

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN CHILDHOOD ESTEREOTIPOS DE GÉNERO EN LA INFANCIA ESTEREÓTIPOS DE GÊNERO NA INFÂNCIA

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the stereotypes, around gender, that exist among the Early Childhood Education students from different educational centers in the Region of Murcia (Spain). For this, the tastes and preferences of students from a gender perspective have been analyzed, the use of school spaces and materials has been identified from the gender perspective, as well as the interactions and socio-educational relationships between boys and girls in the school context.

Through a mixed methodology, the questionnaire and observation have been used as a school instrument and data collection method. The total sample of this study has been made up of 175 boys and girls belonging to different educational centers in the Region of Murcia.

The results obtained show that both girls and five-year-old boys - in the sample - have several of the typified stereotypes assigned to each sex: they play and, in addition, want to play, with different toys depending on their sex ; they use different spaces in the classroom, thus, while they prefer to play in the symbolic corner, they do it in the corner of the buildings.

Therefore, it is evident that patriarchy is still latent in small things, in the differentiation of activities, language, the performance of household chores, games and toys ..., which together cause the perpetuation of a sexist stereotype that conditions our lives since we are born. On the other hand, it's affirmed that educational centers become one of the most relevant areas as it acts both as a reproducer of behaviors and as a regulator of them. In addition, making this situation visible from childhood makes it possible to instill tolerant, egalitarian, and democratic values in girls and boys that refuse to differentiate people because they are of one sex or the other.

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<p>PALABRAS CLAVE: estereotipos coeducación igualdad educación valores sexismo</p>	<p>RESUMEN: En este artículo se analizan los estereotipos, en torno al género, existentes entre el alumnado de Educación Infantil de diferentes centros educativos de la Región de Murcia (España). Para ello, se han analizado los gustos y preferencias del alumnado desde la perspectiva de género, se ha identificado el uso de espacios y materiales escolares desde la óptica del género, así como examinado las interacciones y relaciones socioeducativas entre niños y niñas en el contexto escolar.</p> <p>Mediante una metodología mixta se ha utilizado el cuestionario y la observación como instrumento escolar y método de recogida de datos. La muestra total de este estudio ha estado constituida por 175 niños y niñas pertenecientes a diferentes centros educativos de la Región de Murcia.</p> <p>Los resultados obtenidos ponen de manifiesto que tanto las niñas como los niños de cinco años de edad –de la muestra– poseen varios de los tipificados estereotipos asignados a cada sexo: juegan y, además, desean jugar, con juguetes diferentes según cual sea su sexo; utilizan, en el aula, espacios diferentes, así, mientras que ellas prefieren jugar en el rincón simbólico, ellos lo hacen en el rincón de las construcciones.</p> <p>Por tanto, se evidencia que el patriarcado sigue estando latente en las pequeñas cosas, en la diferenciación de actividades, el lenguaje, la realización de las tareas del hogar, en juegos y juguetes..., que unidas provocan la perpetuación de un estereotipo sexista que condiciona nuestras vidas desde que nacemos. Por otro lado, se afirma que los centros educativos se convierten en uno de los ámbitos más relevantes pues actúa tanto de reproductor de conductas como de regulador de las mismas. Además, hacer visible esta situación desde la infancia, permite inculcar en las niñas y en los niños unos valores tolerantes, igualitarios y democráticos que rechacen diferenciar a las personas por el hecho de ser de un sexo o de otro.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: estereótipos co-educação igualdade educação valores sexismo</p>	<p>RESUMO: Este artigo analisa os estereótipos sobre gênero existentes entre os estudantes de Educação Infantil de diferentes centros educacionais da Região de Múrcia (Espanha). Para isso, foram analisados os gostos e preferências dos alunos na perspectiva de gênero, o uso de espaços e materiais escolares na perspectiva de gênero, bem como as interações e relações socioeducativas entre meninos e meninas no contexto escolar.</p> <p>Por meio de metodologia mista, o questionário e a observação foram utilizados como instrumento escolar e método de coleta de dados. A amostra total deste estudo foi composta por 175 meninos e meninas pertencentes a diferentes centros educacionais da região de Múrcia.</p> <p>Os resultados obtidos mostram que meninas e meninos de cinco anos - na amostra - têm vários dos estereótipos tipificados atribuídos a cada sexo: brincam e, além disso, querem brincar, com brinquedos diferentes, dependendo do sexo; eles usam espaços diferentes na sala de aula, portanto, embora prefiram brincar no canto simbólico, fazem-no no canto dos edifícios.</p> <p>Portanto, é evidente que o patriarcado ainda é latente em pequenas coisas, na diferenciação de atividades, linguagem, desempenho de tarefas domésticas, jogos e brinquedos ..., que juntos causam a perpetuação de um estereótipo sexista que condiciona nossas vidas desde que nascemos. Por outro lado, afirma-se que os centros educacionais se tornam uma das áreas mais relevantes, pois atuam como reprodutores de comportamento e como reguladores deles. Além disso, tornar essa situação visível desde a infância torna possível inculcar valores tolerantes, igualitários e democráticos em meninas e meninos que se recusam a diferenciar as pessoas por serem de um sexo ou outro.</p>

