1,38*
	Educational Status	58,41	3	19,47	3,9*
Male	Environment	45,13	1	45,13	8,92*
	Gender	22,45	1	22,45	4,34*
	Educational Status	67,46	3	22,49	4,50*

\*p<.05

As seen in Table III, it was observed that the environment in which children live has a significant effect on their total sex stereotype scores at .05 level ( $F=15,05$ ). To put it differently, the levels of the sex stereotype knowledge of the children living in urban areas was found to be higher than those of the sex stereotype knowledge of the ones living in rural areas.

It was found that environment in which children live has a significant effect on their female stereotypes at a level of .05 ( $F=11,34$ ). That is to say, the means of the Female Stereotype Scores of the children living in urban areas were found to be higher than those of the Female Stereotype Scores of the children living in rural areas.

The effect of the environment on the Male Stereotype Scores of the children was found to be significant at .05 level ( $F=8,92$ ). That is to say, the male stereotype levels of urban children were higher than those of the rural children.

The effect of gender on the children's male stereotype scores was found to be significant at .05 level ( $F=4,37$ ) and the boys' male stereotype levels were determined to be higher than the girls' male stereotype levels.

The effect of mother educational status on the children's total stereotype scores was found to be significant at .05 level ( $F=5,69$ ). That is to say, the Total Sex Stereotype Scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were observed to be lower than those the children with high school graduate mothers. Moreover, the Total Sex Stereotype

Scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were observed to be lower than those of the children with university graduate mothers as well.

As shown in Table III, the effect of the mother educational level on the children's female stereotype scores was found to be significant at .05 level ( $F=3,90$ ). That is to say, the Female Stereotype Scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were observed to be lower than those of the children with high school graduate mothers. The effect of mother education level on the children's male stereotype scores was found to be significant at .05 level ( $F=4,50$ ). To put it differently, the Male Stereotype Scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were found to be lower than those of the children with high school graduate mothers. Moreover, the Male Stereotype Scores of the children with elementary school graduate mothers were found to be lower than those of the children with university graduate mothers as well.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study tried to examine the effects of environment, gender and mother educational status on seven-eight year old children's knowledge of sex stereotypes and if the levels of children's knowledge of female and male stereotypes vary according to their gender.

##### **4.1.Effect of Environment on Children's Knowledge of Sex Stereotypes**

From the findings obtained from this study, we can conclude that urban children have more stereotypical views regarding sex-roles than rural ones. According to the findings obtained from studies made in previous years, generally families living in rural areas spend effort to have their children develop different sex roles which they and environment expect girls and boys to, and for this reason, sex stereotypes of people living in rural areas are observed to be more apparent. However, sex stereotypes are observed to be flexible in urban areas due to industrialization, urbanization and level of education (Kagıtcıbası, 1999; Kagıtcıbası and Ataca, 2005). However, nowadays, due to the progressive proliferation of gender disorders (homosexuality, transvestism, transsexualism, etc.) or the proliferation of unbiased approaches to sexual preference and the increase observed in the presence of the adults making these different sexual preferences in big cities and in society more than before, and the fact that they have come to the fore especially on mass media means such as newspapers, magazines and television, parents of urban children might have started to

become more anxious about the matter. For this reason, we consider that parents do their best to have their daughters and sons adopt the roles appropriate for their genders starting from early ages. Moreover, the children living in rural areas make us consider that they have learned about the roles appropriate for their genders through the tasks they have undertaken at home. For boys are directed towards the tasks considered to be male-specific and girls are directed towards those regarded as female-specific. Moreover, children spend the rest of the day outside of work by playing outside with their peers and generally with their fellows. For this reason, rural children learn about roles appropriate for their genders in due course by undertaking tasks assigned and observing people around.

#### **4.2. Effect of Gender on Children's Knowledge of Sex Stereotypes**

Another finding obtained from the study is that no significant difference was observed between the girls and the boys regarding the development of sex stereotypes. This finding matches up with those obtained from the studies made on this matter (Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992; Temel, 1991; Karasaracoglu, 1998; Barutcu, 2002; Basal, 2004). In addition to this, Ozdemir (2006) found that there is a change according to age.

Since both the girls and the boys participating to the study have undergone the same developmental process during the same period of time, they have developed sex stereotypes in the same manner. The children having undergone normal sexual development process play games and choose toys, computer games, television shows appropriate for their gender (Jacklin, DiPietro and Maccoby, 1984; O'Brien and Huston, 1985; Gökaya, 1994; Cherney and London, 2006; Alexander, Wilcox and Woods, 2009).

