

# The Gendering Process in Kindergarten Schools

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- ECD: Early Childhood Development
- KG: Kindergarten
- MoEST: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- SDG: Sustainable Development Goals
- UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
- SLT: Social Learning Theory
- GST: Gender Schema Theory
- FP: Feminist Pedagogy
- IJEC: International Journal of Early Childhood
- JECER: Journal of Early Childhood Education Research
- ECE: Early Childhood Education
- KV: Kathmandu Valley
- SES: Socio- Economic Status
- SSI: Semi- Structured Interviews
- TCI: Teacher- Child Interactions
- TA: Thematic Analysis
- GNE: Gender-Neutral Environment
- GSE: Gender-Sensitive Education
- GNS: Gender Neutral Stereotypes
- GE: Gender Equality
- TGT: Teacher Gender Training
- GEI: Gender Education Interventions
- FWE: Future Work Experience
- CR: Curriculum Revisions

## ABSTRACT

This research explores how gender roles are constructed and expressed in kindergarten classrooms in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. It examines the influence of teachers in shaping young children's gender perceptions and behaviors through their interactions, teaching practices, and classroom management strategies. The study also analyzes how classroom materials, activities, and pedagogical approaches contribute to children's understanding of gender. Additionally, it investigates whether teachers reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms in their teaching practices. The research was conducted with 25 kindergarten teachers from five private schools, representing both well-resourced and less-resourced institutions in Kathmandu. Data were collected through classroom observations and teacher interviews. The findings reveal how gender patterns emerge in early childhood education and provide insights into fostering more equitable and inclusive kindergarten environments.

The study found that gender roles were reinforced in both well-resourced and less-resourced schools, though in different ways. In well-resourced schools, teachers were more aware of gender biases and made some efforts to encourage equal participation. However, boys were still given more leadership opportunities, while girls were expected to be disciplined and cooperative. In less-resourced schools, traditional gender norms were more deeply ingrained. Boys were encouraged to be active and outspoken, while girls were expected to be quiet and obedient, reinforcing rigid gender expectations.

Classroom materials and activities also reflected gender stereotypes. Textbooks in well-resourced schools made some attempts at gender balance, but men were still more often shown in leadership roles, while women were depicted in caregiving positions. Teachers occasionally introduced discussions on gender equality, though not consistently. In less-resourced schools, teaching materials heavily reinforced traditional gender roles, with little to no effort to promote inclusivity. Similarly, classroom tasks often followed gendered patterns, with boys assigned physically engaging activities and girls given organizational or supportive roles.

Teachers' awareness and approaches also varied. In well-resourced schools, some teachers tried to challenge gender norms by encouraging equal participation and using gender-neutral language, though their efforts were inconsistent. In less-resourced schools, most teachers followed traditional teaching practices without questioning gender norms, as their methods were more influenced by cultural expectations and a lack of exposure to gender-sensitive teaching approaches.

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### *A. Background of the Study*

Education plays a key role in shaping who we are as individuals- our personalities, social behaviors, and understanding of the world around us. From a young age, children start to pick up on the roles and expectations society has for them. Among all the stages of formal education, kindergarten stands out as especially important because it's the time when children begin to develop not just their cognitive and emotional skills, but also their sense of identity. During these early years, they start to form ideas about who they are, including how they see and express gender. Teachers, peers, and even classroom materials all contribute to shaping these ideas, often without the children even realizing it.

One important aspect of this process is classroom management, which refers to the strategies teachers use to organize the classroom, manage student behavior, and keep children engaged. These practices not only help maintain a positive learning environment but also influence how gender roles are introduced and reinforced. Through their interactions and the structure, they create in the classroom, teachers can either challenge or unknowingly reinforce traditional gender stereotypes (Jones, 2018).

The way gender is introduced and reinforced in kindergarten has a lasting impact on children's attitudes and behaviors toward gender identity. Research has shown that children are not passive learners but active participants in making sense of the gendered messages they receive from their environment (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2019). Teachers' interactions, the way they manage their classrooms, and the materials they use all influence how children come to understand gender. If these influences go unchecked, they can reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, which can limit children's potential and impact their confidence, career choices, and self-perception in the long run.

Kindergarten, as we know it today, was first introduced in the 19th century by Friedrich Froebel, who emphasized the importance of play in early learning. Since then, the concept has spread across the world, becoming a cornerstone of early childhood education. However, the way gender is integrated into the learning process can vary greatly from one country to another.

For example, Norway is recognized for its progressive approach to gender equality in education. The Norwegian Gender Equality Act and national policies prioritize gender neutrality, encouraging teachers to critically reflect on their behaviors and teaching practices to ensure that they do not unintentionally perpetuate gender biases (MacNaughton, 2020). Studies have shown that such gender-inclusive approaches help create more balanced learning environments, allowing all children, regardless of gender, to flourish (Renold & Allan, 2021).

In Nepal, the landscape of kindergarten education has expanded in recent years, with early childhood development centers playing a central role in preparing children for formal schooling. Institutions like Bal Mandir helped establish the foundation for organized early childhood education. Despite this growth, however, the issue of gender sensitivity in Nepalese kindergartens is still relatively unexplored. Research suggests that, while gender biases are present, the ways in which teachers' behaviors, classroom practices, and educational materials contribute to the gendering process remain unclear (Sharma, 2018).

In Nepalese kindergartens, it's common for teachers to unintentionally reinforce traditional gender norms. For example, boys are often encouraged to participate in physical tasks, while girls may be steered toward creative or caregiving activities. These subtle practices shape children's understanding of what is "appropriate" for boys and girls, reinforcing stereotypes that limit their potential. In addition, classroom materials such as storybooks and images in textbooks—often depict men in leadership roles and women in caregiving positions, further promoting traditional gender roles (Blair & Sanford, 2021). Peer interactions also play a role, as children begin to internalize societal expectations based on what they see and hear from others. The impact of these early experiences extends far beyond kindergarten. Gendered expectations in early childhood can influence children's self-confidence, academic choices, and even their future careers. For example, girls who are encouraged to focus on nurturing or creative tasks may shy away from subjects like science and math, while boys who are discouraged from expressing emotions may struggle with social and emotional skills as they grow older.

In other parts of South Asia, research has shown that classrooms with more gender-neutral teaching strategies lead to higher participation, confidence, and inclusivity, particularly for girls (Khan & Jabeen, 2020). In Nepal, adopting similar strategies could help break the cycle of gendered learning limitations, allowing children to explore a wider range of interests without being constrained by societal expectations.

However, the quality and approach to gender sensitivity can also differ depending on the resources available to schools. Well-resourced schools, which typically have better access to teaching tools, technology, and more trained teachers, are more likely to incorporate gender-sensitive practices. Studies suggest that teachers in well-resourced schools, with greater access to professional development, tend to be more reflective of their teaching methods, striving to eliminate biases and foster inclusive environments (Lindsay & McDonnell, 2019). Despite this, traditional gender norms may still persist in subtle ways, as schools in higher-income areas can also face challenges related to cultural norms and societal expectations (Jones, 2018).

In contrast, less-resourced schools face challenges such as outdated materials, limited infrastructure, and fewer opportunities for teacher training. These schools often rely on traditional teaching methods and classroom practices, which can unintentionally reinforce stereotypical gender roles. According to research, in less-resourced environments, teachers may not receive the same level of training or support to address gender biases, leading to practices that perpetuate traditional gender norms (Beck & Cameron, 2020). In these schools, classroom materials may reinforce outdated gender stereotypes, thus limiting the range of experiences and opportunities available to children.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of gender equality in education, there is still limited research on how gender roles are constructed and reinforced in Nepalese kindergartens. Many educators may not fully realize the impact their teaching methods and classroom interactions have on shaping children's understanding of gender. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive training or policies to help teachers become more aware of and address these biases.

This study aims to explore how gender roles are presented and reinforced in Nepalese kindergartens, focusing on teacher-student interactions, classroom activities, and learning materials. By examining these areas, this research will shed light on the ways gender is constructed in early childhood education in Nepal. The findings will contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender equality in education and offer recommendations for making kindergarten classrooms more inclusive. Ultimately, this study aims to help improve teacher training programs, inform policy changes, and create more gender-sensitive learning environments, ensuring that all children have equal opportunities to explore and develop their full potential.

### *B. Statement of the Research Problem*

While there is a considerable body of research on gender disparities in higher education, there remains a significant gap in the exploration of gender dynamics in early childhood education, especially in the context of kindergarten settings. The early childhood years are pivotal in shaping children's social and cognitive development, and it is during this period that gender roles and stereotypes often begin to form. These early interactions, whether through teacher behaviors, classroom materials, or peer influence, have a profound effect on how children perceive themselves, their peers, and their roles within society (Martin & Ruble, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2019).

Kindergarten classrooms are where young children first experience structured education and socialization. These environments play a critical role in the development of gendered behaviors, yet research on how gender is constructed and reinforced in these settings remains limited (Blakemore & Hill, 2008). Teachers, curriculum design, and classroom activities all contribute to the formation of gender identities and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, either consciously or unconsciously (Berk, 2013; Blair & Sanford, 2021). For instance, boys may be encouraged to participate in physical or competitive activities, while girls are directed toward nurturing tasks, thus reinforcing traditional gender norms (Sharma, 2018).

Despite growing awareness of the importance of early childhood education in shaping gender perceptions, there is a lack of focused research on how gender is perceived, reinforced, and challenged in kindergarten classrooms, especially within the Nepalese context (UNICEF, 2019). The existing literature primarily concentrates on gender issues in primary and secondary education, overlooking the crucial role that kindergarten plays in shaping children's early understanding of gender. This gap in research is particularly evident in Nepal, where the gendering process in kindergartens has not been extensively studied, despite the growing number of early childhood education centers (Shrestha & Sharma, 2018).

This study aims to investigate how gender roles are constructed and reinforced in Nepalese kindergarten classrooms. By focusing on teacher-child interactions, classroom materials, and activities, the research will explore how gendered practices are embedded in the learning environment. It will examine whether these practices reinforce traditional gender norms or whether teachers actively challenge and promote more inclusive approaches. The findings will contribute valuable insights into how gender is socially constructed in early childhood education, offering implications for fostering a more inclusive, gender-sensitive learning environment in Nepalese kindergartens.

### *C. Rationale of the Study*

The early years of education are pivotal in shaping children's understanding of gender roles, social identities, and behaviors. Kindergarten, as one of the first structured learning environments, plays a key role in how children internalize gendered expectations. It is during these formative years that children begin to absorb messages about gender through interactions with teachers, peers, and the materials they encounter. These messages, whether explicit or subtle, can profoundly influence how children perceive themselves and others in relation to gender. While there has been extensive research on gender dynamics in later stages of education, there remains a notable gap in studies examining the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms (Berk, 2013; Martin & Ruble, 2020).

This study aims to explore how gender is socially constructed, reinforced, or challenged in Nepalese kindergarten schools, focusing on teacher-child interactions, classroom activities, and the broader learning environment. Research suggests that teachers and classroom dynamics play a central role in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2019; MacNaughton, 2020). By analyzing the gendering process in kindergarten, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how these early educational experiences shape children's gender identity and social development.

Understanding how gender norms are perpetuated at this stage of education is critical because it impacts children's future attitudes and behaviors in various social contexts. Gendered practices in early childhood education can affect not only social interactions but also children's academic choices, confidence, and overall development. Given that kindergartens serve as the foundation for future learning experiences, this study is essential for identifying practices that either perpetuate or disrupt gender stereotypes (Blakemore & Hill, 2008).

The findings of this research will have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. Teachers will gain insights into how their classroom practices and interactions can influence children's gender perceptions, providing them with tools to foster more inclusive and equitable environments. For school administrators and policymakers, the results will inform the development of gender-sensitive policies and curricular reforms that promote equality in early childhood education. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to creating an educational framework that empowers children to explore their identities freely, without being confined by rigid gender norms, thereby supporting their holistic development (UNICEF, 2019).

#### *D. Research Questions*

This study explores how gender roles are constructed and reinforced in Nepalese kindergarten classrooms. The following research questions have been created to guide this investigation:

- How do teachers' interactions in kindergarten schools contribute to the construction of gender roles among young children?
- What specific teaching practices in kindergarten influence children's perceptions of gender and shape their social behaviors?
- In what ways do kindergarten teachers either reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms in their classroom practices?
- How do teacher-child interactions in the classroom influence the development of children's gender identities in early childhood education?
- What role do teaching materials, such as books and toys, and classroom activities play in reinforcing or challenging gendered expectations in kindergarten?

#### *E. Objectives of the Study*

This study aims to explore how gender roles are constructed and reinforced in Nepalese kindergarten classrooms. Early childhood is a critical stage where children begin to develop their understanding of gender, influenced by their interactions with teachers, classroom materials, and daily learning experiences. Understanding these influences is essential to identifying how traditional gender norms are either perpetuated or challenged within the school environment.

##### ➤ *The Specific Objectives of this Research are:*

- To examine teachers' interactions with children and their contribution to shaping gender roles in kindergarten schools through teaching strategies and classroom management.
- To analyze the influence of teaching materials, activities, and pedagogical approaches on children's perceptions of gender and identity formation.
- To explore the ways that kindergarten teachers reinforce or challenge gender norms through their classroom practices, both intentionally and unintentionally.

#### *F. Limitations of the Study*

This study acknowledges several limitations that may influence the depth, scope, and generalizability of its findings. While efforts have been made to conduct a thorough investigation, certain constraints may impact the overall applicability of the results.

One key limitation is the sample size, as the study focuses on a limited number of kindergartens within Kathmandu Valley. This may not fully capture the diversity of kindergarten environments across Nepal, making it difficult to generalize the findings to other regions with different educational systems and cultural norms. Similarly, the geographical focus of the research restricts its applicability beyond Kathmandu, where teaching practices and attitudes toward gender may differ.

Another limitation relates to data collection methods. Since the study relies on qualitative approaches, including classroom observations and teacher interviews, there is a possibility of researcher bias in interpreting findings. Additionally, teachers' responses may be influenced by social desirability, meaning they might provide answers that align with expected norms rather than their actual beliefs and practices.

The study is also constrained by time limitations, as it examines gendering processes within a specific period. As a result, it does not track long-term shifts in gender perceptions or changes in teaching practices over time. This means evolving trends in gender dynamics within kindergarten classrooms may not be fully captured. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on the binary gender framework, examining differences in how boys and girls experience gendered interactions. This approach may overlook the experiences of non-binary or gender-diverse children, limiting the inclusivity of the research. Lastly, while the study examines gender construction within classroom settings, it does not extensively account for external influences, such as family upbringing, media exposure, and societal expectations, all of which play a crucial role in shaping children's understanding of gender.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the gendering process in kindergarten schools, highlighting how teacher interactions, classroom materials, and learning activities contribute to early gender construction. Recognizing these constraints helps situate the findings within their appropriate context while offering directions for future research on promoting gender inclusivity in early childhood education.