1. Introduction

School, as a key socializing agent, is one of the most relevant contexts to study the potential reproduction of sexist stereotypes in our boys and girls, as it is arguably *one of the most important and influential educational contexts where our boys and girls- our societies' future- are developed* (Pinedo, Arroyo & Berzosa, 2018, p. 47). For this reason, it is indispensable to approach two concepts: sex and gender. Both constitute different realities which are often mistaken and used interchangeably. It is essential to take into consideration that the concept of gender arose as a result of the constant search by the feminist movement of the reasons for the existence of inequalities between men and women. (Marugán Pintos, 2020).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2000), “sex” is referred to biological and physiological characteristics which define men and women, that is, it represents the individuals physical appearance and it is of an individual nature. On the other hand, “gender” is defined as the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for each sex. In this sense, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) published in the year 2010 an essay titled Media Reference Guide where both concepts are differentiated. The first of them, sex, is assigned at birth, while the second- gender- is defined as the internalized feeling of a person as a man, woman, boy or girl (GLAAD, 2010). Gender is a social construct, a combination of differentiated norms for

each sex created depending on their necessities and imposed on to individuals since their birth, becoming their identification model. Both- men and women, boys and girls- have developed positive and negative values. Gabriel Cebrián and Huertas Fuentes (2001) highlight for women positive values like affection, tenderness and sensitivity and negative ones like sentimentalism, the lack of emotional response as a necessary defense or submission, among others.

With respect to men, some positive values, such as the capacity of standing up for themselves, action and dynamism are highlighted, whereas impulsiveness, physical abuse and identifying decision as a synonym of domination are found among the negative ones. These stereotypical values for men and women are more acute in rural contexts where, to a great extent, they are preserved and where the patriarchal system is still really prevalent (Ospina García, 2018; González Pozuelo, 2008).

Women's rights, values and needs have gradually evolved to the present day. Likewise, the value granted to the equality between sexes has increased considerably, becoming one of the most important concerns in our society, being nowadays recognized as a worldwide problem and a serious obstacle for development and peace (Alaya Salgado y Hernández Moreno, 2012, p. 2). As Colás Bravo and Jiménez Cortés (2006) state, the introduction of gender perspective in different scopes of life represents now an issue of great interest, both from a political and scientific as well as an educational and instructional standpoint. In the case of -compulsory- education, as López-Navajas (2014) points out, it is a *fundamental milestone in the dissemination of knowledge and historical references, as well as the development of personal and social identities* (p. 286). In this regard, schools constitute significant social spaces, being the foundations for the transmission of cultural gender patterns, and the transformation of these into positive and desirable values (Colás Bravo, 2007). In them, the established cultural standards and patterns are expressed and transmitted, and therefore, they represent the appropriate setting to promote and foster gender equality¹. For this reason, during the development of the study which we are acknowledging throughout this article, the educational center has been pinpointed as the subject of analysis, observing and analyzing how those different cultural models are developed in boys and girls (Castilla Pérez, 2008; Autonomous Community of Andalusia, 2005; Díaz-Pinés Sendra en 2010, CEIP Pablo Picasso, 2010, among others).

On the other hand, and regarding sexism in games and toys selection by the youngest children, the study carried out by Puerta Sánchez and González Barea (2015) as well as the one conducted by Castillo Viera and Tornero Quiñones (2012) determine that both boys and girls play very different games. The differences stem from the gender structures in game and toy choices, as well as the representation of characters (symbolic play).

In this sense, Lera Rodríguez (2002) highlights that gender segregation has its origins during Preschool Education, when boys and girls begin to select their peers for their games in such a way that they end up playing separately and playing different games.

