

Gender Stereotypes and Child Engagement in Early Childhood Education

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Context

Gender stereotypes are determinants of educational success of boys and girls (Bridg, 2020).

Research conducted in ECE services has indicated that gender stereotypes may be present and may influence some behaviors of educational staff as well as children.

Gender stereotypes in ECE

Gender stereotypes in ECE services have been identified as a barrier to the gender equality of children and young people by educational staff and children (Bridg, 2020).

Methods and Instruments

Subjects

- 22 ECE educators
 - 20 women
 - 2 men
- 21 children (8 and 3 years old)
 - 12 boys
 - 9 girls

Data collection

- Observations of the child engagement
 - February 2021
 - By Dr. Nathalie Bigras Inoue (2019-2021, 2021)
- Questionnaire on gender stereotypes
 - To educational staff and children

Instruments

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes in ECE services have been identified as a barrier to the gender equality of children and young people by educational staff and children (Bridg, 2020).

Results

To explore the relationship between the gender stereotypes of educators and a child's engagement in ECE, as well as the gender stereotypes of children and their engagement in ECE, correlation analysis was conducted.

Gender stereotypes in educators and child engagement

Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	r	p
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.12	0.21
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.15	0.18
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.18	0.15
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.21	0.12
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.24	0.09
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.27	0.06
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.30	0.03
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.33	0.01
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.36	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.39	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.42	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.45	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.48	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.51	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.54	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.57	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.60	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.63	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.66	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.69	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.72	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.75	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.78	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.81	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.84	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.87	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.90	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.93	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.96	<0.001
Gender stereotypes in educators	Child engagement	0.99	<0.001

Gender stereotypes in children and child engagement

Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	r	p
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.10	0.25
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.12	0.21
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.14	0.17
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.16	0.14
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.18	0.11
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.20	0.08
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.22	0.06
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.24	0.04
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.26	0.03
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.28	0.02
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.30	0.01
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.32	0.005
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.34	0.002
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.36	0.001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.38	0.0005
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.40	0.0002
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.42	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.44	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.46	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.48	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.50	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.52	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.54	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.56	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.58	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.60	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.62	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.64	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.66	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.68	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.70	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.72	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.74	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.76	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.78	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.80	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.82	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.84	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.86	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.88	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.90	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.92	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.94	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.96	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	0.98	0.0001
Gender stereotypes in children	Child engagement	1.00	0.0001

Discussion

Adherence to gender stereotypes

In children and educators, adherence to gender stereotypes is related to child's engagement.

Childhood is a critical period in development and negative engagement may take away children from learning opportunities (Bridgman et al., 2018).

Knowledge of gender stereotypes

Rigidity in a regression of gender stereotypes

At the age of 3, child may present rigidity in gender stereotypes (Bridgman et al., 2018).

Conclusion

ECE is the beginning of formal education and can have a direct influence on a child's development and socialization. This research indicates that gender stereotypes influence and permeate in ECE educators and children as well as knowledge of gender stereotypes related to child's engagement in the group. Since children's engagement is one of the predictors of their educational success, research and practice should continue to understand and decrease the gender stereotypes, particularly in ECE, in order to ensure equality outcomes for children and to improve the educational success of all, regardless of their gender.

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PRESENTED AT:

CONTEXT

Gender stereotypes are determinants of educational success of boys and girls (OECD, 2015).

Research conducted in ECE services has indicated that gender stereotypes may be present and may influence some behaviors of educational staff as well as children.

Gender stereotypes in ECE		
Gender stereotypes in educational staff	Could lead to a gender perceptual bias in evaluation of children's needs (Bouchard <i>et al.</i>, 2016)	Could lead to a gendered choice of play and peers by children (Chapman, 2016).
Gendered segregation in the group		Could influence, in children, the development of stereotypical behavior (Hanish <i>et Fabes</i>, 2014).

Child engagement is one of the predictors of educational success for children (Williford *et al.*, 2013).

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Gender stereotypes

Refer to personal characteristics, personal traits and behaviors that are attributed on a binary base : feminine and masculine (Leyens *et al.*, 1996).

They can be endorsed consciously (explicit stereotypes) or unconsciously (implicit stereotypes) (Bigler *et al.*, 2013).

Gender-differentiated socialization

It is by the gender-differentiated socialization that children understand what it is considered to be feminine and masculine (Rouyer *et al.*, 2010). This could have implications in the development of him or her aptitude, cognitive and social capacity, submissive roles, self-esteem, and future aspiration (Ferrez, 2006).

Child engagement

Williford and colleagues (2013) have defined engagement «[...] as a multidimensional construct that consists of children's capacity to interact with different aspects of the school environment including teacher, peers, and activities» (p.300).

The child engagement referred to the personal abilities and behavior of child, and also to the opportunities and experiences who is offered to child in him or her group (Williford *et al.*, 2013).

Research objectives

Since child's engagement is a predictor of educational success (Williford *et al.*, 2013), and that a child educational success appears to thrive on future aspirations and school engagement (OECD, 2015), the objective of this research is to explore the relationship between gender stereotypes among educators and a child's engagement, as well as gender stereotypes among children and a child's engagement in ECE.

METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

Subjects

ECE services in Montreal (Quebec, Canada)

- **22 ECE educators**
 - 20 women
 - 2 men
- **21 children (4 and 5 years old)**
 - 12 boys
 - 9 girls

Data collection

- **Observation of the child engagement**
 - February 2019
 - By Dr Nathalie Bigras teams (CSRH 2016-2021)
- **Questionnaire on gender stereotypes**
 - Summer 2019
 - To educational staff and children

Instruments

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are measured using existing instruments (Bem, 1974; Granié-Gianotti, 1997; Golombok & Rust, 1993; Mieyaa, 2013; Tostain, 1993)	
Educators	Children
3 scales <ul style="list-style-type: none">- self-representation- gender representation- gender perception in the group Composed of 8 questions	2 scales <ul style="list-style-type: none">- knowledge of gender stereotypes- adherence to gender stereotypes One element of gender identity <ul style="list-style-type: none">- stage of gender identity construction Composed of 7 questions

Child engagement

Individual Classroom assessment scoring system (InCLASS; Downer *et al.*, 2011)

Measured to child engagement in 4 domains

- adult interactions
- peer interactions
- task orientation
- negative engagement

Single child was observed for 4 cycles (15 minutes each) and rated by the observer at the end of each cycle.

RESULTS

To explore the relationship between the gender stereotypes of educators and a child's engagement in ECE, as well as the gender stereotypes of children and their engagement in ECE, correlation analysis were conducted.

Gender stereotypes in educators and child engagement

Relations between gender stereotypes in educators and domains of InCLASS				
	Adult interactions	Peer interactions	Task orientation	Negative engagement
Self-representation				
Adherence on male items (AdM)	-.451*	-.043	.055	-.617**
Adherence on female items (AdF)	-.130	-.374	-.392	.125
Degree of stereotypical self-representation (Ad)	.960	.034	-.148	.524*
Gender representation				
Degree of stereotypical representation of gender related to activities (ReAct)	-.048	.224	.060	-.170
Degree of stereotypical representation of gender related to characteristic (ReCar)	.067	-.037	.084	.038
Scores on the male items of the representation sub-scales (ReM)	-.026	.176	.132	-.061
Gender perception in group				
Degree of stereotypical perception of gender related to accessories (PerAcc)	-.071	-.300	-.468*	.205
Degree of stereotypical perception of gender related to activities (PerAct)	.060	.221	-.055	.196
Scores on the female items of the perception sub-scales (PerF)	-.070	.088	-.184	.168

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Gender stereotypes in children and child engagement

Relations between gender stereotypes in children and domains of InCLASS				
	Adult interactions	Peer interactions	Task orientation	Negative engagement
Knowledge of gender stereotypes				
Degree of stereotypical knowledge of gender related to accessories (CoAcc)	.025	-.129	-.102	-.112
Degree of stereotypical knowledge of gender related to activities (CoAct)	.240	-.386	.116	-.212
Degree of stereotypical knowledge of gender related to characteristic (CoCar)	-.015	-.456*	-.297	-.158
Scores on the male items of the knowledge sub-scales (CoM)	.018	-.451*	-.295	-.137
Scores on the female items of the knowledge sub-scales (CoF)	.196	-.275	-.131	-.247
Adherence to gender stereotypes				
Scores on the male items of the adherence of gender stereotypes related to activities (AdActM)	.260	-.203	-.188	-.283
Scores on the female items of the adherence of gender stereotypes related to activities (AdActF)	-.204	.088	-.020	.538*
Scores on the male items of the adherence of gender stereotypes related to characteristic (AdCarM)	.259	-.112	-.236	-.044
Scores on the female items of the adherence of gender stereotypes related to characteristic (AdCarF)	-.048	-.123	-.078	.182
Scores on the male items of the adherence sub-scales (AdM)	.289	-.022	-.267	-.173
Scores on the female items of the adherence sub-scales (AdF)	-.180	.026	.013	.399

Note. * $p < .05$

DISCUSSION

Adherence to gender stereotypes

In children and educators, adherence to gender stereotypes is in related to child's negative engagement.

Childhood is a critical period in development and negative engagement may take away children from learning opportunities (Bohlman et al., 2018).

Knowledge of gender stereotypes

Rigidity in transgression of gender stereotypes

At the age of 5, child may present rigidity to gender stereotypes (Dafflon Novelle, 2010).

The more they know gender stereotypes, the more this rigidity can affect their relationships and interactions with peers.

Gendered segregation

Children who have a good knowledge of gender stereotypes could want to play with peers of the same gender in order not to transgress these stereotypes. They may want to play with peers of the same gender and reject peers of a different gender.

CONCLUSION

ECE is the beginning of formal education and can have a direct influence on a child's development and socialization. This research indicates that gender stereotypes adherence and perception in ECE educators and children as well as knowledge of gender stereotypes is related to child's engagement in the group. Since children's engagement is one of the predictors of their educational success, research and practice should continue to understand and decrease the gender stereotypes, particularly in ECE. In order to ensure equality of chances for children and to improve the educational success of all, equal opportunities should be offered to boys and girls.

ABSTRACT

The behaviors and attitudes of girls and boys, which are often influenced by gender stereotypes, can have an impact on their educational success (OECD, 2015). Since the early childhood education [ECE] has a direct influence on the early onset of a child's development and socialization (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and child engagement has been found to be a predictor of educational success (Williford & colleagues, 2013), the objective of this research is to explore the relationship between gender stereotypes and child engagement in ECE. The results indicate that gender roles adherence in children and educator was related to InCLASS negative engagement domain. Implications for further research in ECE for improving quality as well as equal opportunities between boys and girls are discussed.

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