#### *G. Organization of Study*

This research is organized into five chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of the study. Chapter One introduces the research by providing an overview of the study's background, significance, objectives, and key research questions. It sets the stage for understanding the importance of examining gender roles in early childhood education. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of relevant theories and previous studies on gender roles in education. This chapter explores theoretical frameworks such as Social Learning Theory and Gender Schema Theory, along with empirical studies that highlight how gender dynamics are shaped in classroom environments. Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology, explaining the study design, data collection methods, and analytical approaches used to examine the gendering process in kindergarten schools. It details the qualitative research methods employed, including interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and an analysis of educational materials. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study, providing an in-depth interpretation and analysis of the data. It identifies key patterns related to teacher-student interactions, learning activities, and gender representation in educational materials, shedding light on how traditional gender roles are reinforced or challenged in kindergarten classrooms. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the entire study, drawing conclusions based on the findings. It discusses the implications of the research, particularly in the context of early childhood education in Nepal, and offers recommendations for policymakers, educators, and future researchers. This chapter emphasizes the need for more gender-sensitive teaching practices and inclusive classroom environments that promote gender equality from an early age.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *A. Theoretical Arguments*

The gendering process in kindergarten schools is shaped by various factors, including teacher interactions, classroom materials, and societal expectations. Socialization plays a key role in early childhood, as children learn gender norms through their environment. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains that children develop gendered behaviors by observing and imitating figures such as teachers, parents, and peers. In classrooms, teachers often unknowingly reinforce traditional gender roles through their interactions, language, and expectations. Studies (Smith & Johnson, 2022; Lee & Patel, 2023) suggest that boys are frequently encouraged to take on leadership roles, while girls are expected to be cooperative and passive. These patterns contribute to shaping children's understanding of gender from an early age. Similarly, Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981) argues that children develop mental frameworks that guide their understanding of gender roles. These schemas are influenced by social cues such as classroom decorations, learning materials, and teacher expectations (Tanaka et al., 2021; Zhou & Kim, 2023). Research (Davis et al., 2022) indicates that when children are consistently exposed to gendered images in books, toys, and activities, they begin categorizing behaviors and interests as either "for boys" or "for girls," which can limit their sense of possibilities.

While these theories focus on how children internalize gender norms, Constructivist Theory (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978) takes a different approach, emphasizing that children actively construct knowledge through their experiences and social interactions. Unlike the idea that children simply absorb gender norms, this perspective suggests that they interpret and negotiate gender roles based on their surroundings (Garcia & Nguyen, 2021; Malik & Arora, 2023). Research (Brown et al., 2023) shows that when teachers encourage mixed-gender activities and provide gender-neutral materials, children display more flexible attitudes toward gender. This suggests that kindergarten classrooms can serve as spaces to either reinforce or challenge gender norms, depending on how learning experiences are structured. Feminist Pedagogy further builds on this by advocating for gender-sensitive teaching practices that challenge traditional gender roles. Studies (Kumar & Hassan, 2022; Carter & Green, 2023) highlight those classrooms actively countering gender stereotypes contribute to fostering more inclusive learning environments. When teachers consciously avoid reinforcing gender norms and introduce diverse role models in teaching materials, children develop a broader understanding of gender. Research (Singh et al., 2024) suggests that addressing gender biases in early education can help shape more inclusive attitudes before rigid stereotypes take hold.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study explores how gender roles are formed and reinforced in kindergarten classrooms. Social Learning Theory highlights the impact of observation and modeling, while Gender Schema Theory explains how children internalize gendered expectations. Constructivist Theory emphasizes children's active role in making sense of gender norms, and Feminist Pedagogy provides strategies for fostering more gender-inclusive education. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for analyzing how early childhood education contributes to shaping gender identities and what can be done to create more equitable learning environments.

Research has shown that disparities in school resources significantly impact early childhood education (Smith & Jones, 2020). Well-resourced schools tend to have better facilities, diverse learning materials, and teachers who receive regular training, creating an environment that fosters inclusive learning (Brown, 2018). In contrast, less-resourced schools often face challenges such as outdated materials, limited facilities, and fewer opportunities for teacher development (Garcia & Patel, 2019). These differences can shape how gender roles are presented and reinforced in the classroom.

Studies suggest that schools with more resources are more likely to introduce gender-sensitive teaching strategies, as they have access to inclusive textbooks, diverse toys, and teacher training programs that promote gender equity (Anderson et al., 2022; Lee & Carter, 2023). On the other hand, schools with fewer resources may unintentionally reinforce traditional gender norms due to a lack of updated materials and exposure to progressive teaching methods (Hassan & Green, 2023). These variations in school environments play a key role in shaping children's early understanding of gender and the opportunities they are exposed to in the classroom.



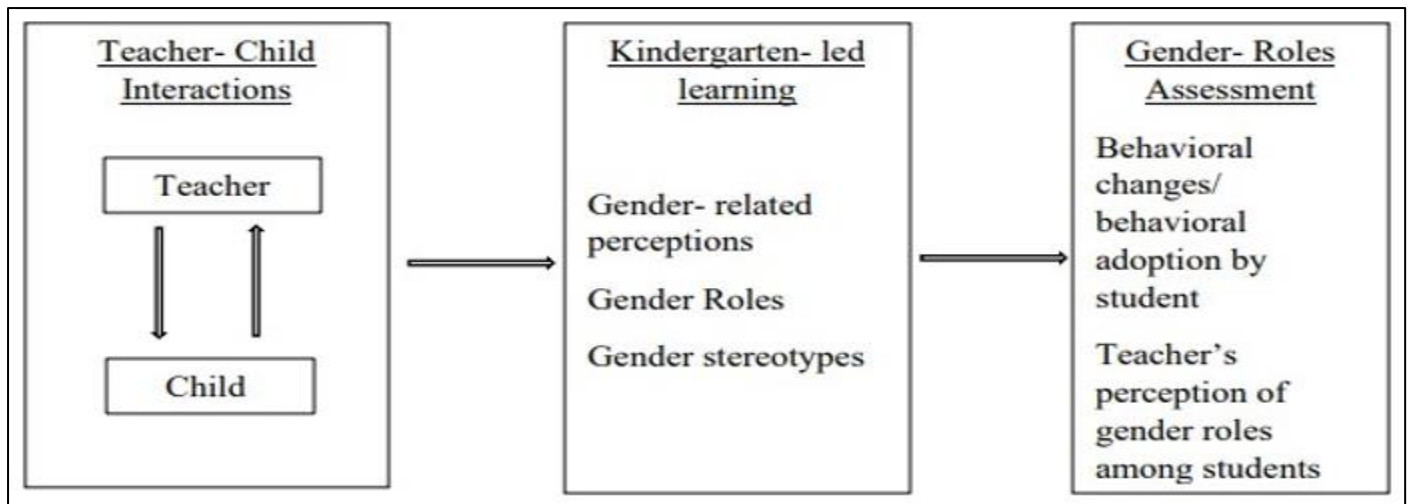


Fig 1: Research Framework on Teacher-Child Interactions and Gender Role Formation

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study explores how gender roles are formed and reinforced in kindergarten classrooms. Social Learning Theory highlights the impact of observation and modeling, while Gender Schema Theory explains how children internalize gendered expectations. Constructivist Theory emphasizes children's active role in making sense of gender norms, and Feminist Pedagogy provides strategies for fostering more gender-inclusive education. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for analyzing how early childhood education contributes to shaping gender identities and what can be done to create more equitable learning environments.

#### B. Global Context

Gender equality in early childhood education has become a major global focus, with organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF pushing for more gender-sensitive teaching approaches. Their reports (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2022) highlight how persistent gender biases still exist in classrooms across the world, especially in early education. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping how young children see gender, as the early years are when they begin to internalize societal expectations. Whether teachers are aware of it or not, their actions and classroom practices influence how boys and girls perceive their roles in the world.

Recent studies (Anderson & Taylor, 2021; Jansen & Schmidt, 2023) have shown that gendered expectations in kindergarten classrooms can affect children's confidence, social interactions, and even academic success. Boys, for example, are often pushed to take leadership roles, while girls are expected to be quieter and more nurturing. This early reinforcement of gender stereotypes can have lasting effects on children's self-esteem and opportunities. Research by Smith et al. (2020) even points out that girls in some cultures feel less confident in subjects like math and science, areas that are stereotypically seen as "masculine." In contrast, boys may feel discouraged from engaging in activities that are perceived as more feminine, such as caring for others or playing in a cooperative manner.

Countries like Sweden and Canada have been leaders in trying to address these issues, with gender-neutral teaching strategies and inclusive curricula. Studies (Lindberg et al., 2022) show that these approaches have led to reduced gender disparities in education. In classrooms where boys and girls are encouraged to pursue a wide range of interests, free from the constraints of traditional gender norms, both genders perform more equally across subjects. For example, boys and girls in these countries tend to show similar levels of achievement in academic subjects, and both are encouraged to take on leadership roles without gender-based expectations (Bergström et al., 2021).

However, in many developing countries, gender bias remains a major challenge. Rodriguez et al. (2024) point out that in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, societal gender norms are still deeply rooted in the education system. In these areas, girls are often steered toward roles like caregivers, while boys are encouraged to be leaders or assertive figures. This early socialization limits children's potential and often dictates what activities or career paths are deemed "appropriate" for them based on gender.

A study by Lee & Patel (2023) in Africa and Latin America highlights those educational materials often perpetuate these gender stereotypes, portraying women in domestic roles and men in professional settings. This reinforces a limited view of what boys and girls can achieve. These findings show the need for gender-sensitive curricula, teacher training, and educational materials that actively challenge traditional gender roles. However, many countries still lack the resources or political will to implement such changes, and cultural or religious beliefs often complicate efforts to challenge these norms (Pérez & Sanchez, 2022).

There's no denying that achieving gender equality in education is a complex and ongoing challenge, but there are examples from around the world where positive change is happening. Sweden, Canada, and other progressive nations offer valuable lessons

in creating inclusive classrooms. For developing countries, the lesson is clear: early childhood education has a crucial role in breaking down harmful gender stereotypes. This study seeks to explore how these global insights can inform practices in Nepal and other regions facing similar challenges. By examining what works globally, we can identify strategies that could be implemented to create more gender-inclusive environments in Nepalese kindergartens.

### *C. South Asian Context*

South Asia continues to face significant challenges in achieving gender equity in education, particularly in early childhood learning environments. Despite notable strides in increasing female enrollment in schools across the region, deep-rooted gender biases persist, influencing how children experience education. In countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, these biases are often perpetuated by teachers who, whether consciously or unconsciously, reinforce traditional gender stereotypes through their classroom practices. Research by Ali & Rahman (2023) and Sharma & Yadav (2024) underscores the ongoing influence of gendered expectations in shaping children's educational experiences from a very young age.

For example, in many South Asian classrooms, boys are more likely to be encouraged to take on leadership roles, engage in competitive activities, and explore subjects such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). On the other hand, girls are typically expected to adopt more passive and nurturing roles, with a greater emphasis on artistic activities or caregiving tasks. These gendered expectations can limit both boys' and girls' potential by steering them toward activities that align with traditional societal roles rather than allowing them the freedom to explore a wide range of interests and skills. This reinforcement of gender norms can contribute to shaping children's perceptions of what is "appropriate" for their gender, often limiting their career choices and aspirations later in life (Sharma & Yadav, 2024).

In a comparative study by Das & Khan (2023), the researchers found that early exposure to gender-sensitive pedagogy, where children are encouraged to break free from traditional gender roles, can significantly shape their perceptions of gender roles. However, such progressive teaching strategies remain rare in mainstream South Asian educational systems. Most schools continue to follow traditional curricula and pedagogical approaches that perpetuate gendered distinctions, which children internalize at a very early age. The absence of gender-inclusive teaching methods not only limits children's understanding of gender equality but also restricts their ability to engage with the full range of their potential. Boys may shy away from activities perceived as "feminine," and girls may feel discouraged from pursuing leadership roles or STEM subjects.

The failure to implement gender-inclusive strategies in schools is indicative of a broader issue that affects the education system in South Asia. Many teachers have not been adequately trained to recognize their own biases or to implement teaching practices that actively challenge gender stereotypes. As a result, students continue to internalize rigid gender norms that shape their identities and aspirations. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, beginning with systemic reforms at the national and local levels. Revisions to the curriculum, a greater focus on teacher training in gender sensitivity, and increased awareness among educators and parents about the long-term impact of gender biases are essential steps in creating a more equitable educational environment.

In recent years, some progressive schools and organizations in the region have begun to introduce gender-inclusive pedagogies, and research indicates that these efforts are yielding positive results. For example, initiatives that encourage girls to take on leadership roles and engage in traditionally male-dominated subjects like mathematics and science have led to increased confidence and interest among girls in these fields (Das & Khan, 2023). While such initiatives are still limited, they represent an important step toward fostering gender equality in education. If these approaches are scaled and integrated into mainstream education, they have the potential to significantly alter the way children perceive gender roles, offering both boys and girls the opportunity to break free from traditional constraints and pursue careers and interests based on their talents and interests, rather than societal expectations.

The research aims to explore how gendered interactions in South Asian classrooms, particularly in Nepal, shape children's perceptions of gender roles. By examining the impact of these entrenched practices, the study seeks to identify areas where change is possible, offering recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to promote a more inclusive and equitable educational experience for all children, regardless of gender.

### *D. Nepal's Context*

In Nepal, gender inequality in early childhood education remains a pressing issue, despite the country's efforts to improve gender parity in school enrollment. Over the past few decades, the government has implemented various policies aimed at ensuring equal access to education for both boys and girls. However, while these policies have led to increased enrollment rates for girls, significant gender disparities persist within the classroom setting. Classroom interactions, teaching materials, and pedagogical practices still often reflect traditional gender norms, influencing how children understand their roles and capabilities from a young age (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2021; UNESCO, 2022; UNICEF, 2020).

Research by Gurung et al. (2022) indicates that many kindergartens in Nepal continue to promote gendered expectations, which align with deeply ingrained societal norms that define and limit children's roles based on their gender. For example, boys are frequently encouraged to be active, assertive, and independent, traits that are traditionally associated with leadership and success.

In contrast, girls are often expected to be obedient, nurturing, and cooperative, with their roles primarily linked to caregiving and domestic responsibilities. These gendered expectations not only restrict the freedom of both boys and girls to explore different aspects of their personalities and interests but also perpetuate stereotypes that limit their future opportunities and aspirations.

Studies conducted in Nepalese schools (Tamang & Shrestha, 2023; Regmi et al., 2024) reveal that these traditional gender roles are often reinforced through both subtle and overt cues in the classroom. Teachers, often unconsciously, perpetuate gender stereotypes by providing more opportunities for boys to take on leadership roles, engage in competitive activities, and express opinions in class discussions. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be assigned tasks that require nurturing or caregiving, such as organizing materials or helping others. This type of gendered differentiation in classroom activities limits children's understanding of what is possible for them, based on their gender.

In an observational study conducted in the Kathmandu Valley, Bista & Poudel (2023) found that teachers often gave more leadership opportunities to boys, unconsciously reinforcing the stereotype that leadership and decision-making are primarily male traits. This distinction in treatment not only fosters a sense of inequality but also discourages girls from taking on roles that involve authority or responsibility. Furthermore, research by Khadka et al. (2024) analyzed classroom materials and textbooks used in Nepalese schools and found that these resources overwhelmingly depict men in professional roles, such as doctors, engineers, and politicians, while women are primarily shown in domestic or caregiving positions, reinforcing traditional gender roles. This portrayal limits children's exposure to diverse role models and further ingrains the belief that certain careers and activities are more suited to one gender than the other.