Regarding the type of games, Hernández García, Peña Calvo and Rodríguez Meléndez (2004) and Subirats Martori and Tomé González (2007) also point out that boys are more keen on playing sports like football, during recess, while girls have more diverse preferences in their recreational choices.

With regard to girls, their recreational activities are characterized by household-related ones, caring and beauty, whereas in the case of boys, traits like power and domination, competitiveness and independence are revealed. Likewise, and concerning the use that each of them make of the materials, girls tend to play the role of moms, babies and princesses, valuing physical beauty, utilizing the objects of the construction corner (bars, specifically) as kitchen utensils. As for boys, they model themselves after superheroes, monsters, gunmen and cowboys. As these studies show, sexism and sexist behaviors have their origin in gender stereotypes which also reinforce the former and which impair the acknowledgement of capacities, necessities, opinions, etc., in an individualized way. (Europe's Council, 2019).

On the other hand, and regarding decoration, as Marín Gil (2014) highlights, visual culture also reproduces stereotypes, conveying certain information in an explicit manner. According to this author, in the photos and pictures that surround Preschool students, numerous images which depict the traditional and male-centered vision of the genre can be found. This reproduction of stereotypes gears us implicitly towards the hidden curriculum. In this regard, Pinedo, Arroyo and Berzosa (2018) in their research on the capacity of the teaching staff to detect situations of inequality and symbolic violence in relation to gender, stress the necessary attention that should be paid to the *use of materials which convey ideas which discriminate, make invisible and subtly or indirectly harm women* (p. 37).

In a different sense, and regarding the kind of relationships and interactions existing between girls and boys, it is worth mentioning the research conducted by Monjas Casares (2004), which concludes that boys consolidate a dominant and aggressive style of relations while girls play a rather passive role as a consequence of the evolutionary development of gender socialization.

Therefore, the naturalization and biological determinism of a socially constructed organization which generalizes male and female behaviors which are in turn stereotyped, asymmetrical, and hierarchical... unequal is evidenced.

In this gender socialization is where the patriarchy is supported to perpetuate itself, creating *social environments predominantly masculine and feminine* (Marugán Pintos, 2020, p. 207). This shift in focus to the patriarchal social phenomena, together with globalized struggles, of an intersectional and intergenerational nature, and where diversity, technology and sustainability are acknowledged and taken into consideration as contemporary trademarks, conform what we know as fourth-wave feminism² (Valera, 2020).

Bearing in mind all the above mentioned, the general objective of the present study is to analyze gender stereotypes which exist among children's education students. For its accomplishment, three more specific goals are included:

- 1) Describing the interests and preferences of the pupils from a gender perspective;
- 2) Identifying the use of school areas and materials from a gender perspective and
- 3) Reviewing the socio-educative interactions and relationships between boys and girls in the school context.

2. Methodology

This study is framed- following Hayman (1991), within the educational research whose purpose is comprehend, explain, and predict human behavior. Within these parameters, a mixed methodology which combines the quantitative and qualitative method (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson, 2993) is utilized, allowing the implementation of varied research techniques and instruments, as reality is not only conformed by data, but also by facts or situations (Rivero Fernández, 2008).

Sample

The total sample in the study has consisted of 175 boys and girls belonging to educational centers of the Region of Murcia. After experimental mortality, the sample was reduced to 158 subjects, 79.7%

of whom were educated in public schools and more than half of which (56.3% vs. 43.7%) were boys. The pupils taking part were distributed in classrooms belonging to the third year of the second cycle of Childhood education (5 years old), which results in five different schools and 8 classrooms of the above-mentioned educational level.

Instruments

For data collection, a questionnaire form completed by the pupils along with the use of classroom observation techniques have been utilized. First, with regard to the questionnaire, Martin Arribas (2004) considers it the most widespread technique in research works, *as it allows a greater number of participants and simplifies the analysis process* (p. 23). On the other hand, observational methodology *proposes the systematic observation of reality and its purpose is that of the analysis of a subject's behavior in a given environment* (López-Fehal & Losada López, 2003, p. 67).