#### **4.3. Levels of Children's Knowledge of Female and Male Stereotypes**

The findings obtained from the study indicated that there was a difference between the levels of the children's knowledge of female and male stereotypes. Male stereotypes are better known by both girls and boys compared to female stereotypes. This finding appears to provide support to those obtained from some other studies (Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992; Barutcu, 2002).

The finding obtained with respect to the fact that male stereotypes are known more than female stereotypes can be considered to be related to the fact that more importance is attached to the picking of male stereotypes both in Turkish culture and other cultures. Moreover, in our society, there is a tendency towards a desire that boys should become more

characters that are dominant. As a result of this, the roles which are thought to be specific to boys are emphasized more at early ages, and for this reason, boys compared to girls attempt to spend the socialization process by showing more adherence to sex stereotypes. In sum, since the importance and value attached by the society to males are stronger and more emphasized, it makes us consider that both girls and boys are able to learn about male stereotypes more easily and better by observing their environment.

#### **4.4. Effect of Mother Educational Status on Children's Knowledge of Sex Stereotypes**

The findings obtained from this study indicated that sex stereotypes of the children increased with the increasing mother educational level. In some studies, it was determined that stereotypical behaviors of children decreased with the increasing mother education level (Baykal, 1988; Temel, 1991). However, parallel to the result obtained from this study, in recent years, especially in the studies made in Turkey, the stereotypes of the children of the women with higher education were found to be higher (Karasaracoglu, 1998). Moreover, no differentiation was determined between the developments of the stereotypes of the children having mothers with higher education and those of the children with working mothers (Barutcu, 2002; Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992).

Nowadays, gender identity disorders have become the phenomena that can be talked easily, discussed in media organs and films, and started to be accepted by most societies. Mothers with higher education and working mothers know that this has to do with not only biological reasons but also with familial and environmental factors. For this reason, they might be approaching to their children with more stereotypical views. However, mothers with lower educational levels might be unaware of different gender identities and believe that their children will learn about their sex stereotypes within the course of time. This might cause mothers with lower educational levels to play a more passive role in their children's acquiring sex stereotypes. Moreover, in a study by Kandiyoti (1982), too, mothers were determined to have more stereotypical views about sex-roles than their daughters. That is to say, no matter how well-educated mothers are, they have stereotypical attitudes resulting from their own children and they reflect this on their children as well (cited by Sirvanli-Ozen, 1992). Moreover, since environment has effect on children, they might have less stereotypical views about their sexes.

From the study, it appeared that the means of the total stereotype scores obtained by the urban children from the measure were higher than those the total stereotype scores of the rural children. Moreover, gender was determined to have no significant effect on the children's total stereotype scores. Besides this, an increase was observed in the means of the total stereotype scores obtained by the children from the measure depending on mother educational status.

## **5. Suggestions**

Families inoculate children with the rules and values of the society in which they live by approving and rewarding the behaviors appropriate for their gender and by disapproving and generally responding negatively to those inappropriate for their gender. Thus, they make sure that children develop in a way desired by the society and expect them to behave in accordance with their own gender type. This causes sex stereotypes to occur in children starting from early ages.

Families having an important effect on sex stereotypes of children should be made conscious of this matter. In this respect, the attitudes and behaviors of parents about female and male roles should be investigated and parents counseling centers from which parents can get help and Parents Schools giving service within the structure of schools and public education centers should be able to play an effective role in both rural and urban areas.

The effect of mass media means on the society is important as well. Benefiting from this, instructional programs and panel discussions can be arranged to enlighten people about sex stereotypes and columnists can publish articles on this matter. Moreover, this matter can be paid attention to in the books and programs read and watched by children. Thus, children can be helped to acquire enough knowledge about sex stereotypes and to develop in social, cultural and professional areas.

Investigating and evaluating the attitudes and behaviors of educationalists in terms of sex stereotypes and acquainting them with this matter through in-service trainings will make it easier for them to give more healthy education. Moreover, instructing educationalists is important in terms of children and families' keeping up with the changing structure of the society more easily.

Within the scope of the vocational guidance that provides guidance service at schools, the possible effects of sex stereotypes of children on their choice of profession can

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be prevented and they can be helped to choose the profession appropriate for them without differentiating between sexes.

Nowadays, both in other societies and in our society, the changing statuses of woman and man can have effects on sex stereotypes. In this respect, the examination of sex stereotypes from different points of view is primarily important for educational institutions and Centers for Psychological Counseling and Guidance taking on the task of raising children. It is important these institutions should investigate into and evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of children regarding female and male stereotypes in terms of finding solutions to problems.

Further studies can include new variables, which are considered to have effects on sex stereotypes, such as different socio-economic levels of families and parents' perceptions of their own genders.

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