Despite these challenges, there have been some positive developments in Nepal's educational landscape. Progressive schools have begun to integrate gender-inclusive teaching strategies, aiming to create a more balanced and equitable learning environment for children. Research by Acharya et al. (2024) highlights the potential benefits of these practices, such as encouraging mixed-gender group activities, promoting equal participation in all classroom activities, and including diverse role models in teaching materials. These strategies have shown promising results in shifting children's perceptions of gender, encouraging them to see beyond the rigid gender norms that traditionally define their roles. However, the implementation of such practices remains limited, and there is a significant need for broader adoption across the education system to address the deeply rooted gender biases.

This study aims to explore how gendered interactions in Nepalese kindergarten classrooms shape children's perceptions of gender roles. By examining how traditional gender expectations are reinforced or challenged through teacher interactions, classroom activities, and learning materials, the research seeks to shed light on the extent to which gender bias continues to influence young children's development. It will also explore the potential of gender-inclusive teaching strategies in disrupting these traditional norms and fostering a more equitable learning environment. The findings from this research will be valuable in guiding future policy and practice changes, ultimately contributing to the development of an education system that promotes gender equality and empowers children to explore their full potential, free from the constraints of gendered expectations.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

This study aims to explore the dynamic and evolving nature of the gendering process in kindergarten schools, focusing on how gender roles are constructed, reinforced, and perceived in early childhood education. Given the complex nature of gender dynamics in young children's learning environments, a qualitative approach is most fitting. Qualitative research is well-suited for examining how individuals form meanings and experiences around gender in natural settings, allowing for a deeper understanding of social interactions and behaviors (Creswell, 2014). The flexible and exploratory nature of this approach enables the study to adapt and evolve as new insights emerge during the research process, providing a rich, detailed picture of the lived experiences of both teachers and children in the classroom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The research design incorporates classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers to capture a comprehensive view of the gendering process. Observations take place in real-time, within the natural classroom setting, allowing for the examination of teacher-child interactions without interference (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). This approach provides authentic insights into how gender roles are enacted and negotiated in the everyday interactions between teachers and children, capturing the subtle ways in which gender is both communicated and reinforced.

In addition to observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers are conducted to explore their personal insights, beliefs, and experiences regarding gender roles. These interviews allow teachers to reflect on their own perceptions of gender and how those beliefs manifest in their teaching practices. By delving into how teachers internalize gender roles and the impact of these beliefs on their pedagogical approaches, the study seeks to understand how teachers influence and contribute to the gendering process in the classroom (Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1990).

To ensure a well-rounded and reliable understanding of the gendering process, data triangulation is employed. This involves gathering data from multiple sources, including classroom observations, teacher perspectives, and contextual information about the schools themselves (Patton, 2015). By drawing from these different angles, the study aims to provide a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of how gender is constructed and perpetuated in kindergarten classrooms.

#### B. Sources of Information

This study relies entirely on primary sources to understand the gendering process in kindergarten schools. The data comes from direct classroom observations, teacher interviews, and an analysis of curriculum books and teaching materials. These firsthand sources provide a detailed and authentic look at how gender roles are reinforced in early education.

##### ➤ Primary Sources

The primary sources for this research include:

- **Classroom Observations:** Observing real-time interactions in kindergarten classrooms offers valuable insights into how gender roles are expressed in teaching practices, student behavior, and daily activities.
- **Teacher Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with kindergarten teachers provide perspectives on their beliefs, experiences, and classroom strategies related to gender. These conversations help reveal whether gender norms are reinforced or challenged in early education.
- **Curriculum Books and Teaching Materials:** I personally reviewed textbooks, visual aids, and classroom resources to analyze how gender is represented in educational content. Since this review was conducted firsthand, it is considered a primary data source rather than a secondary one.
- **School Policies:** I also reviewed the school policies, if available, to see how gender-related issues are addressed at the institutional level. This included examining whether there are formal guidelines on gender equality, teacher training on gender sensitivity, or any initiatives that support gender inclusivity in the classroom.
- **Personal Field Notes:** Throughout my observations and interviews, I kept detailed field notes to document my findings. These notes helped me track the context of the observations, capture specific examples of gendered behavior or practices, and reflect on the broader implications for my research.

This study does not rely on secondary sources such as journal articles, previous research, or external academic literature. Instead, all findings are based on direct observations and firsthand data collection within the research setting.

#### C. Mode of Inquiry

This study follows a qualitative mode of inquiry, focusing on how gender roles are constructed, reinforced, and perceived in kindergarten schools. A qualitative approach is the most suitable because it allows for an in-depth exploration of social interactions, classroom dynamics, and teachers' beliefs in their natural settings. Rather than relying on numerical data, this study seeks to understand how gender is embedded in everyday classroom practices and how teachers contribute- consciously or unconsciously- to shaping children's understanding of gender roles. By using a qualitative approach, the research captures real-life experiences and

perspectives that would not be easily quantifiable. The study aims to explore the subtle ways in which gender norms emerge in classroom interactions and teaching methods, making qualitative inquiry essential for uncovering patterns that may go unnoticed in more structured, quantitative approaches.

#### ➤ *Qualitative Mode of Inquiry*

This research employs a qualitative mode of inquiry to gain a deeper understanding of how gender is constructed in kindergarten classrooms. A qualitative approach is particularly valuable when studying complex social phenomena, such as the gendering process in early childhood education, because it allows for the collection of rich, descriptive data that captures the nuances of human interactions (Creswell, 2014).

The study uses observations and in-depth interviews as the primary methods of data collection. Observing teacher-child interactions in their natural setting provides real-time insights into how gender roles are reinforced through teaching practices, classroom activities, and communication styles. These observations are complemented by in-depth interviews with kindergarten teachers, which offer a deeper understanding of their beliefs, attitudes, and pedagogical approaches toward gender.

A qualitative inquiry is also flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt to new insights as they emerge. Gender norms are often embedded in everyday interactions, sometimes in ways that teachers themselves may not be fully aware of (Blaise, 2005). By using a qualitative approach, the study can capture these subtleties, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the gendering process in early education.

Furthermore, this approach allows for thematic analysis, where patterns and recurring themes related to gender are identified and examined. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest, qualitative research helps interpret meaning from lived experiences, making it the most appropriate method for exploring how gender is internalized and expressed in kindergarten classrooms.

By combining observational data with teacher interviews, the study ensures a holistic exploration of how gender roles are developed in early childhood education. This qualitative mode of inquiry provides depth and insight, making it an effective approach for understanding the complex and evolving nature of gender socialization in kindergarten schools.

#### *D. Sampling Method and Steps in Sampling*

This study used purposive sampling to select both schools and teachers that could provide relevant insights into the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms. The aim was to understand how gender roles are shaped through teacher-child interactions, classroom materials, and overall teaching practices. To ensure that participants had valuable experiences to share, the following criteria were considered for selecting the schools and teachers.

#### ➤ *Selection of Schools*

The study included five private kindergarten schools from Kathmandu, which were selected to represent both well-resourced and less-resourced schools. The classification was based on observations made during site visits.

- **Well-Resourced Schools:** These schools were identified based on their access to a wide range of teaching materials, modern classroom infrastructure, and opportunities for teacher professional development. These factors contributed to a richer learning environment, which likely influenced classroom dynamics and the gendering process.
- **Less-Resourced Schools:** In contrast, these schools had limited teaching materials, poor classroom infrastructure, and fewer opportunities for professional development for teachers. Financial or logistical challenges often hindered their ability to provide an ideal learning environment. These limitations could influence the way gender roles were perceived and enacted in the classroom.

By comparing these two types of schools, the study aimed to explore whether the availability of resources impacted how gender roles were reinforced or challenged in different educational settings.

#### ➤ *Teacher Selection Criteria*

The selection of teachers was based on the following criteria:

- **Experience:** Teachers needed to have at least one year of experience in kindergarten education. This ensured they had enough exposure to the classroom environment to provide meaningful insights into gender dynamics.
- **Active Involvement:** Only teachers who were actively involved in daily classroom activities were selected. Their direct interactions with children allowed them to offer authentic perspectives on how gender roles were reinforced or challenged in the classroom.
- **Willingness to Participate:** Teachers had to be willing to openly discuss their experiences related to gender in the classroom. Their openness was crucial for obtaining richer and more detailed data for the study.

To further ensure a diverse and representative sample, snowball sampling was also employed. Teachers who were initially selected recommended other colleagues they believed could offer valuable insights into gender-related classroom dynamics. This approach helped expand the sample, ensuring a broader range of perspectives.

#### ➤ *Selection of Children for Observation*

The study focused on children aged 3-5 years, a critical stage for gender socialization. A balanced representation of boys and girls was maintained in the sample to ensure an unbiased view of how gender roles were played out in the classrooms. Parental consent was obtained when necessary to ensure ethical practices in observing the children.

#### ➤ *Finalizing the Sample*

- A total of five teachers across five schools were selected for the study.
- Observational data were collected from multiple classrooms to ensure varied perspectives on how gender roles were addressed and enacted in the classroom.

This structured approach to sampling ensured that the study captured a wide range of experiences and insights into the gendering process in kindergarten schools, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

#### ➤ *Data Saturation and Sample Size*

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a smaller sample size was deemed appropriate. Data saturation- the point at which no new information emerges- was reached after the 11th interview. Subsequent interviews did not provide additional insights. To further ensure the comprehensiveness and diversity of the data, an additional 14 interviews were conducted, following the recommendation of Richards and Munsters. These additional interviews helped ensure that no new information would emerge and provided a more varied set of perspectives, enriching the findings.

By combining purposive and snowball sampling techniques, this study ensured a diverse and representative sample. This method allowed for a rich and nuanced understanding of the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms and contributed to the study's objectives of examining how gender roles are shaped, reinforced, or challenged in early childhood education.

### *E. Geographical Location*

This study was conducted in private kindergarten schools within Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. As the capital city, Kathmandu had a diverse range of private schools catering to different socio-economic groups, making it an ideal setting to explore how gender roles were developed in early childhood education. These schools provided structured learning environments where teacher interactions, classroom activities, and educational materials influenced children's understanding of gender from an early age.

To capture a broad perspective, the study included both well-resourced and less resourced schools. Schools with better resources and exposure to modern teaching approaches tended to promote more progressive gender attitudes, while those with fewer resources often followed more traditional gender norms. By comparing these different settings, the study aimed to understand how socio-economic factors shaped the way gender was reinforced in kindergarten classrooms.

A total of five private schools were selected to ensure a mix of teaching styles, classroom cultures, and socio-economic contexts. To maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical research guidelines, the names of the schools remained undisclosed. Protecting the identity of institutions and participants was essential to ensuring privacy and ethical integrity in the research.

By studying schools from different backgrounds, this research provided a deeper understanding of how gender roles were formed and reinforced in kindergarten education in Kathmandu Valley.

### *F. Nature of Respondent*

The study included 25 kindergarten teachers from five private schools in the Kathmandu Valley. The teachers had varying years of teaching experience, with ages ranging between 22 and 52 years. The sample consisted of 18 female teachers (72%) and 7 male teachers (28%). The teachers were selected from both well-resourced and less resourced private schools to ensure socio-economic diversity among the participants. Their insights into classroom dynamics, teaching practices, and gender-related interactions provided valuable information on the gendering process in kindergarten schools.

The following table (Table 1) provides a breakdown of the schools, the number of students, and the classification of each school:

Table 1: Breakdown of Schools, Students, and Teachers by Resource Classification

| School | Total Students | Boys | Girls | Number of Respondents | Male Teachers | Female Teachers | Resource Classification |
|--------|----------------|------|-------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| A      | 65             | 33   | 32    | 5                     | 3             | 2               | Well- resourced         |
| B      | 59             | 30   | 29    | 5                     | 1             | 4               | Well- resourced         |
| C      | 60             | 32   | 28    | 5                     | 0             | 5               | Well- resourced         |
| D      | 72             | 37   | 35    | 5                     | 2             | 3               | Less- resourced         |
| E      | 70             | 35   | 35    | 5                     | 1             | 4               | Less- resourced         |
| Total  | 326            | 167  | 159   | 25                    | 7             | 18              |                         |

#### G. Tools for Qualitative Inquiry

For this study, two main tools were used to gather data: classroom observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

- **Classroom Observations:** Classroom observations were carried out to directly capture teacher-child interactions and explore how gender roles were reinforced or challenged. Each observation session lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, with multiple sessions conducted in each classroom to observe different dynamics. A structured checklist was used to guide the observations, focusing on key aspects such as how teachers communicated with students, assigned tasks, and distributed attention between boys and girls. This approach ensured that the focus remained on gender-related behaviors. The goal was to identify both subtle and overt ways in which teachers may reinforce gender norms through verbal communication, such as language used, and non-verbal cues, including body language and how classroom space was allocated.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** The primary method for collecting qualitative data in this study was a semi-structured interview questionnaire. The development of the questionnaire followed several stages to ensure it was both clear and relevant. First, a thorough review of existing literature guided the creation of the interview questions. These questions were then reviewed by two PhD scholars to assess their validity and reliability. Based on their feedback, the questions were revised.

The interviews were conducted with 25 teachers, providing a deeper understanding of their perspectives on gender roles and how they address them in the classroom. The flexible, open- ended format of the semi-structured interviews encouraged participants to reflect on their teaching practices and share personal experiences and insights regarding gender.

Together, these methods provided a rich, multifaceted understanding of the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms, combining direct observations with teachers' insights and reflections.

#### H. Data Analysis Method for Qualitative Data

The data collected from the interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method helped identify patterns and themes in the data, making it easier to understand how gender roles are shaped in kindergarten classrooms.

##### ➤ Here's How the Data Was Analyzed:

- **Transcribing the Interviews:** The interviews were transcribed word for word to make sure every detail was captured. This allowed a clear understanding of the teachers' views and experiences related to gender roles in the classroom.
- **Coding the Data:** After transcription, the data was broken down into smaller parts and labeled with codes. These codes highlighted key ideas and examples about gender roles, teaching practices, and interactions between teachers and students. To enhance the depth of responses, a laddering technique was used during interviews. Probing questions such as "**Can you please explain what you mean by that?**" or "**Can you give an example?**" encouraged participants to elaborate on their thoughts. This approach ensured that underlying beliefs and assumptions were explored in greater detail.
- **Finding Themes:** The codes were grouped into broader themes. For example, common themes included how teachers might unintentionally reinforce gender roles, the impact of classroom activities on gender beliefs, and teachers' views on gender in education. Identifying these themes helped to see the bigger picture of how gender is dealt with in the classroom.
- **Interpreting the Data:** The final step was to interpret the themes by linking them to the research questions. This helped to understand how teachers' actions and thoughts match with existing theories about gender and how factors like socio-economic background influence gender behavior in classrooms.