The questionnaire has been adapted to the psycho-evolutionary characteristics of the population surveyed (letter, color, language), including certain images due to the power they have in creating stereotypes (López-Navajas, 2014). Also, it contains a series of multiple-choice questions (Aignerén, 2005). After identifying the sex of the informant person, we find the following questions:

1. Picture of a boy and a girl, with the aim of getting them to communicate whether they feel comfortable with their genetic sex.
2. Choosing their two favorite toys, which will allow us to know their play preferences.
3. Animation characters. Different scenes and animation movie characters are presented. Their answers show their desirable values.
4. What they want to be when they grow up. They will have to draw the job that they would like to do. Moreover, it offers information about the potentially stereotyped use of colors.
5. 5/6. Housework. The fifth and sixth question answer have the same pictures: a sexless character doing ordinary house chores. The boys and girls can decide which chores they would have to learn to help mom- Question number 5- and dad- question number 6- at home. These questions will provide information about the pupils' viewpoint on who should be in charge of different house chores.
7. Favorite color. We want to check if the prototypical *pink for girls and blue for boys* preference is actually developed.

8. Cartoons. They have to choose among the different options the animation series they watch more regularly. This will provide information on their preferences, as each of those cartoons features different storylines and situations, which imply different personalities, and which may or may not match those which they are socially determined by.

Regarding observation, a series of categories devoted to expand upon and corroborate the information compiled in the questionnaires, like the type of relations and interactions existing between boys and girls in the classroom, the use they make of language, spaces, toys and materials in the classroom, were selected, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Classroom Observation. Categories

Categories	
Relationships between sexes. Interactions between boys and girls	Relationships and interactions in the classroom, focusing on both work and play scenarios in areas and the playground. Existence of relationships based on power and authority, gender role differentiation, among others.
Children's use of the language	Use of gender-neutral language to refer to the group, address the teachers, etc.
Children's use of the different areas	Preferences regarding the use of the different classroom and school areas.
El uso de los materiales por parte del alumnado.	Preferencias con respecto al uso de los diferentes materiales del aula y del centro educativo.
Children's use of materials	Those aspects not included in the rest of the categories are described (color of materials, clothing...)
Source: Personal compilation.	

Procedure

The sequencing of this research follows a series of phases (Rodríguez Gómez, Gil Flores & García Jiménez, 1996):

- (1) First phase: Preparatory. Bibliographical review around the subject of study, which has been transversal throughout the entire research.
- (2) Second phase: Field Research. Elaboration of the instruments for data collection, being these validated by experts. Elaboration of

the methodological framework in which the study is supported and the selection of the educational centers participating. The election of schools has not been of a random nature, but the result of a series of conditioning factors:

- a. their geographical location: all the centers are located in the area of the Northwest of the Region of Murcia, defined as the largest zone of those eminently rural in this autonomous community³ (a higher likelihood of evidence of a patriarchal system).



Region of Murcia

Northwest Area⁴

- b. The variability of educational institutions (public vs private) and, finally
- c. The willingness of the centers to take part in the study.

During this phase, the classroom observation was carried out. Classrooms belonging to the third year of this stage were selected. It is the most appropriate age for students to have developed their own interests and preferences, and also to be able to complete the questions in the form. Each one of those schools was visited for a period of 20 hours. The forms were completed by our informants.

- (3) Third phase: Analytical. The analysis of the data collected, and the results obtained was carried out, interrelating them with the reference framework.
- (4) Fourth phase: Informational. Obtaining conclusions and elaboration of the report.

Data Analysis

On the one hand, for the organization of quantitative data, we employed the statistic package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 2.0), one of the most widespread worldwide, especially in fields such as Economy, Health Sciences or Education (Serrano Pastor y Sánchez Rodríguez, 2009). In this sense, with respect to the matrix, the questionnaire employed consists of 10 variables.

On the other hand, in order to organize the qualitative data, the discourse analysis technique has been suggested. It is composed of a series of categories of analysis (See Table 1) in which those relevant aspects for the research were noted down. We show our agreement with Santander Molina (2011), who states that reading discourses involves an interpretation of the social reality and puts forward a new perspective concerning the subjects of study.

3. Results

The data are analyzed taking into consideration the objectives detailed in this work and which have determined its development.

Regarding the interests and preferences of pupils, from a gender perspective, it is worth noticing that a vast majority, specifically 61.4% of students surveyed show a preference for the masculine sex, while 38.6% opts for the feminine.

However, if we consider the sex of the person answering this question, we observe that the 61 (38.6%) subjects who declared they would have preferred to be a girl, actually are a girl, being the remaining two thirds boys who would have

preferred to be the opposite sex. On the other hand, within the 97 individuals (61.4%) whose preference was given to the masculine sex, 86 were boys and 11, girls. It could be observed that male pupils were more reluctant towards the feminine than in the opposite case.

Table 2. Item # 1. I would have liked to be...

	Frequency	Percentage
Boy	61	38,6
Girl	97	61,4
Total	158	100

Source: Personal compilation.

About the question referred to the choice of toys, they show a clear preference for toys like the ball and the bicycle (38.9%) over the rest of dichotomies.

Table 3. Item # 2. Color the two toys you like the most

Toys	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Ball and Teddy Bear	15	9,5	9,6
Ball and Bicycle	61	38,6	38,9
Ball and Toy Kitchen	5	3,2	3,2
Ball and Puzzles	5	3,2	3,2
Teddy Bear and Bicycle	14	8,9	8,9
Teddy Bear and Toy Kitchen	15	9,5	9,6
Teddy Bear and Puzzles	11	7,0	7,0
Bicycle and Toy Kitchen	11	7,0	7,0
Bicycle and Puzzles	12	7,6	7,6
Toy Kitchen and Puzzles	8	5,1	5,1
Total	157	99,4	100
Missing Values	1	,6	
Total	158	100	

Source: Personal compilation.

In this case, if we perform the contingency between the answers to this question and the sex of the informant person, out of those who chose the ball and the bicycle as their favorite toys, 54 are boys and 7 girls. In the case of the latter, their preferences are more diverse, being the most popular the cuddly bear and the toy kitchen, with a total of 14 girls and only one boy.

In the third question, a series of animation characters were introduced. As we can observe in the following table, the majority of the pupils show a preference for the *knight*, whereas a minority would like to be the *wizard* (10.8%) or a *squirrel* (10.2%).

Table 4. Item # 3. Circle the character that you would like to be

Characters		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	Cinderella	22	13,9	14,0
	Knight	64	40,5	40,8
	Male/Female Wizard	17	10,8	10,8
	Snow white	38	24,1	24,2
	Squirrel	16	10,1	10,2
	Total	157	99,4	100,0
	Missing	System	1	,6
Total		158	100,0	
Source: Personal compilation.				

If we perform the contingency between the results obtained and the sex of the informant subjects, out of the 40.5% of them, almost all are boys, with only one girl who chose to be a knight. However, in the case of the second most popular option, *Snow White*, out of the 38 children who opted for this character, 37 were girls and just one boy. Likewise, as we can check in table 4, boys are indecisive between choosing *knight* or *wizard*, whereas girls are indecisive between *Snow White* and *Cinderella*.

Fourthly, we highlight the question referred to the job the pupil would like to do in the future. A diversity of answers has been obtained, due to its open character.

Table 5. Item # 4. Draw what you would like when you grow up.

Job	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher	8	5,1
Princess/Prince	12	7,6
Painter	3	1,9
Footballer	19	12,0
Doctor	10	6,3
Pirate	1	,6
Police Officer	21	13,
Singer	1	,6
Soldier	2	1,3
Snow White	1	,6
Queen/ King	7	4,4
Pilot	1	,6
Fire Fighter	5	3,2
Driver	3	1,9
Inventor	1	,6
Veterinarian	6	3,8
Nurse	4	2,5
Bullfighter	7	4,4
Mermaid	1	,6
Hunter	1	,6
Florist	1	,6
Wizard	2	1,3
Fairy	1	,6
Spaceman/Spacewoman	2	1,3
Waiter/Waitresses	1	,6
Laborer	1	,6

Job	Frequency	Percentage
Horse Rider	4	2,5
Strongman/ Strongwoman	2	1,3
Hairdresser	6	3,8
Actor/Actress	1	,6
Ship's Captain	1	,6
Chef	4	2,5
Diver	1	,6
Handyman/ handywoman	1	,6
Knight	1	,6
Cashier	1	,6
Cobbler	1	,6
Crane Driver	1	,6
Soldier	1	,6
Midwife	1	,6
Boxer	1	,6
Tractor driver	1	,6
Getting married	1	,6
Chef	1	,6

As we can observe, there are several jobs which stand out above the others, like police officer (13.3%), footballer (12%), prince or princess (7.6%) and doctor (6.3%). Some professions have only been chosen by one or two informants, among which we highlight male or female cleaners, boxers, tractor drivers or soldier, with a 0.6% each. Like in the former cases, a contingency between sex and data obtained in the question has been carried out. In the first place, with regard to the *police officer* job, of the 21 answers, only 4 corresponded to girls; in the case of the *footballer*, of the 19 pupils who chose it, 17 were boys. However, in the last one, that is *princess or prince*, only a boy was found, being the rest (11) girls.