#### I. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in research, especially when working with children and educators. Ensuring the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants is essential. Ethical guidelines help prevent harm, secure informed consent, and maintain confidentiality, which are key to building trust in the research process.

In this study on The Gendering Process in Kindergarten Schools, strict ethical standards were followed to protect all participants. Teachers were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Written consent was obtained before conducting any interviews or classroom observations.

Confidentiality was a priority. Personal information, including the identities of teachers, students, and schools, was kept private. Data was anonymized, and pseudonyms are used in the final report. Any audio recordings and notes are securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Every effort was made to ensure that participants did not experience any stress or discomfort during the study.

Given the young age of the students, special care was taken to make sure that observation methods were appropriate and did not interfere with their natural classroom activities. The findings of this study were used solely for academic purposes and remained within the scope of the research objectives. By following these ethical guidelines, the study upheld the highest standards and ensured the protection of all participants.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

#### A. Demographic Information of the Interviewees

The study included 25 kindergarten teachers from five private schools in the Kathmandu Valley. These teachers had varying years of teaching experience, with ages ranging from 22 to 52 years. The sample consisted of 18 female teachers (72%) and 7 male teachers (28%). The schools were selected to represent both well- resourced and less resourced institutions, ensuring socio-economic diversity among the participants.

In terms of marital status, most of the teachers were married (16 out of 25), with 9 being unmarried. The ethnic backgrounds of the teachers reflected Nepal's diversity, with participants from various ethnic groups such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar, and others. Similarly, regarding religion, the majority of the teachers identified as Hindu (19 out of 25), with a few practicing Buddhism (4 out of 25) and others following different beliefs. This diversity in religious beliefs further contributes to the cultural richness of the study, providing different perspectives on gender dynamics in early childhood education.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Participants

| Gender       | Frequency (n=25) | Percentage  |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| Female       | 18               | 72%         |
| Male         | 7                | 28%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>25</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

This table presents the gender distribution of the 25 kindergarten teachers who participated in the study, highlighting the representation of female and male teachers within the sample. The gender balance is essential for understanding potential differences in teaching styles, interactions with students, and gender dynamics in early childhood education.

Table 3: Age Range of Participants

| Age Range    | Frequency (n=25) | Percentage  |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| 22-35        | 10               | 40%         |
| 35-45        | 8                | 32%         |
| 45-52        | 5                | 20%         |
| 52 and above | 2                | 8%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>25</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

This table presents the age range of the participants, all of whom were between 22 and 52 years old. The diversity in age allows for a variety of perspectives on kindergarten education. The largest group, aged 22-35 years, represents 40% of the sample, followed by 35-45 years (32%), and smaller groups of 45-52 years (20%) and 52 and above (8%). This age range captures a broad spectrum of teaching experiences and approaches to gender dynamics in early childhood education.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Teachers

| Educational Qualification | Frequency (n=25) | Percentage  |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| High School Graduate      | 5                | 20%         |
| Undergraduate Degree      | 5                | 20%         |
| Graduate Degree           | 15               | 60%         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>25</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

This table presents the educational qualifications of the 25 kindergarten teachers. The qualifications are divided into three categories: High School Graduate, Undergraduate Degree, and Graduate Degree. This distribution offers insight into the level of academic preparation of the participants.

Table 5: Years of Teaching Experience

| Years of Teaching Experience | Frequency (n=25) | Percentage  |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1-3 years                    | 5                | 20%         |
| 3-5 years                    | 7                | 28%         |
| 5-7 years                    | 6                | 24%         |
| 7-9 years                    | 4                | 16%         |
| 9 and above                  | 3                | 12%         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>25</b>        | <b>100%</b> |



This table categorizes the years of teaching experience among the 25 teachers. The data is grouped into five categories: Less than 3 years, 3-5 years, 5-7 years, 7-9 years, and 9 or more years. This classification provides insight into the professional experience of the teachers, which may influence their teaching practices and their approach to gender dynamics in the classroom.

Table 6: School Type of Participants

| School Type              | Frequency (n=25) | Percentage  |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Well- resourced Schools  | 15               | 60%         |
| Less resourced Schools   | 10               | 40%         |
| <b>Total Respondents</b> | <b>25</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

This table shows the distribution of participants based on the type of school they are affiliated with, divided into well- resourced and less resourced schools. This distinction is important to understand the socio-economic diversity and how different school environments may influence teaching practices and gender dynamics in early childhood education.

#### ➤ Explanation

- **Gender Distribution:** Among the 25 participants, the majority were female teachers (18), representing 72% of the sample, while 7 teachers (28%) were male. This gender distribution reflects the trend in early childhood education, where female teachers generally outnumber male teachers. The higher proportion of female teachers may influence the classroom environment, teaching methods, and the way gender roles are presented to young children. The male teachers, though fewer in number, play an important role by providing diverse role models for the children.
- **Age Range:** The teachers' ages ranged from 22 to 52 years, representing a mix of young and experienced educators. Younger teachers (22-35 years) often bring fresh ideas and innovative approaches to teaching, while older teachers (35-52 years) possess more years of experience, which can shape their teaching style and classroom management. This diversity in age enhances the study by offering various perspectives on gender-related practices in kindergarten education.
- **Teaching Experience:** The years of teaching experience among the teachers varied, with some having less than 3 years and others having over 9 years. Teachers with less experience may incorporate modern pedagogical strategies, while those with more experience often rely on established methods. This variety adds depth to the study, highlighting how teaching experience affects gender dynamics and teacher-student interactions.
- **Educational Qualifications:** The educational qualifications of the teachers ranged from high school graduates to those holding graduate degrees. The majority of the participants held graduate degrees (60%), suggesting that the teachers in this study had strong academic backgrounds, which may influence their teaching practices, including their approach to gender in the classroom.
- **School Type:** The sample included teachers from both well-resourced (48%) and less resourced (52%) schools, ensuring a balanced representation of socio-economic backgrounds. This diversity allows for a comprehensive exploration of how different school environments impact gender- related teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and the overall learning experience for children. Well-resourced schools tend to have more resources and formal curricula, while non-well-resourced schools often adopt more flexible, creative teaching approaches. I also explored what motivated the teachers to choose kindergarten teaching as their profession. Teachers were asked about the reasons behind their decision to work in this field.

#### ➤ Motivations for Choosing Kindergarten Teaching

Teachers chose to teach in kindergarten for a variety of reasons. Many were driven by a genuine love for children and a passion for helping them grow. Some were drawn to the idea of making a lasting impact on young learners during their formative years. Others enjoyed the hands-on, creative aspect of teaching, where they could engage children through fun and interactive activities. A few teachers mentioned being inspired by personal experiences or role models in the field, while for others, it just felt like a natural fit.

#### B. Observational Findings

The observations from the study highlighted clear differences in teacher-child interactions, classroom activities, and the types of teaching materials used in Schools A, B, and C compared to Schools D and E.

In Schools A, B, and C, teachers tended to use more structured approaches. For example, during lessons, teachers often gave direct instructions and used formal learning materials like textbooks or educational kits. In one instance, a teacher guided the children on how to use educational toys in a very structured way, telling the boys to play with trucks and encouraging the girls to play with dolls, reflecting traditional gender roles. Teacher-child interactions were more verbal, with teachers explaining tasks in detail and providing explicit directions on what to do.

On the other hand, teachers in Schools D and E adopted a more flexible approach, focusing on creativity and play. For example, during an art activity, the children were free to choose what they wanted to create, with no restrictions based on gender. One teacher didn't give specific instructions but instead used gestures and body language to guide the children, like pointing to the materials or gently guiding a child's hands when they needed help. Non-verbal communication like eye contact or a simple nod seemed to play a bigger role in these classrooms.

The materials also reflected these differences. In Schools A, B, and C, teachers had access to specialized resources, such as worksheets and digital tools, which often reinforced gender stereotypes. For instance, in a reading activity, the teacher used a story where the girl character was nurturing and the boy character was adventurous. But in Schools D and E, teachers used whatever materials were available, often turning to recycled items or simple objects like cardboard boxes, which allowed children to create whatever they imagined, with fewer gendered limitations.

These examples show how teacher-child interactions, classroom activities, and materials varied between the schools, influencing how gender roles were reinforced or challenged.

#### ➤ *Toy and Color Preferences and Their Role in Gender Identity Formation*

When examining how teaching materials, activities, and pedagogical approaches contribute to the gendering process, clear patterns emerged, particularly in children's toy and color preferences. While traditional gender roles were evident, the learning environment and teacher interventions played key roles in shaping these preferences.

##### • *Toy Preferences*

In the well-resourced Schools A, B, and C, which are more aware of gender roles, students exhibited a more balanced approach to toy preferences. While some boys still favored cars, building blocks, and outdoor activities, and some girls leaned towards dolls, kitchen sets, and pretend play, a significant number of children in these schools also engaged in non-traditional play. Teachers actively encouraged mixed-gender play, leading to greater acceptance of diverse toy choices. As one teacher from School B shared:

*"We avoid labeling toys by gender, and this has helped many children feel comfortable choosing what they like, regardless of societal expectations."*

Unlike in traditional settings, many boys in Schools A, B, and C were seen playing with dolls and kitchen sets, while girls engaged in building blocks and outdoor activities. A teacher from School A noted:

*"We've noticed that boys and girls are equally participating in activities like storytelling, pretend cooking, and construction play. The more we normalize this, the more confident they become in their choices."*

In contrast, Schools D and E, which are less-resourced, had fewer structured toy options, relying on shared materials like recycled objects and handmade toys. This setup allowed children more freedom to explore different types of play without rigid gendered expectations. A teacher from School E explained:

*"With fewer predefined toys, children experiment more. We see boys engaging in pretend cooking and girls building structures with blocks."*

While Schools A, B, and C intentionally promoted gender-neutral play through structured interventions, Schools D and E naturally encouraged mixed play due to the availability of open-ended materials. Despite these efforts across all schools, societal norms still played a role in shaping children's preferences.

This highlights that gender awareness in Schools A, B, and C has contributed to a more neutral play environment, reducing strict adherence to traditional gender roles. However, the broader societal expectations still influence children's choices, reflecting the ongoing complexity of the gendering process in early childhood education.



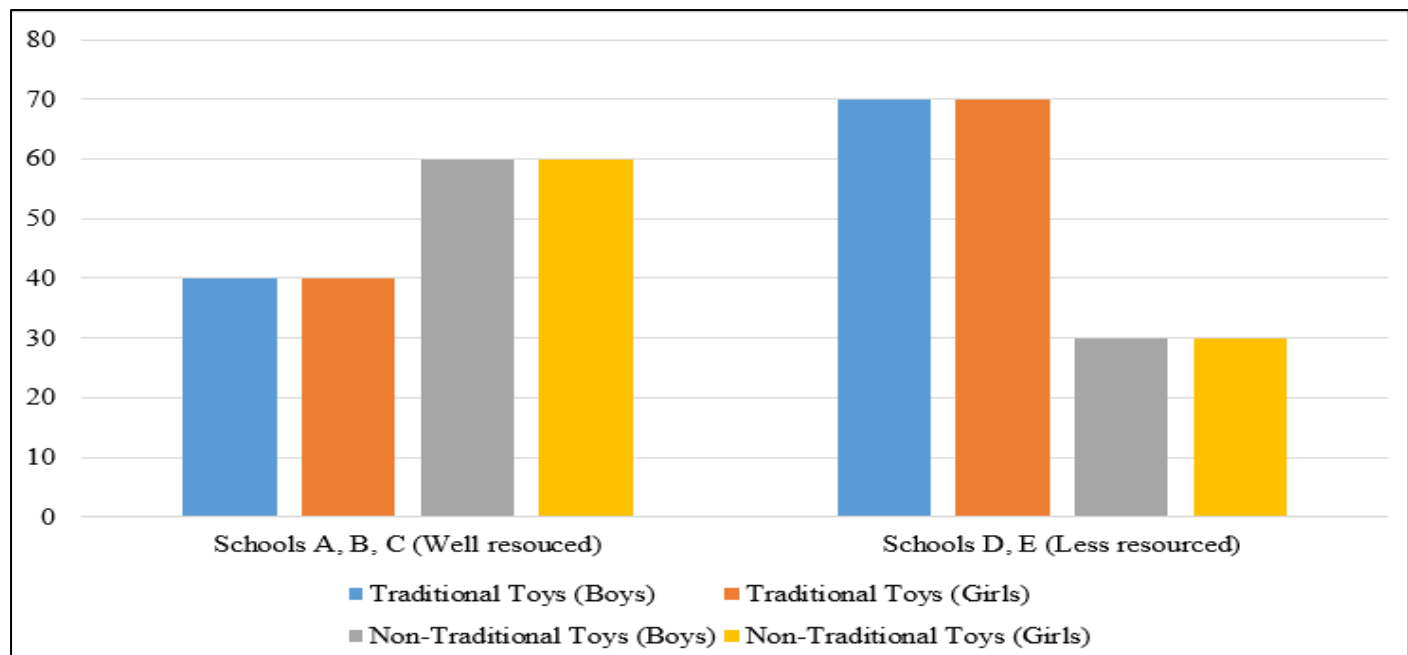


Fig 2: Comparison of Toy Preferences by Gender and School Type

The bar diagram illustrates the differences in toy preferences between students in well-resourced, gender-aware schools (Schools A, B, and C) and less-resourced schools (Schools D and E). In Schools A, B, and C, where teachers actively promote gender neutrality, a higher percentage of boys (60%) engage with non-traditional toys like dolls and kitchen sets, while 60% of girls explore traditionally male-associated toys like building blocks and cars. This suggests that teacher interventions and structured learning environments help break gender stereotypes.

In contrast, Schools D and E, with fewer structured interventions and more reliance on open-ended materials, show a stronger adherence to traditional gender roles, with 70% of boys preferring masculine-coded toys and 70% of girls favoring feminine-coded ones. This indicates that while resource availability plays a role, societal norms continue to influence children's choices, highlighting the need for continued efforts in promoting gender-neutral play environments.

#### • Color Preferences

In terms of color preferences, clear gender-based patterns emerged in the classrooms. In Schools A, B, and C, where there was an emphasis on gender neutrality, students were more flexible in selecting colors. While about 80% of girls still gravitated toward traditionally feminine colors like pink, purple, and red, and about 75% of boys chose traditionally masculine colors like blue, green, and black, there was a noticeable trend toward more neutral color choices. Teachers in these schools encouraged experimentation, which led to a broader range of color preferences across genders. For example, a teacher in School B explained:

"When we asked children to pick their favorite colors, many followed the usual pink-for-girls, blue-for-boys pattern, but some were open to experimenting when we encouraged them."

On the other hand, in Schools D and E, where the environment was less structured, traditional color preferences were more prominent. Boys predominantly chose blue, green, and other masculine colors, while girls continued to favor pink, purple, and red. A teacher in School E shared:

"Since we don't assign specific colors for activities, children mix and match more freely. Some boys pick pink, and some girls go for blue without hesitation."

Family background also influenced color preferences. A teacher in School C pointed out:

"Children with more exposure to different experiences at home tend to have a wider range of color preferences."

Schools A, B, and C demonstrated more flexibility in color choices due to teacher encouragement of gender-neutral options, while Schools D and E exhibited more traditional color preferences. This highlights the role of early childhood education in promoting gender-neutral choices and helping children explore more flexible gender identities.