The second to last question the students answered addressed their favorite color. In this occasion, we find really close results between three of the suggested colors. A 26.6% of pupils shows a preference for red, 25.3% has a predilection for pink and 24.7% opts for green. On the other hand, just 7 of the surveyed pupils chose orange (4.4%).

Table 6. Item # 7. Circle your favorite color.

Colors	Frequency	Percentage
Red	42	26,6
Green	21	13,3
Blue	39	24,7
Yellow	9	5,7
Pink	40	25,3
Orange	7	4,4
Total	158	100

Moreover, if we carry out the contingency between these results and the informant subjects' sex, we check that there is a parity between the number of boys who prefer red color (36) and of girls who opted for pink, 36 as well. The main difference is that, for the first- red- a total of 6 girls opted for it, whereas only three boys chose pink. With regard to boys, we can observe that their most popular choice does not corroborate the stereotype that *blue is for boys and pink is for girls*.

While it is true that this- blue- is the second most popular option among boys, it is also the second most popular for girls.

Finally, in the eight question, referred to the choice of their favorite animation characters, the following results were obtained.

Table 7. Item # 8. Circle your favorite animation character.

Cartoons	Frequency	Percentage
Sendokai	67	42,4
Dora the Explorer	23	14,6
Calliou	10	6,3
Peppa Pig	39	24,7
Dinosaur Train	19	12,0
Total	158	100

As it can be observed in the former table, the majority of the pupils show a preference for the *Sendokai* animation characters (42.4%), followed by *Peppa Pig* (24.7%). On the other hand, the least popular animation characters among the pupils (specifically, only 10 of the surveyed subjects) is *Caillou*, with a 6.3%.

The contingency between sex and this question reflects that of the 42.4% who chose *Sendokai*, 54 were boys and 13 girls. For the latter, their favorite choice is Peppa Pig, being the one chosen by 22 of the 29 girls who completed the form. Finally, with respect to this animation character, 17 boys also singled it out as their favorite choice.

Regarding the use of school spaces and materials among boys and girls, the data reveal that in 62.5% of the classrooms, girls show a predilection for the symbolic corner or the little house, as well as artistic creations or costumes. Likewise, an overall preference for the building corner was observed among boys.

Regarding the theme, it has been noticed that boys are reluctant to play in the symbolic corner, and when they do, they do not usually employ the materials with their most common use; instead, they use them to invent their own war games, cars or dinosaurs, as it happens with the building corner, where they use blocks or plastic pieces to make weapons. Concerning girls, and in spite of their preferences, they play in the corner which they have been told to or assigned to, although they use any opportunity to go to the symbolic corner, to see what their female classmates are doing.

Regarding games in the recess, it has been noticed that both boys and girls use the area in the same way, depending on the activity they are performing. Likewise, both girls and boys tend to play games which involve running, jumping and shouting, while it is also true that they make a more frequent use of the resources that can be found in the playgrounds (slides, seesaws, etc.).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that with respect to the clothes they wear or materials that pupils carry with them in the classroom, in 100% of the cases, pink and princesses are used for the clothes and lunchboxes of girls, and 100% of heroes and animation characters which are not princes are featured in dark colors like red or navy blue in the case of boys. Moreover, it is noticeable that in 37.5% of the sample, the teacher has established a color for the children's smock, regardless of their sex; in the rest, however, pink and blue prevail.

Regarding the socio-educative interactions and relations between girls and boys, it can be noted that in the majority of the cases, specifically an 87.5%, students prefers unisex relations, that is, only with member of their own sex. The rest, 12.5% matches with classroom nº 5, where there are only 2 girls and where one socializes amply with the boys, whereas the other prefers to play with girls of other groups.

Moreover, it is worth highlighting the fact that, when boys and girls do play together, they take part in games which involve races or strength, never in calm and slow-paced games which imply traits like sensitivity, caring or any other characteristic stereotypically connected with the feminine. On the other hand, in 87.5% of the cases, boys are the ones who strive for attention and leadership, more even so than girls, who tend to go rather unnoticed. However, it bears noting that when they perform tasks together, it is the girls who look for controlling the situation. Disputes or arguments tend to occur more often within pupils of the same sex, being the boys more aggressive in their way of solving their conflicts than girls, and which is usually due to involuntarily hitting each other or when arguing about possessions.

Finally, in the framework of social interactions among the students from a gender perspective, the language used to refer to one or another sex also plays an important role in the construction of equality. In this sense, it needs to be stressed that an 87.5% of male and female students do not distinguish between *female and male friends* or between *female and male classmates*, using a gender-neutral language instead (just classmates, friends, children...). Likewise, in 100% of the cases, they use the term *parents* when they refer to their family unit as a whole, unless they are talking about one or the other separately.

4. Discussion

The data collected prove that both girls and boys aged 5 show a number of the typified stereotypes associated to either sex.

In this sense, firstly, and addressing the first specific goal of the present research- *Describing the interests and preferences of the pupils from a gender perspective*-, the idea that girls are more likely to approach the *masculine* than the other way around is corroborated. Boys, on the other hand, are rather reluctant to relate to whatever they do not consider inherent to their sex. Furthermore, another fact which supports this conclusion is the selection that either sex has made of their favorite toys. In this regard, we second the results of the study carried out by Puerta Sánchez and González Barea (2015), as well as the one conducted by Castillo Viera and Tornero Quiñones (2012) in which it is concluded that the games and toys which are chosen by boys and girls reveal sexist stereotypes, being related the ones selected by girls to the domestic, caring and beauty, whereas boys opt for power, competitiveness and independence.

On the other hand, with respect to the characters preferred by the pupils, according to the results obtained, it is proven that sexist stereotypes are perpetuated in said choice. It is especially relevant that girls preferred being the Cinderella which appears in the image (moping the floor) than being a squirrel, a knight, or a female wizard. In close relation to this aspect is the role that cartoons play in the formation of stereotypes. After surveying which animation characters were more popular among the children, Sendokai (41.4%) stood out- being 13 girls and 54 boys-. For the first, it was *Peppa Pig* their favorite animation character (31.8%), which also was the boys' second choice (19.1%). It should be stressed that sexism present in children's tales and cartoons influences enormously the preferences of girls and boys of the third year of the second cycle of Childhood Education participating in the sample, according to the exposed by Marín Gil (2014).

With respect to the second specific objective of the present study- *identifying the use of school areas and materials in children from a gender perspective*-, the data obtained corroborate that boys and girls use different areas of the classroom (Puerta Sánchez and González Barea, 2015; Castillo Viera and Tornero Quiñones, 2012). While girls prefer playing in the symbolic corner, they do so in the construction corner. Moreover, they also use the materials differently, as both girls and boys replace the use those materials are originally conceived for by other which fit their preferences (using toy kitchen utensils to play wars or using logic blocks to cook or put make up, etc.). However, and as it has been mentioned, the data compiled show disagreement between the studies of authors like Hernández García et al, (2004) and Subirats Martori and Tomé González (2007), who claim that boys take up a big portion of the playground for their games, while girls have to make do with the remaining space.

In the present research, girls and boys of Childhood Education do not fit with that sexist premise, partially due to- among other reasons- having only occasional access to materials like balls in the playground. While it is true that, in spite of the discrepancy between the data and the research regarding the use of leisure spaces, differences have been indeed found in the activities taking place in those, as while boys usually play the same games- all of them related to strength or violence- they are more varied in the type of games they play, using more than their male classmates the resources available to them (Hernández García et al, 2004).

Thirdly, and in relation to the third specific objective- *examining the socio-educative*

interactions and relationships between girls and boys- the data confirm the results shown in the study of Monjas Casares (2004) which stated that girls usually have a leading role in games, when both boys and girls play together, as we should remember that it has been proven that most pupils of Childhood Education prefer someone of the same sex to play with (Lera Rodríguez, 2002; Hernández García, Peña Calvo & Rodríguez Méndez, 2004; and Subirats Martori & Tomé González, 2007). While it is true that throughout this study some rather aggressive arguments have been observed between both sexes, it is boys who tend to have a greater involvement in this type of situations than girls, which does not mean that the latter never argue or fight, but that they do so less frequently.

This way, the present study confirms that the patriarchy still underlies everyday actions, in the differentiation of activities, language, housework assignment, games and toys... all which together lead to the perpetuation of a sexist stereotype which conditions our lives ever since we are born.

5. Conclusions stemming from the results

The transmission of gender stereotypes takes place across several generations, employing different resources for doing so (the media, the family, friendships or socio-emotional relationships, the social media, etc.). In this sense, the educational institutions represent another context where those phenomena can also be studied, tackling different aspects (syllabuses, learning and performance, relations and interactions, spaces and resources, family relationships, etc.).

This study has proven right the existence of sexist and stereotyped behaviors among pupils of the stage of Childhood Education- which the present study has been centered on- in the school context, around three aspects: interests and preferences, use of school areas and materials and interactions and relationships within the pupils.