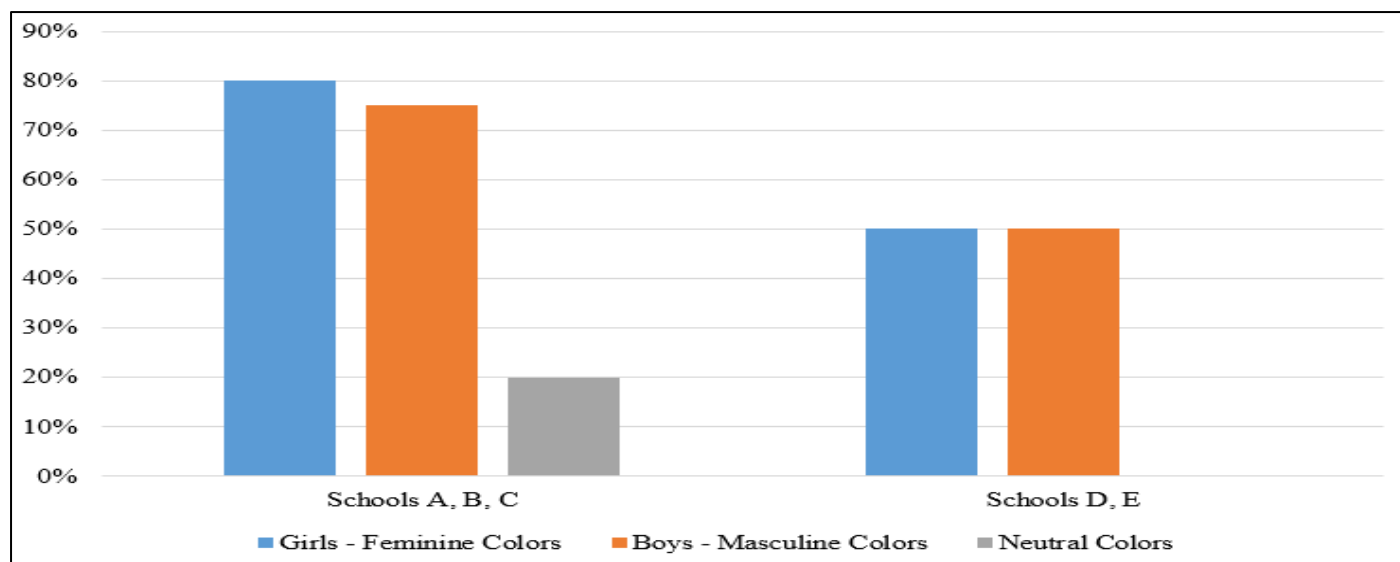


Fig 3: Color Preferences in Kindergarten Classrooms

This bar diagram shows how children in Schools A, B, C (gender-aware) and Schools D, E (less-resourced) chose colors. In Schools A, B, and C, most girls preferred colors like pink, purple, and red, while boys picked blue, green, and black. However, some students in these schools chose neutral colors, reflecting a more flexible approach to color selection. In contrast, Schools D and E saw more traditional color choices, with girls mostly choosing pink and boys mostly choosing blue. These patterns show that children in gender-aware schools had more freedom to explore color preferences, while traditional norms influenced choices more strongly in less-resourced schools.

- *The Impact of Gendered vs. Neutral Language on Color Preferences*

In early childhood classrooms, the language teachers use can strongly influence children's color choices. In Schools A, B, and C, where teachers avoided gendered language and presented colors neutrally, both boys and girls felt free to choose colors like blue without it being seen as "just for boys." As one teacher from School B explained:

*"When we stop labeling colors as 'for boys' or 'for girls,' we notice both boys and girls picking blue equally and exploring other colors without hesitation."*

In contrast, in Schools D and E, where colors were more traditionally linked to gender (blue for boys, pink for girls), boys mostly picked blue, while girls stuck to pink. This shows how gendered language can shape children's color preferences, reinforcing traditional gender norms.

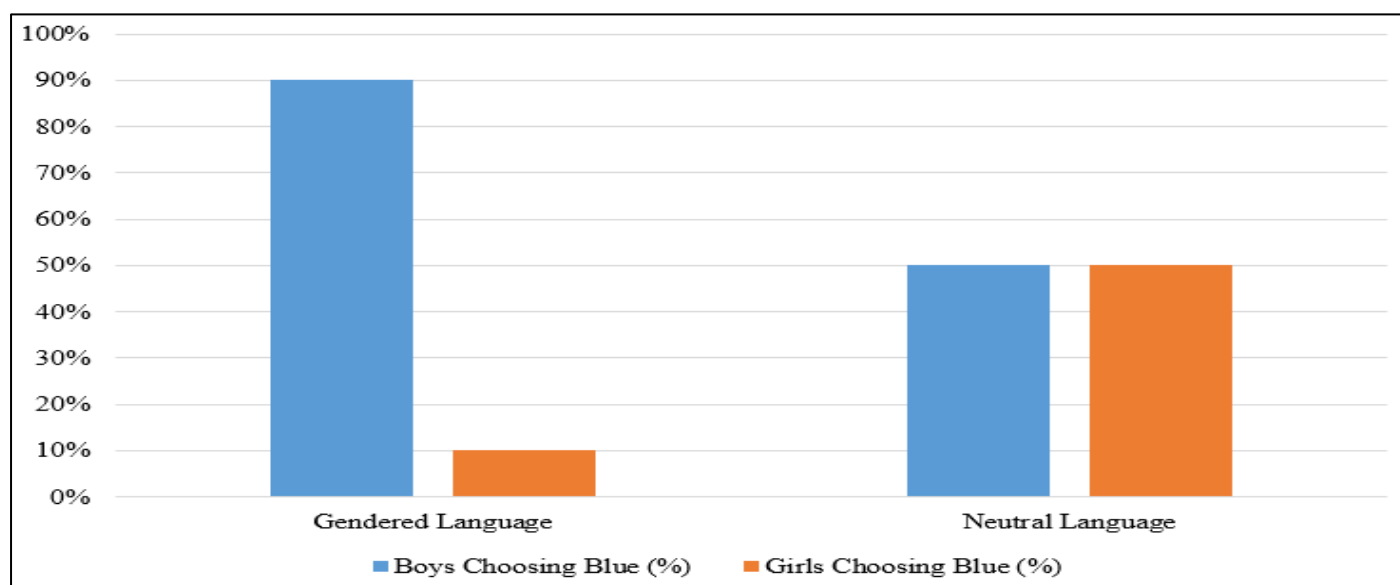


Fig 4: Comparison of Blue Color Choices by Gendered vs Neutral Language in Kindergarten Classrooms

The diagram shows how gendered and neutral language influences children's color preferences. In classrooms with gendered language, 90% of boys chose blue, while only 10% of girls did, reflecting traditional gender associations. However, in classrooms with neutral language, both boys and girls selected blue equally, at 50%. This suggests that when colors are not linked to gender, children are more likely to make independent choices, highlighting the role language plays in shaping children's preferences and promoting gender-neutral behavior.

This comparison underscores the powerful role that language plays in shaping children's behaviors and attitudes towards gender. The results suggest that gendered language in the classroom can reinforce traditional gender norms, while neutral language allows children to make choices based on personal preference rather than societal expectations.

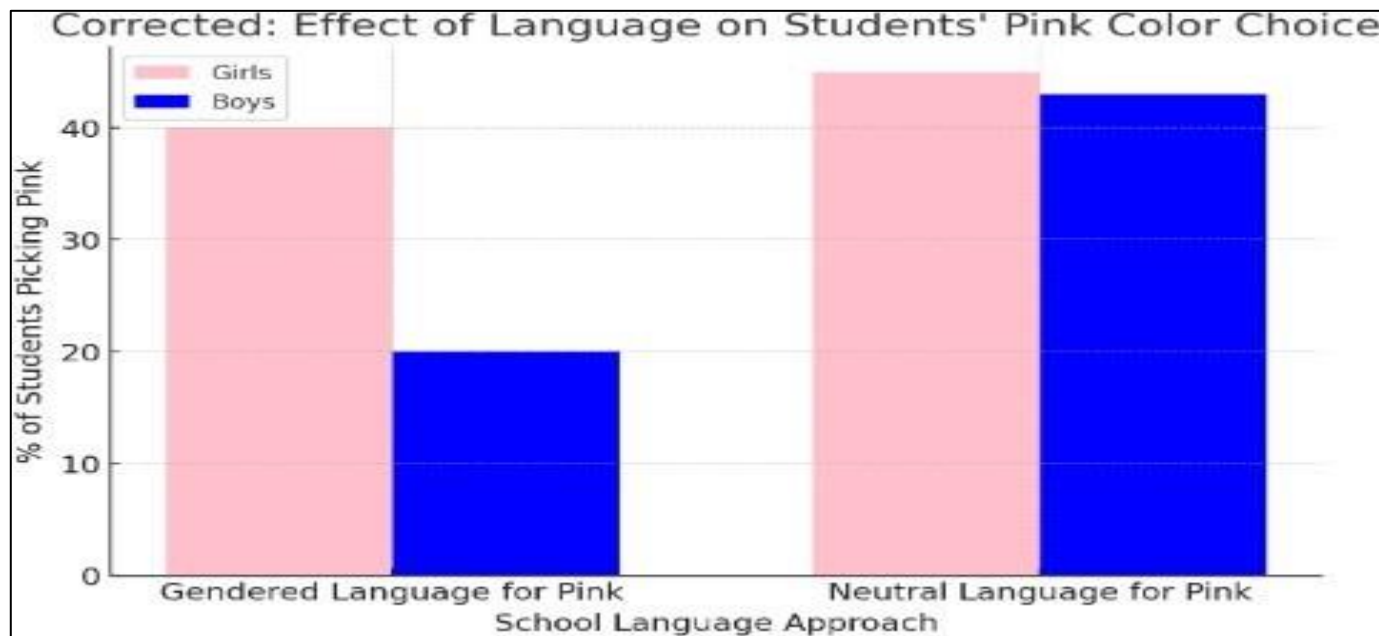


Fig 5: Comparison of Pink Color Choices by Gendered vs Neutral Language in Kindergarten Classrooms

In gendered language environments, girls are more likely to choose pink, while boys tend to pick other colors. In contrast, when the color is presented neutrally, both boys and girls are equally likely to choose pink, suggesting that without the influence of gendered expectations, children's choices are more balanced.

This comparison underscores the powerful role that language plays in shaping children's behaviors and attitudes towards gender. The results suggest that gendered language in the classroom can reinforce traditional gender norms, while neutral language allows children to make choices based on personal preference rather than societal expectations.

- *The Role of Teacher Awareness in Shaping Gender Perceptions*

Beyond toys and colors, teacher awareness played a crucial role in shaping children's classroom experiences. In schools where teachers were mindful of gender biases, students naturally engaged in a broader range of activities, without the rigid distinctions between "boys' toys" and "girls' toys." Color preferences also seemed more neutral, with children selecting from a variety of colors instead of sticking strictly to gendered color norms. In contrast, in schools where teachers were less conscious of gender differences, children tended to follow traditional patterns- boys choosing building blocks, cars, and action figures (often in darker colors), while girls gravitated towards dolls, kitchen sets, and art activities (typically in pastel shades).

An interesting trend emerged in the well-resourced schools, where teachers had more flexibility in curriculum design. In these settings, educators who were aware of gender issues deliberately structured lessons and activities to prevent reinforcing stereotypes. This approach led to a more balanced learning environment, where both boys and girls were encouraged to explore a wider array of roles, interests, and color choices. This contrast was particularly evident when comparing well-resourced schools, where gender-conscious practices were implemented, with less-resourced schools, where traditional gender roles remained more dominant due to limited curriculum flexibility and teacher awareness.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TEACHER'S INTERACTION AND GENDER ROLE FORMATION

#### A. Teacher-Child Interactions and Gendered Perceptions

The interactions between teachers and children significantly influence how gender roles are understood and internalized in kindergarten settings. Both verbal and non-verbal exchanges contribute to the gendering process, as observed during classroom sessions and through interviews with teachers.

##### ➤ Verbal Interactions and Gendered Language

In Schools A, B, and C, where resources and training were more readily available, teachers were more aware of gender biases and made a conscious effort to avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles. For instance, in these schools, some teachers used neutral language, referring to students as "friends" rather than making distinctions based on gender. One teacher in School C shared:

*"I try to avoid saying 'strong boys' and 'cute girls,' focusing more on the individual qualities of my students."*

This shift in language, which promotes equality, was more common in well-resourced schools where professional development on gender sensitivity was often a part of teacher training.

On the other hand, in Schools D and E, the lack of resources and professional development opportunities made it more difficult for teachers to consciously alter their language. In these schools, traditional gendered language was more prevalent, with boys frequently praised for qualities like "bravery" and "strength," while girls were complimented for being "sweet" and "obedient." Teachers in these settings, like in School E, admitted:

*"Sometimes, I tell boys to 'be tough' and girls to 'be sweet.' It's hard to break from what we were taught as children."*

##### ➤ Non-Verbal Interactions and Gendered Engagement

In Schools A, B, and C, where teachers had more resources and training, they were more intentional about creating gender-neutral environments. For example, in these schools, teachers encouraged mixed-gender seating arrangements and group work. One teacher in school A said:

*"I noticed that when we placed boys and girls together in seating and group work, they started engaging more as equals rather than separating themselves."*

This approach helped foster more balanced interactions between boys and girls, encouraging them to collaborate and interact without gender-based boundaries.

However, in Schools D and E, where resources and professional development opportunities were limited, more traditional gendered patterns of engagement were observed. For instance, male teachers tended to engage more with boys during physical activities, like outdoor games, while female teachers spent more time with girls in quieter activities like arts and crafts. A teacher in School D shared:

*"I naturally end up playing football with the boys during breaks, while the girls gather around for drawings and crafts."*

This division in teacher interactions based on gendered expectations was more common in less-resourced schools, where such practices were less challenged.

Seating arrangements also reflected these patterns. In less-resourced schools, boys and girls often chose to sit apart, reinforcing traditional gender divisions. In contrast, well-resourced schools made a point of encouraging mixed seating and group activities, helping to reduce gender-based segregation.

These examples show how teacher behavior, even in non-verbal ways, can either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles in the classroom. While teachers in well-resourced schools worked to create inclusive environments, those in less-resourced schools were more likely to stick to traditional gendered patterns due to ingrained habits and limited training.

Overall, teacher interactions, both through words and actions, shape how young children understand gender roles in the classroom. In well-resourced schools, teachers made conscious efforts to use neutral language, mix seating arrangements, and encourage balanced participation. In less-resourced schools, traditional gender norms were more evident, often reinforced through daily routines and interactions. While some teachers tried to challenge these patterns, ingrained habits and limited training made change difficult. Creating a more gender-inclusive learning environment requires continuous awareness, training, and support for teachers across all school settings.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TEACHING MATERIALS, ACTIVITIES AND GENDER PERCEPTIONS

#### A. Teaching Materials, Activities, and Pedagogical Approaches in the Gendering Process

Teaching materials, classroom activities, and pedagogical approaches are fundamental in shaping children's perceptions of gender roles in early childhood education. In examining how these factors contribute to the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms, differences were observed between well-resourced and less-resourced schools.