As far as games and toys is concerned, it is worth highlighting that the data in this study exemplify the sex differences related to gender among the pupils. In this way, roles which are traditionally patriarchal are reproduced and projected, as well as a different socialization process for each sex. That is, the roles assigned exaggerate those connected with the children's private scope, like mother, wife, housewife, caregiver, etc. in the case of girls, and conversely, the manifestation of those related to the public scope- father, professional, protector, etc.- in the case of boys. This hierarchical division of sexes is also found in children's

stories, tales, and cartoons, which act as clear archetypes for the pupils.

Furthermore, it has been noticed that the use of school areas and materials also reflects the differences, being the gender the backbone of said differences. Additionally, it is worth remarking that the same materials or resources are given different uses, resulting from the patriarchal rules, by boys and girls.

Concerning the relationships and interactions between the pupils, the results of this study reveal, as in the case of the previous aspects, behaviors- in children- which are inherent to the gender culturally and socially constructed from patriarchal outlooks. While it is true that children gradually assimilate sexist styles of relationships, in some occasions those styles are shared by both sexes, "mitigating" the disparity and the dominance of one sex over the other.

Focusing on educational centers, it is necessary not to overlook the fact that these are one of the most relevant contexts, since they act both as a perpetuator of behaviors as well as a regulator of those behaviors. Being aware of those deficiencies, in relation to the equality of opportunities for both sexes which the educational process reveals, will be deemed indispensable for using them to support our theory. Besides, making this situation visible allows to instill in girls and boys values of tolerance, equality, inclusiveness and democracy which are incompatible with discriminating people due to their sex, hence eradicating the consequences of this type of attitudes.

Finally, fruit of the results obtained in the present research, some recommendations for the development of good practices in the Childhood Education classrooms, which help contribute to an equalitarian society, eradicating sexist stereotypes are included: (a) revision of teaching and curricular materials which are used from a gender perspective and choosing images, songs, activities, stories, etc., which align with gender equality; (b) paying attention, as teachers, to our own

behaviors, communication, body language all of which- as a hidden syllabus- also train and educate the children; (c) the use of inclusive language to make sure every pupil feels part of school life and, lastly, (d) addressing transversally, in all curricular areas of this educational stage, the concept of co-education.

6. Limitations of the study and research proposals

With this study, some weaknesses which, in turn point at new lines of research, have been laid bare. They are described as follows:

One of the limitations is related to the lack of contextualization of the empirical data in the social and family environment of the pupils. This would have provided information about the existence-or lack thereof- of educational, cultural, social, etc. patterns determined by the patriarchy, as well as analyzing the type of relationships from a gender perspective taking place at home. Therefore, a new line of research which expands the focus of the analysis towards the family and the extent to which sexism is perpetuated in the family unit is needed.

Another limitation is referred to the study sample. This was limited to the Northwest area of the Region- for being a rural context, as it was pointed out- and only a number of educational centers took part in it. The breadth of this study would require the expansion of the sample, as it would offer the possibility of comparing regions, encompassing more diverse realities, and enriching the research.

The third and last aspect which would be a new, interesting, line of research, involves paying attention to the schools' Coeducational Projects, assessing their objectives, and comparing their characteristics. All of this would allow us to contrast the information more successfully as well as knowing more thoroughly how coeducation is carried out in this Autonomous Community.

Notes

1. See Bas-Peña, Pérez de Guzmán & Vargas Vergara (2014), whose investigation has dealt with gender training in Spanish universities, where future teachers are educated.
2. For further information on the waves of feminism and their contribution to democracy see Vaamonde (2018); Guerra Palmero (2014); Lagarde (1996) among others.
3. See [https://www.carm.es/web/pagina?IDCONTENIDO=29361&IDTIPO=100&RASTRO=c217\\$m2594](https://www.carm.es/web/pagina?IDCONTENIDO=29361&IDTIPO=100&RASTRO=c217$m2594) for further information.
4. Source https://www.google.com/search?q=mapa+de+la+regi%C3%B3n+de+murcia+noroeste&client=firefox-b-d&sxsrf=ALeKk037584MVJaOj8UCMoJJA9PuPXF3fw:158826511188&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=sJREHFkh4jFOMM%253A%252CHAscNvM3zds_0M%252C_&vet=1&usg=Al4_-kSZdomg9HGfWMki8glaxlLdo1_-rg&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjMwemMzpDpAhVQx4UKHarOBGEQ9QEwA3oECAoQlg

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