##### ➤ Gender Representation in Learning Materials

In well-resourced schools (Schools A, B, C), gender representation in textbooks, storybooks, and visual materials showed a relatively balanced approach. Teachers in these schools made an effort to introduce books that feature both male and female characters in diverse roles. For instance, a female teacher from School B noted:

*"Most stories in our books show girls playing indoors while boys explore outside. We try to balance this by discussing different career options."*

Similarly, a teacher in School A shared:

*"We often find that books portray boys as the ones going on adventures or solving big problems, whereas girls are just supporting characters. We try to create a more inclusive environment by introducing books with female role models in diverse careers."*

While these schools made efforts to present a more inclusive approach by using supplementary materials and engaging in discussions about gender equality, the availability of gender-neutral or non-stereotypical materials was still limited, posing challenges in fully neutralizing gender representation.

In contrast, less-resourced schools (Schools D and E) struggled more with gendered learning materials. Teachers in these schools faced difficulties accessing diverse books and materials, often relying on outdated or limited resources. As a result, gender stereotypes were more prominently reflected in the teaching materials. A teacher from School E noted:

*"We don't have many resources to work with, and the materials we do have often show stereotypical gender roles. For example, girls are portrayed as homemakers, while boys are seen as leaders. We try to balance this as much as possible in our classroom discussions, but it's a constant struggle."*

Despite their efforts to challenge these stereotypes, the lack of diverse, gender-neutral materials in less-resourced schools made it harder for teachers to fully address the imbalance in gender representation.

Thus, while both well-resourced and less-resourced schools were aware of gender biases in their materials, well-resourced schools had more access to a variety of resources that allowed for a more proactive approach in addressing gender representation. Less-resourced schools, on the other hand, faced more limitations in terms of materials, which hindered their ability to provide a balanced gender perspective in the classroom.

##### ➤ Classroom Activities and Gendered Participation

Classroom activities also revealed gendered patterns in children's participation, with notable differences between well-resourced and less-resourced schools. In both settings, free play sessions showed that girls often engaged in role-playing activities associated with caregiving, such as playing with dolls or pretending to cook, while boys were more inclined to choose physical activities or play with building blocks and cars. However, the extent to which teachers intervened to challenge these gendered preferences varied.

In well-resourced schools (Schools A, B, C), teachers actively worked to encourage children to step outside traditional gender roles. For example, one teacher in School B shared:

*"We try to rotate activities so that all students experience both traditionally 'male' and 'female' tasks. For example, we encourage boys to participate in storytelling and girls to try problem-solving games."*

Such efforts indicate that teachers in well-resourced schools had the tools and support to promote a more inclusive approach to gendered activities. By intentionally rotating activities and encouraging children to explore different roles, they aimed to break away from traditional gender expectations. However, despite these efforts, natural preferences still persisted, as one teacher noted:

*"Even when we allow free choice, boys usually pick active games, and girls go for drawing or storytelling. We do encourage them to try different things, but they seem to stick to what they're comfortable with."*

In less-resourced schools (Schools D and E), teachers faced more challenges in diversifying participation. Due to limited resources, activities often remained traditional, and teachers were less able to provide varied opportunities for children to explore non-gendered roles. A teacher from School D mentioned:

*"We don't always have the resources to rotate activities in the way we'd like. Boys often pick sports or building blocks, while girls go for arts and crafts. We encourage them, but it's difficult to make significant changes with the materials available."*

While teachers in less-resourced schools attempted to address gendered participation, the lack of diverse materials and structured activities limited their ability to break traditional gender roles effectively.

#### ➤ *Pedagogical Approaches and Teacher Interventions*

The pedagogical approaches and teacher interventions also reflected varying degrees of gender inclusivity across schools. In well-resourced schools, teachers were more likely to implement gender-neutral language and ensure equal participation during lessons. For instance, one teacher in School C emphasized:

*"I make it a point to talk to the children about how they can pursue any career they want, whether it's a nurse or an engineer."*

This proactive approach was aimed at addressing gender bias by encouraging children to pursue interests beyond stereotypical roles. Teachers in these schools also made efforts to alternate leadership roles between boys and girls, fostering a more balanced distribution of responsibilities. As a teacher from School A noted:

*"Sometimes we unconsciously call boys for leadership roles, like being the class monitor. We are trying to change that by alternating responsibilities between boys and girls."*

However, in less-resourced schools, subtle biases still lingered. A male teacher from School D admitted:

*"Sometimes, we unconsciously call boys for leadership roles, like being the class monitor. We are trying to change that by alternating responsibilities between boys and girls."*

While there was a conscious effort to diversify participation, the constraints of less-resourced schools made it more difficult to fully implement these changes consistently.

Overall, the findings highlight that while both well-resourced and less-resourced schools recognize the impact of teaching materials, activities, and pedagogical approaches on gender perceptions, their ability to address gender biases differs. Well-resourced schools have more opportunities to challenge stereotypes through diverse materials and structured interventions, whereas less-resourced schools struggle with limited resources despite teachers' efforts. These differences underscore the role of accessibility in shaping how gender roles are reinforced or challenged in early childhood education.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### REINFORCEMENT OR CHALLENGES OF GENDER NORMS IN CLASSROOM

#### A. Teachers' Role in Reinforcing or Challenging Traditional Gender Norms

Kindergarten teachers play a pivotal role in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms within the classroom environment. The ways in which teachers assign roles, structure activities, and use teaching materials can either perpetuate gender stereotypes or actively work toward breaking them. This section explores the methods used by teachers in the classrooms observed, examining how they either reinforced or contested conventional gender roles.

When asked whether boys and girls behave differently in the classroom, many teachers pointed out noticeable patterns. Boys were often more active, taking leadership roles and seeking attention through physical activities, while girls tended to be quieter, more cooperative, and inclined toward nurturing tasks. For instance, teachers observed that boys were more likely to volunteer for physically demanding tasks, like arranging classroom materials or setting up play areas. Meanwhile, girls often took on roles such as helping to clean up or assisting younger classmates, mirroring traditional gender expectations.

However, these patterns weren't universal. Some girls displayed confidence and leadership skills, while some boys engaged in more cooperative and nurturing behaviors. Teachers acknowledged that their own interactions played a big role in shaping these behaviors- sometimes reinforcing traditional roles, other times encouraging children to step outside them.

In Schools A, B, and C, where teachers had the flexibility to design their own curriculum, there was a noticeable effort to promote gender equality. Teachers intentionally created classroom activities that encouraged both boys and girls to take on diverse roles, challenging traditional gender norms. For example, they rotated leadership responsibilities and made sure all children participated in problem-solving and creative tasks, regardless of gender.

In contrast, in Schools D and E, where teachers relied more on pre-existing materials, traditional gender roles were more deeply embedded in classroom practices. Limited resources and a lack of alternative teaching materials meant that gender biases in books and activities were often left unchallenged. Teachers in these schools acknowledged these issues but found it difficult to make significant changes without additional support or materials designed with gender inclusivity in mind.

These observations highlight the strong influence teachers have in shaping students' understanding of gender roles. Whether they reinforce or challenge these norms depends not only on their own awareness but also on the flexibility and resources available to them in their schools.

#### B. Gender Bias in Classroom Roles

In many of the observed classrooms, teachers unintentionally assigned tasks and responsibilities in ways that reinforced traditional gender roles. Boys were more frequently given leadership roles, while girls were often assigned supportive or decorative tasks. Although teachers were generally unaware of these biases, they acknowledged that such patterns had become ingrained in daily classroom routines. School B teacher noted:

*"Unintentionally, we often expect boys to lead and girls to organize.. It's something we need to consciously work on."*

School D teacher described how group activities often followed predictable gendered dynamics:

*"Boys are usually given the leadership roles in group activities, while girls are more likely to be asked to help with setting things up or tidying. We don't mean to do this, but it's something that just happens."*

Despite these tendencies, many teachers expressed a commitment to promoting more equitable task assignments. Some had already started rotating roles to ensure both boys and girls had opportunities to lead and assist. School A teacher highlighted this effort:

*"I try to give every child a chance to lead, but I've noticed that when we divide into groups, boys are often the ones chosen first as leaders. It's definitely something I need to pay more attention to."*

In some classrooms, teachers consciously encouraged girls to take on leadership roles such as group spokespersons, while boys were assigned tasks like organizing materials or assisting with decorations. This approach helped challenge traditional gender expectations and ensured a more balanced distribution of classroom responsibilities.

In Schools A, B, and C, there was a deliberate effort to challenge traditional gender roles. Teachers actively rotated leadership and support roles, ensuring that all students participated in a variety of tasks. These schools also exposed children to diverse career role models and promoted equal participation in both physical and creative activities. School E teacher shared their challenge in changing these norms:

*"We want to give both boys and girls the same opportunities, but sometimes we follow the same patterns we were taught. Without proper training, it's difficult to change overnight."*

Teachers in these schools recognized the issue but struggled to implement changes due to limited resources and a lack of structured gender-inclusive strategies. In many cases, students naturally gravitated toward gendered roles during activities, and without intentional intervention, these patterns persisted.

Teachers across all schools noted that children often internalized traditional gender roles on their own, even without explicit guidance. Boys frequently volunteered for physically demanding tasks like moving chairs or carrying books, while girls naturally took on roles that involved organizing or assisting the teacher. Some teachers observed that unless they actively intervened, these behaviors continued, reinforcing existing stereotypes.

Ultimately, these reflections highlight that while gendered expectations can shape classroom dynamics, teachers' awareness and deliberate actions can help challenge traditional norms. Schools with greater flexibility in curriculum design were better equipped to implement gender-inclusive practices, while those with fewer resources faced more challenges in breaking ingrained gender patterns.

### *C. Classroom Environment and Teaching Practices*

The physical and social environment of the classroom, along with the teaching strategies used, played a significant role in reinforcing or challenging gender norms. Observations revealed that classroom layouts and materials often reflected subtle gender biases. Areas with dolls, kitchen sets, and arts and crafts tended to attract girls, while building blocks and physical activity zones were more often chosen by boys.

In Schools A, B, and C, where teachers had more flexibility in designing their curriculum and classroom setups, efforts were made to create a more balanced and inclusive environment. Teachers consciously encouraged children to explore activities beyond traditional gender roles. A teacher from School A noted:

*"We try to rotate tasks equally, but sometimes children still follow traditional roles out of habit. For example, boys hesitate to help with cleaning unless encouraged."*

These schools actively promoted gender-neutral learning experiences, integrating activities that encouraged both boys and girls to participate in various tasks. Teachers also introduced diverse color palettes in classroom materials to challenge gendered preferences. A teacher from School B highlighted how this approach had a positive impact:

*"We introduced a variety of colors equally in our activities, and some boys have started picking pink or purple, which they wouldn't have before."*

In contrast, Schools D and E, which had fewer resources and followed a more rigid curriculum structure, showed less intervention in breaking traditional gender roles. Classroom materials and seating arrangements tended to follow conventional patterns, with boys and girls naturally gravitating toward gendered play areas. A teacher from School D observed:

*"Most boys still prefer superhero or car-themed clothes, and girls wear outfits with flowers and princesses. But I've noticed some children are starting to mix things up, girls wearing blue hoodies with dinosaurs and boys coming in with pastel-colored t-shirts."*

While these changes were small, they reflected gradual shifts toward more flexible gender expression. However, teachers in Schools D and E also noted that children's clothing choices were heavily influenced by parents and peers. A teacher from School E explained:

*"A boy might wear a pink shirt one day, but if his friends tease him, he stops wearing it. The same happens with girls who choose darker colors or sports-themed clothes. They want to fit in, so they adjust their choices."*

Seating arrangements played a role in classroom dynamics, with all schools-A, B, C, D, and E- allowing children to choose their own seats rather than assigning them based on gender. This encouraged interaction between boys and girls and helped break traditional grouping patterns. Teachers in both well-resourced and less-resourced schools observed that mixed seating arrangements promoted better communication and collaboration among students.

Additionally, some teachers reflected on how their own teaching styles might unintentionally reinforce gender norms. A few admitted that they were more assertive with boys while using a gentler tone with girls. Others modified classroom activities to encourage balanced engagement. A teacher from School C shared their strategy:



*"I noticed that boys tend to be more engaged in problem-solving tasks, while girls participate more in storytelling. So now, I intentionally encourage boys to join storytelling activities and girls to solve logical puzzles."*

Despite these differences, teachers across all schools agreed on the importance of helping children explore beyond traditional gender expectations. Those in Schools A, B, and C had more structured approaches to achieving this, while teachers in Schools D and E faced greater challenges due to curriculum limitations and societal expectations.

Ultimately, while gendered behaviors were still present in classrooms, teacher awareness and active intervention played a crucial role in either reinforcing or challenging these norms. Schools with more flexibility and resources were able to implement inclusive practices more effectively, while those with limited resources struggled to make significant changes.

#### *D. Gender Representation in Learning Materials*

The learning materials in classrooms played a significant role in shaping children's understanding of gender roles. In Schools A, B, and C, teachers had the flexibility to design their own curriculum, allowing them to incorporate books, posters, and activities that promoted gender equality. They deliberately selected materials that showed boys and girls in diverse roles—depicting girls as scientists, athletes, and leaders, and boys as caregivers, artists, and teachers. A teacher from School B shared:

*"We make sure our materials don't reinforce stereotypes. Our books show both boys and girls as leaders, adventurers, and caregivers so children don't think certain jobs are only for one gender."*

In contrast, Schools D and E used standard textbooks, which often portrayed traditional gender roles. Male characters were typically shown in leadership or adventurous roles, while female characters were depicted as caregivers or helpers. A teacher from School D noted:

*"Most of our books still show boys as explorers and girls as homemakers. We try to challenge this by discussing different career options in class."*

Despite these limitations, teachers in Schools D and E made efforts to encourage critical thinking about gender roles. Some supplemented the curriculum with additional reading materials that featured strong female characters and nurturing male figures. Others used classroom discussions to question stereotypes. A teacher from School E explained:

*"We ask children questions like, 'Can boys also be nurses?' or 'Why do you think only girls are shown cooking?' This helps them think beyond what they see in their books."*

In Schools A, B, and C, teachers also introduced toys and visual aids that broke gender norms, such as dolls representing both boys and girls as astronauts, firefighters, or engineers. They encouraged all children to engage in storytelling, problem-solving, and hands-on activities, regardless of gender.

While gender stereotypes were still present in some materials, the way teachers approached them made a difference. Schools where teachers had control over the curriculum were better able to challenge gender biases, while those using pre-designed textbooks had to rely on discussions and additional activities to promote a more inclusive perspective.

#### *E. Activity Assignments and Participation*

The way teachers assign activities plays a significant role in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender roles. In many classrooms, certain tasks were typically linked to gender expectations. Girls were often assigned roles related to care, like organizing or tidying up, while boys were encouraged to take on more authoritative tasks, such as leading groups or engaging in physical activities.

In Schools A, B, and C, teachers made efforts to avoid reinforcing gender roles when assigning tasks. Instead of assigning tasks based on gender, teachers considered what needed to be done and who could contribute. This allowed both boys and girls to take on a broader range of roles, helping to challenge traditional gender norms. A teacher from School A shared:

*"We make a conscious effort to avoid assigning tasks based on gender. Instead, we look at what needs to be done and who can help. This way, boys and girls experience a variety of roles."*

In Schools D and E, gendered expectations were more noticeable. Boys were often given leadership roles or tasks that involved physical activity, while girls were assigned tasks like organizing or assisting with care-related activities. Some teachers in these schools worked to challenge these norms, but it was sometimes harder to make changes. One teacher from School D said:

*"We encourage boys to take part in arts and crafts, but they're often hesitant. Similarly, girls are sometimes reluctant to join physical activities, so we have to keep reassuring them."*

To combat this, teachers in Schools D and E made efforts to rotate the activities so that both boys and girls had the opportunity to engage in different roles. For example, boys were encouraged to join baking or arts and crafts, while girls were invited to try science experiments and building activities. A teacher from School E explained:

*"We started rotating activities like baking and construction, and over time, the children have become more open to trying different things. It's a slow process, but it's working."*

Despite these efforts, some children still stuck to traditional roles due to socialization or peer pressure. Even when teachers encouraged boys to join storytelling or creative activities, many hesitated, saying such activities were "for girls." Similarly, girls were reluctant to join physical activities or science tasks, often preferring tasks they were already familiar with. Teachers had to offer reassurance and encouragement to help them break away from these ingrained expectations.

In all schools, teachers consciously worked to create an inclusive environment. They alternated roles in classroom activities, like having both boys and girls take turns as leaders or helpers. A teacher from School C shared:

*"I make sure boys participate in storytelling and writing activities, and I encourage girls to join in science experiments or building with blocks. This way, everyone gets a chance to explore different roles."*

Through these efforts, teachers in all schools worked to create a classroom environment where gender did not limit participation in any activity, encouraging students to explore roles beyond traditional gender norms.

#### *F. Teacher Awareness and Training*

Teacher awareness and training on gender sensitivity played a significant role in shaping how gender roles were addressed in the classroom. Across the schools, there was a noticeable disparity in how well teachers were equipped to handle gender-related issues. Of the 25 teachers interviewed, only 8 had received formal training on gender-sensitive teaching. This gap was more prominent in Schools D and E, where teachers often relied on their own experiences and beliefs rather than structured training on how to promote gender inclusivity.

In Schools A, B, and C, teachers who had received formal gender sensitivity training were more aware of how their teaching practices, classroom management, and interactions with students could reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms. These teachers, predominantly from well-resourced schools, were intentional about creating an inclusive environment. They planned activities that weren't based on gendered expectations, such as inviting both boys and girls to participate in role-playing activities or encouraging diverse career aspirations in classroom discussions. A teacher from School A noted:

*"We try to make sure both boys and girls are involved in all activities, no matter if it's a 'boy's task' or a 'girl's task.' This helps break the typical stereotypes."*

In contrast, teachers in Schools D and E, which had fewer resources, lacked formal training in gender-sensitive teaching. As a result, gendered expectations were more likely to influence their classroom practices. These teachers were less conscious of how their biases might shape their interactions, such as encouraging boys to play physically and girls to engage in quieter, more passive tasks. One teacher from School D shared:

*"I never really thought about it, but I guess I do tend to ask the boys to help with the physical tasks and the girls to help with the tidying up."*

Teachers in Schools D and E generally relied on personal beliefs and societal norms to shape their approach to gender, which meant traditional gender roles were often reinforced. These teachers lacked the tools to address and challenge these biases actively.

While teachers in Schools A, B, and C benefited from more regular training-ranging from one-time workshops to annual sessions-teachers in Schools D and E had fewer opportunities for professional development. A teacher from School C mentioned:

*"The training we receive helps us rethink how we approach gender, but we need more of it. One session a year isn't enough to stay on top of best practices."*

Many teachers across all schools agreed that gender sensitivity training should be more frequent to maintain awareness and reinforce inclusive practices. Those who had participated in gender-sensitive training felt it positively impacted their classroom dynamics, helping them create a more balanced environment for both boys and girls. However, there was a shared sentiment that more regular refresher courses were necessary to keep gender inclusivity at the forefront of teaching practices.

### G. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Creating a supportive and gender-inclusive learning environment is essential in fostering equality in kindergarten classrooms. When asked about their strategies for ensuring every child felt valued and included, teachers shared a variety of approaches they used.

Many teachers emphasized the importance of positive reinforcement and equal participation in all activities. One teacher from School A explained:

*"I ensure that every child has the opportunity to speak, lead, and participate, regardless of gender. Sometimes, children hesitate to take on roles that don't fit traditional expectations, so I encourage them step by step."*

Another teacher from School B stressed the importance of fostering a classroom culture that discourages gender-based assumptions:

*"We teach children that anyone can be a leader, a helper, or a problem-solver. If a boy hesitates to play with dolls or a girl hesitates to play with blocks, I reassure them that all toys are for everyone."*

Teachers who had received gender sensitivity training were more intentional in their interactions with students. One teacher of School C shared:

*"I make a conscious effort to praise both boys and girls equally for skills like teamwork, leadership, and creativity. It's about focusing on their individual potential, not their gender."*

However, teachers in schools without gender sensitivity training admitted that creating an inclusive environment was often based more on personal effort than structured guidance. Some mentioned that they lacked the tools to address unconscious biases and had to rely on their own experiences to navigate gender-related challenges in the classroom.

Overall, the responses highlighted that while some teachers actively work to create supportive, gender-inclusive classrooms, others face challenges due to the lack of formal training and institutional support.

### H. Teaching Materials and Activities: Gender Balance or Stereotypes?

The learning materials and activities used in the classroom significantly influence children's perceptions of gender roles. In schools with gender-sensitive training (Schools A, B, and C), teachers carefully selected materials that promoted gender equality. Textbooks and storybooks included both male and female characters in leadership roles, and toys in the play areas were not assigned based on gender. Teachers also designed activities that encouraged both boys and girls to step outside traditional gender roles—encouraging boys to engage in cooking and girls to try construction play.

In contrast, in Schools D and E (non-well-resourced), materials and activities often reinforced gender stereotypes. Boys were typically given toys and activities associated with strength and competition, such as toy cars, trucks, and sports equipment, while girls were encouraged to play with dolls, kitchen sets, and craft materials that emphasized nurturing and domesticity. This distinction in play materials reflected traditional gender roles, reinforcing the idea that certain activities were meant for one gender over the other.

While teachers in well-resourced schools were more intentional about challenging these norms through their materials and activities, teachers in less-resourced schools had fewer resources to encourage gender-neutral play. The difference in resources and training resulted in a more gender-divided approach to activities in the classrooms of Schools D and E.

### I. Tracking Gender Differences and Its Impact on Learning Outcomes

Although gender differences were not formally tracked in most schools, teachers observed patterns in how boys and girls were treated. In Schools A, B, and C (well-resourced schools), teachers recognized these subtle distinctions and made efforts to balance the opportunities given to both genders. Boys were often encouraged to take on leadership roles and engage in physical tasks, while girls were more likely to be steered toward nurturing or creative activities. One teacher from School A shared:

*"We don't formally track gender differences, but we consciously encourage girls to take leadership roles and boys to engage in nurturing activities. It helps ensure a balanced approach."*

On the other hand, in Schools D and E (non-well-resourced schools), these gendered patterns were more prominent. Boys were typically given more opportunities in physical tasks and leadership roles, while girls were often assigned nurturing or artistic tasks. One teacher from School E explained:

*“Boys gain confidence in physical tasks, while girls are more inclined toward nurturing activities. We don’t track this formally, but it’s clear in how they engage with the activities.”*

Teachers in both well-resourced and non-well-resourced schools acknowledged the impact these subtle gender divisions had on learning outcomes. In well-resourced schools, there was a greater awareness of gender bias, and teachers worked to ensure a more equitable distribution of roles. However, in less-resourced schools, teachers faced more challenges in addressing these differences, as traditional gender roles were often more ingrained.

#### *J. Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Influence*

A significant finding from the interviews was that teachers strongly believed their own gender influences how children develop their gender identity. Approximately 65% of the teachers interviewed agreed that their gender had a noticeable impact on how children shaped their understanding of gender roles. Teachers observed that children often model behaviors based on the gender of their educators, which could reinforce traditional gender stereotypes in the classroom.

For example, male teachers noted that boys tended to be more disciplined and attentive when they were present. They also observed that boys responded better to authority figures of the same gender, seeking validation and approval from them. One teacher from School B shared:

*“Boys are more likely to listen and engage in physical activities like sports when I’m the one leading. They tend to follow my lead more when I’m involved.”*

On the other hand, female teachers pointed out that girls were more inclined to confide in them, often sharing personal experiences and emotions. This was attributed to the societal view of women as nurturing and emotionally supportive figures, making girls feel more comfortable seeking guidance from female teachers. One female teacher explained:

*“Girls often come to me for reassurance, especially when it comes to activities like drawing or storytelling. They tend to be more comfortable with me, and I think it’s because they see women as more approachable for these tasks.”*

In addition to emotional support, some teachers mentioned that their gender influenced how they approached discipline and classroom management. Female teachers were more likely to use verbal reasoning and emotional support, while male teachers tended to rely on firm authority. A female teacher shared:

*“I find myself using more words of encouragement and reasoning, while male teachers are often more authoritative when managing the class.”*

This difference in teaching styles helped shape children’s views on how men and women are expected to behave in leadership and authority roles. In some cases, students associated specific tasks with the teacher’s gender. For instance, students often expected female teachers to handle classroom decorations, while male teachers were assumed to manage outdoor activities or technical tasks.

Interestingly, teachers noted that in schools where both male and female teachers worked together, children showed more flexibility in their attitudes toward gender roles. In these classrooms, children seemed more comfortable engaging with teachers regardless of their gender. This suggested that exposure to diverse teaching styles and gender representations could positively influence children’s perceptions of gender roles, fostering a more inclusive and open-minded attitude.

#### *K. Administrative Policies and Gender Inclusivity*

The influence of administrative policies on the gendering process in kindergarten schools was another key factor in shaping gender inclusivity. Interviews with school administrators revealed that only two out of the five schools had formal guidelines on gender equality. In these schools, administrators took proactive steps to integrate gender equality into classroom activities and interactions. This approach helped reduce the rigidity of gender roles, enabling students to engage in a wider variety of activities without being constrained by traditional gender expectations. For instance, one teacher from School A shared:

*“We receive guidelines to make sure boys and girls participate equally, like taking turns leading activities or using storybooks that don’t reinforce gender norms.”*

In contrast, the remaining schools lacked clear guidelines or formal policies on gender equality. As a result, gendered expectations were more entrenched, and teachers were often unprepared to challenge these biases. Without structured policies or professional development opportunities, teachers unknowingly reinforced traditional gender roles. In these schools, boys were often assigned leadership roles, while girls were encouraged to take on nurturing tasks. One teacher from School D explained:

*“The school tells us to treat boys and girls equally, but there’s no specific training on how to do it. We just try our best.”*

However, a teacher from School B mentioned the importance of addressing unconscious gender bias and the plans to introduce workshops for teachers. These workshops aimed to raise awareness about how unconscious biases might shape teacher-student interactions and how teachers could foster a more inclusive classroom. Administrators in this school believed that providing teachers with tools to recognize and counteract biases would help create a more equitable learning environment, where children were encouraged to explore their interests without the limitations of societal gender norms.

Some teachers also suggested implementing structured classroom observations and regular teacher training to better track and address gender biases. They believed that a more systematic approach to monitoring gender development would ensure that all children received equal opportunities in learning and participation.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### A. Summary

This study, *The Gendering Process in Kindergarten Schools*, explores how gender roles are shaped and reinforced in kindergarten classrooms in Nepal. It looks at the role of teachers, classroom materials, activities, and school policies in influencing children's understanding of gender. To gather insights, the research used a mix of observations, interviews with teachers and administrators, and an analysis of classroom materials. A detailed literature review was also conducted, covering theoretical perspectives, global studies, and the South Asian context, with a focus on Nepal.

The main goal of this study was to understand how different factors contribute to gendered experiences in early childhood education. It focused on key areas such as teacher-student interactions, the role of toys and learning materials, the influence of teacher gender, and how school policies shape gender norms. The findings showed that gendered practices both obvious and subtle are common in classrooms, often reflecting societal norms and teachers' own perceptions. However, there were clear differences between schools that had gender-inclusive policies and those that did not.

In schools where gender-sensitive policies were in place, teachers were trained to be mindful of gender biases, and classroom materials were carefully chosen to promote inclusivity. These schools created an environment where boys and girls had equal opportunities to explore different roles. On the other hand, in schools without such policies, traditional gender roles were more deeply ingrained. Teachers, often unintentionally, reinforced these norms by steering boys toward leadership roles and active play while encouraging girls to engage in nurturing and creative activities.

The study also found that teachers' gender had an impact on students' behavior. Male teachers noticed that boys were more disciplined and confident in their presence, while female teachers observed that girls were more likely to confide in them. Interestingly, in schools where both male and female teachers worked together, children seemed to develop a more open attitude toward gender roles, engaging more freely with teachers regardless of gender.

Overall, this research highlights that gendering in kindergarten classrooms is shaped by a mix of societal expectations, teacher practices, and school policies. However, schools with clear policies and gender-inclusive teaching approaches provided a more balanced learning experience, allowing children to express themselves beyond traditional gender norms. The findings emphasize the need for gender-sensitive training and inclusive policies in early childhood education to create learning spaces where all children feel equally encouraged to explore their interests and abilities.

#### B. Key Findings

The study revealed several key insights into how gender roles are shaped and reinforced in kindergarten classrooms.

- **Gendered Toy and Activity Preferences:** Boys and girls displayed distinct preferences in play, with boys gravitating toward construction toys, cars, and outdoor activities, while girls were more drawn to dolls, kitchen sets, and role-play toys. These preferences were more rigid in schools where gender norms were not actively challenged. However, in schools with gender-inclusive approaches, children engaged more freely in diverse activities, suggesting that early exposure to balanced play opportunities can reduce gendered expectations.
- **Influence of Teacher Gender on Student Behavior:** Teachers' gender played a noticeable role in shaping children's behavior. Male teachers often reported that boys were more disciplined and engaged in physical activities under their guidance, while female teachers observed that girls were more likely to seek emotional support from them. However, in schools with both male and female teachers working together, students exhibited greater flexibility in their interactions, showing that a balanced teaching environment can challenge traditional gender norms.
- **Color Preferences and Gender Norms:** Traditional gender-based color preferences were evident, with girls favoring pink and purple, while boys leaned toward blue, green, and black. This was particularly noticeable in schools where teachers did not actively encourage a more open exploration of colors. In contrast, in classrooms where gender inclusivity was prioritized, children exhibited a broader range of color choices, indicating that exposure to diverse options can help break gendered color associations.
- **Limited Gender Sensitivity Training for Teachers:** A significant gap was found in gender sensitivity training. Schools with more resources tended to provide training sessions, leading to greater awareness of gender inclusivity among teachers. Meanwhile, in schools with fewer resources, teachers primarily relied on personal experiences to navigate gender-related issues. This highlights the need for structured professional development to equip all educators with the tools to create inclusive learning environments.
- **Administrative Policies and Their Role in Gender Inclusivity:** The study found that only two of the five schools had formal gender equality policies. In these schools, administrators took active steps to promote gender inclusivity, resulting in classrooms where boys and girls participated in a wider range of activities. In contrast, schools without such policies saw gender roles being reinforced, often unintentionally, through teacher interactions and classroom structures. The findings suggest that administrative support plays a crucial role in fostering gender-equitable learning spaces.

- **Unconscious Gender Bias in Teaching Practices:** Many teachers acknowledged that they unintentionally reinforced gender stereotypes—such as assigning leadership roles to boys and nurturing tasks to girls. Some teachers, particularly in schools with gender-sensitive policies, were actively trying to counteract these biases, while others expressed the need for professional training to address them more effectively. This finding underscores the importance of teacher awareness and institutional support in creating equitable educational environments.
- Overall, the study highlights that while gendered norms continue to shape early childhood education, schools that implement inclusive policies and teacher training can create more balanced and equitable learning spaces. These findings emphasize the need for greater awareness, structured interventions, and ongoing discussions on gender inclusivity in early childhood education.

### C. Conclusion

This research on the gendering process in Nepalese kindergarten schools has examined how gender roles are shaped and reinforced through teacher interactions, classroom activities, and learning materials. Through the lens of Social Learning Theory, Gender Schema Theory, Constructivist Theory, and Feminist Pedagogy, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of early childhood education in constructing gender identities. The findings align with previous research in both global and local contexts, highlighting significant gender disparities in kindergarten classrooms.

As outlined in the literature review, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981) suggest that gendered behaviors are learned through observation and internalized mental frameworks. In Nepalese classrooms, these theories hold true as teachers often unconsciously reinforce traditional gender roles. For instance, boys are encouraged to be assertive and take on leadership roles, while girls are expected to be nurturing and cooperative (Tamang & Shrestha, 2023). These patterns of behavior align with findings in the literature (Smith & Johnson, 2022; Lee & Patel, 2023) that suggest similar tendencies in the treatment of boys and girls across various cultural contexts.

The findings of this study also corroborate the perspective offered by Constructivist Theory (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the active role children play in constructing knowledge. In Nepal, as highlighted by Bista & Poudel (2023), children's gender perceptions are not simply absorbed but actively shaped through their interactions with teachers and peers, as well as the materials available to them. When teachers encourage mixed-gender activities and provide gender-neutral learning resources, children show more flexible attitudes towards gender, reinforcing the concept that classroom environments can either challenge or perpetuate gender norms (Brown et al., 2023).

The importance of gender-sensitive pedagogies, as discussed in Feminist Pedagogy (Kumar & Hassan, 2022; Carter & Green, 2023), was also evident in the findings of this study. In some progressive Nepalese kindergartens, teachers are beginning to adopt more inclusive practices, such as promoting equal participation in activities and using diverse role models in teaching materials. These practices have shown promise in shifting children's perceptions of gender (Acharya et al., 2024), mirroring global examples from Sweden and Canada, where inclusive pedagogies have led to reduced gender disparities in education (Bergström et al., 2021).

However, similar to the challenges highlighted in the literature on South Asia (Ali & Rahman, 2023; Sharma & Yadav, 2024), the implementation of these progressive teaching methods remains limited in Nepal. Many schools still follow traditional curricula that perpetuate gender stereotypes, which impacts children's aspirations and career choices, limiting their opportunities based on gendered expectations. The research findings confirm that gender biases remain deeply embedded in Nepalese kindergartens, especially in less-resourced schools where traditional materials and limited teacher training contribute to reinforcing these stereotypes (Gurung et al., 2022; Regmi et al., 2024).

Moreover, the disparities between well-resourced and less-resourced schools, as discussed in the literature (Garcia & Patel, 2019; Anderson et al., 2022), are also evident in this study. Well-resourced schools, with better teaching materials and teacher training, have more opportunities to promote gender-sensitive approaches, while less-resourced schools continue to face challenges in implementing such practices. The findings from Nepal align with these global trends, suggesting that resources play a significant role in shaping the gendered experiences of young children (Smith & Jones, 2020).

In conclusion, this research reinforces the notion that early childhood education plays a critical role in shaping gender identities and that teachers, classroom materials, and societal influences all contribute to this process. While there are positive efforts to integrate gender-inclusive practices in some Nepalese kindergartens, significant challenges remain, particularly in less-resourced schools. To address these issues, it is essential to focus on teacher training, curriculum reform, and the adoption of gender-sensitive teaching strategies across the country. By drawing on the global and regional insights discussed in the literature, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender equity in early childhood education and offer recommendations for creating more inclusive learning environments in Nepalese kindergartens.

### D. Suggestions for Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the gendering process in kindergarten classrooms, but several areas remain open for further exploration. Based on the literature review and the findings of this research, the following suggestions for future research are proposed:

➤ *Impact of Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy on Long-Term Gender Role Development*

While this study highlights the importance of gender-inclusive practices in early childhood education, future research could examine the long-term impact of these practices on children's development of gender roles throughout their schooling years. Research could explore whether early interventions in gender-inclusive environments lead to more balanced gender perceptions in later stages of education and society.

➤ *Role of Parents and Home Environment in Gender Development*

Although this study focused on classroom dynamics, the influence of parents and the home environment on children's gender role development deserves attention. Future studies could explore how parental attitudes and behaviors contribute to reinforcing or challenging gender norms, particularly in conjunction with the school environment. A comparative study between home and school influences could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender roles are shaped.

➤ *Exploration of Gender Bias in Early Childhood Curriculum Design*

Further research could focus on the gendered nature of the curricula used in kindergarten classrooms. Are certain subjects, activities, or educational materials inherently gender-biased? A deeper investigation into how curricula can be more inclusive, perhaps through the development of gender-neutral or gender-sensitive resources, could provide insights into how to create more equitable learning environments from the start.

➤ *Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Gender Roles in Kindergarten Education*

Given the global attention on gender equality, comparative studies between different cultural contexts could shed light on the varying ways gender norms are constructed in early childhood education. Research in countries with different cultural attitudes towards gender could highlight how local societal norms influence the gendering process in the classroom, offering strategies that may be adapted for the Nepalese context.

➤ *Teacher Training and Gender Sensitivity*

The findings of this study suggest a significant gap in gender sensitivity training among teachers, particularly in less-resourced schools. Future research could explore the effectiveness of specific training programs designed to address unconscious gender bias and promote gender equality in classrooms. Studies could assess how different types of professional development (e.g., workshops, seminars, peer training) impact teacher awareness and classroom practices.

➤ *Gender Inclusivity in Resource-Constrained Educational Settings*

As this study found differences between well-resourced and less-resourced schools in terms of gender inclusivity, future research could investigate how gender-sensitive practices can be integrated into classrooms with limited resources. Research could explore innovative and cost-effective ways to implement gender-inclusive teaching methods in underfunded educational settings, where access to resources and training might be limited.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender roles in early childhood education and support the development of more inclusive practices that promote gender equity from the very start of a child's educational journey.



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## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Study: The Gendering Process in Kindergarten Schools Principal

Investigator: Samikshya Thapa

Institution: Tribhuvan University

Email:

Phone:

### ➤ *Introduction*

You are being invited to participate in a research study on gender dynamics in kindergarten education, specifically focusing on teacher-child interactions, classroom materials, and play environments. This form provides information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, and any potential risks and benefits. Please read this document carefully and feel free to ask questions before deciding whether to participate.

### ➤ *Purpose of the Study*

The aim of this research is to assess how gender roles are perceived and reinforced in private kindergartens in the Kathmandu Valley. This study will examine teacher-child interactions, classroom activities, and materials, as well as the influence of these factors on children's gender identity and behaviors.

### ➤ *Participation Requirements*

Your participation involves the following:

- Being interviewed about your experiences, perspectives, and teaching practices related to gender in the classroom.
- Participating in classroom observations, where gender-related dynamics will be noted in natural classroom settings.
- Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

### ➤ *Time*

The interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

### ➤ *Confidentiality*

All data gathered in this study will remain confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any reports, presentations, or publications resulting from this research. Any identifying details will be removed or anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Your responses will be coded, and only the research team will have access to the data.

### ➤ *Risks*

No known risks are associated with participation in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any time, you are free to withdraw your participation.

### ➤ *Potential Risks and Discomforts*

There are no significant risks associated with participating in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable with any questions or topics, you may skip them or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

### ➤ *Potential Benefits*

Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating, your involvement will contribute to a better understanding of gender dynamics in kindergarten education, potentially influencing future educational practices and policies in Nepal.

### ➤ *Voluntary Participation*

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to decline participation, to withdraw from the study at any time, and to refuse to answer any questions. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the institution involved.

### ➤ *Contact Information*

For any questions regarding the study or your rights as a participant, please contact:

- Samikshya Thapa
- Tribhuvan University
- Email Id
- Phone Number

➤ *Consent*

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided above and agree to participate in the study. You also acknowledge that you are free to ask questions at any time during the study and can withdraw your participation at any point.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

### 1. Teacher-Student Interactions

- ☐ Teacher uses gender-neutral language (e.g., “friends” instead of “boys and girls”)
- ☐ Teacher encourages both boys and girls to participate in all activities
- ☐ Teacher challenges or reinforces traditional gender roles in student behavior
- ☐ Teacher praises boys and girls equally for similar behaviors

### 2. Classroom Environment

- ☐ Classroom materials are equally accessible to both boys and girls
- ☐ Toys and play materials are not labeled as “boys’ toys” or “girls’ toys”
- ☐ Classroom visuals (e.g., posters, pictures) include both male and female figures
- ☐ Classroom space is used equally for both boys and girls

### 3. Play Materials

- ☐ Toys and materials (e.g., blocks, art supplies) are available for both boys and girls
- ☐ Traditional gendered toys (e.g., dolls, action figures) are available for both genders
- ☐ Books and teaching materials show both male and female characters
- ☐ Materials represent diverse gender identities

### 4. Activity Participation

- ☐ Both boys and girls are encouraged to join all activities (e.g., sports, art)
- ☐ Children participate in activities not typically associated with their gender (e.g., girls playing sports, boys doing arts and crafts)
- ☐ Teacher encourages students to engage in non-traditional gender activities

### 5. Gender Stereotypes in Teaching

- ☐ Teacher reinforces gender stereotypes (e.g., boys should be tough, girls should be gentle)
- ☐ Teacher challenges or breaks down gender stereotypes
- ☐ Teacher corrects inappropriate gender-based behavior

### 6. Group Dynamics

- ☐ Boys and girls work in separate groups
- ☐ Boys and girls mix during group activities
- ☐ Teacher encourages mixed-gender teamwork

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

### Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Gender and Sexual Minorities
2. Age:
3. Caste:
4. Ethnicity:
5. Religion:
6. Marital Status:
7. Highest Educational Qualification:
  - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
  - ☐ Master's Degree
  - ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_
8. Years of Experience in Kindergarten:
  - ☐ Less than 1 year
  - ☐ 1-5 years
  - ☐ 6-10 years
  - ☐ More than 10 years

9. Total number of Children: Boys:

Girls:

Gender Minorities:

### ➤ Section 1: Classroom Environment and Teaching Practices

1. What motivated you to choose teaching in kindergarten?
2. How do you create a supportive learning environment for all children?
3. In your experience, do male and female children exhibit different behavior patterns in the classroom?
  - ☐ Yes / No
  - ☐ If yes, please describe the behavior patterns you have observed.
4. Do you think that tracking gender differences affects children's learning outcomes in your kindergarten?
  - ☐ Yes / No
  - ☐ If yes, in what ways does it affect their learning outcomes?



5. What improvements would you suggest regarding how gender development is tracked in your kindergarten?
6. Is there any training facility available for teachers on gender-sensitive teaching?
  - Yes
  - No

If yes, please specify the type of training and its frequency:

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➤ *Section 2: Teacher-Student Interactions and Gender*

7. In your opinion, does the gender of the teacher impact how children develop their gender identity?
  - Yes / No
  - If yes, how do you think the teacher's gender influences this?
8. Do you consciously adapt your teaching style or activities based on the gender of the students?
  - Yes / No
  - If yes, can you provide examples of how you adapt?
9. Can you please share any specific examples of different activities you assign to your students?

➤ *Section 3: Classroom Toys and Games*

10. What kind of games or toys do you provide for boys to play in the classroom?
- 

11. What kind of games or toys do you provide for girls to play in the classroom?
- 

➤ *Section 4: Preferences and Choices*

12. What colors do girls typically choose when given options (e.g., toys, books, crafts etc.)?
- 

13. What colors do boys typically choose when given options (e.g., toys, books, materials)?
- 

➤ *Section 5: Activities and Participation*

14. What kind of activities do boys tend to engage in more often?
- 

15. What kind of activities do girls tend to engage in more often?
- 

16. Are there any gender specific roles or activities taught in school? (For eg: car toys for boys, and dolls for girls or gardening/baking for girls and gaming for boys etc.)
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➤ *Section 6: Textbooks and Classroom Materials*

17. Do you use gender-neutral textbooks and materials, or do they reflect specific gender roles?
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18. Are storybooks, toys, and materials used in the classroom free of gender stereotypes? Can you give examples of how they promote inclusivity?

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19. How are classroom roles or responsibilities (e.g., line leader, cleanup helper) assigned to ensure they are not gender-biased?

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➤ *Section 7: Classroom Arrangement and Environment*

20. How are the seating arrangements organized in the classroom? Do they vary for boys and girls?

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Behaviors of students (Dependent Variable)

21. Are students picking up traditional gender specific roles or activities in school? (Laddering questions: Can you please provide examples?)

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22. What changes have you seen in children in terms of the clothes they wear? Are they wearing gender specific colors?

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➤ *Section 8: Administrative Guidance*

23. How does the administration guide you in treating boys and girls equally in the classroom?

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## CHECKLIST FOR ADMINISTRATORS

### *A. School Policies and Practices*

- Does the school have guidelines for ensuring equal participation of all children in activities? (Yes / No)
- Are there resources for promoting inclusive teaching practices? (Yes / No)

### *B. Teacher Support and Training*

- Does the school provide training for teachers on inclusive classroom practices? (Yes / No)
- Are teachers encouraged to avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles? (Yes / No)

### *C. Classroom Environment*

- Does the school provide gender-neutral toys and materials for the classroom? (Yes / No)
- Are seating arrangements designed to encourage equal participation? (Yes / No)

### *D. Curriculum and Resources*

- Are textbooks and teaching materials gender-neutral? (Yes / No)
- Does the curriculum promote gender equality? (Yes / No)

### *E. Monitoring and Feedback*

- Does the school monitor gender equality in the classroom? (Yes / No)
- Is there a feedback system for teachers on gender inclusivity? (Yes / No)

### *F. Recommendations*

- Are there any planned initiatives to improve gender inclusivity? (Yes / No)
- What improvements would you suggest?