

**Master's thesis**

**NTNU**  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences  
Department of Education and Lifelong Learning

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# A Gender Study: Children's Perspective Of Gender in a Co- Educational School in Iran

Master's thesis in MPil in Childhood Studies

Supervisor: Ida Marie Lyså

May 2019



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Science and Technology



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*To My Family  
My Mother Who I Owe Her My Life  
My Father Who I Owe Him My World  
My Sisters Who Are My Best Friends  
And My Brother Who I Miss the Most*



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## **Abstract**

Children's perspectives of gender mostly are shaped by the society and culture they are living and grow up in. This present study has goal to explore perspectives and experiences of Iranian children in a co-educational system school. Specifically, the research is seeking to look at gender from children's views, perspectives and their experiences in their daily lives. The social studies of children and childhood, furthermore the structuration theories have built up the theoretical background which this study has been conducted by. By this, there was an effort to consider children as active individual with agency, also they have been considered as social group who are affected by the structuration of the society and the culture they are living in.

A sample of 18 children who are living in Tehran, Iran were recruited for the research. Their age was from eight to nine years old. Participant Observation focus Group Discussion, in-Depth Semi-Structured Interview, body-Mapping and Drawings were using in this research to collect data in fieldwork. The data which has been collected during fieldwork, has been used in analysis process.

The findings of this study have covered aspects which can be influenced by gender and the experiences of the children on those aspects, furthermore it will discuss features of the society and culture which had influenced individuals' perspectives of gender. The gender has been seen a topic which cannot be discussed publicly and appear to be a delicate topic to be touched upon. Furthermore, the gender itself had influence on individuals' lives as living in a specific gender, also the gender has affected the peer relationship in way that individuals' peer group, relationship has been made of specific gender and perspectives of individuals on the gender of themselves or the opposite gender. Also, gender was considered a delicate topic to be placed in public and focus on it. The separation of the gender was another reason for gender influence in society and culture.

Based on analysis which has been made through the research, the conclusion marked that gender as a social structure can influence individuals lives, furthermore it shows that gender itself can be affected by other social structure which has been made by individuals in the society. Moreover, individuals are finding ways to cooperate with the gender aspects in their daily lives.

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# 1. Introduction

## Background of the Study

I recall one time I was in middle school, I laughed loudly, and my teacher told me “*you are a girl, don’t laugh like this, first it is a rudeness towards your audience and then it is inappropriate in our society if a girl laughs like this*”. I was only seven when I heard that. A situation like this and many more that I was witnessed similar to this one, made me think what if I was a boy would it be different? Am I allowed to laugh loudly or play “boy’s” games such as Football? Is there any problem with my gender compare to another gender? Who decides upon what is a good behavior for boys or girls? Piles of question and ideas like these were in my life and became increasingly important for me during my teenage years. But above all, my main question was what the most important aspect of me was affecting my behavior and shape them, not only my behavior but also all aspects of my life? My gender? But what is gender? Are there any differences between gender and sex of a person?

To answer the last question, I checked the word gender in the dictionary, based on the Oxford Dictionary gender is “*Either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.*” And sex is defined in Oxford dictionary as “*Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions (Editor, 2000).*”

Based on these two definitions which are quoted from Oxford dictionary, both phrases are depended on female and male categories, but the term of sex is based on the *reproductive functions* and the word gender is considered with connection to *social and cultural differences*, also this word is not referenced to the biological aspects of being a human.

As Diamond mentioned (2002): “*Maintenance of clear conceptual distinctions between the two words sex and gender and associated concepts is particularly helpful for the psychological understanding of identity (Diamond, 2002a, p. 6).*”

This distinction is important in social studies also. Furthermore, Diamond (2002) mentioned that the word gender is used in the context of social and cultural aspects. Aside from this distinction, the word *gender* is connected to the word Identity based on the definition from Oxford Dictionary. This would bring me my next question what is an identity? And what are the connections between Identity and Gender?

Identity is a collection of thoughts and beliefs which a person can have about him/herself, in another word it is a self-concept (Leflot, 2010). Overall, identity demonstrates the answer to “*who am I?*” (Myers, 2009)

Based on this definition, what is the connection between the identity and gender? The answer is gender identity. According to Diamond (2002): “*Gender identity is recognition of the perceived social gender attributed to a person. Typically, a male is perceived as a boy or a man, where boy and man are social terms with associated cultural expectations attached. Similarly, a female is perceived as a girl or woman. The distinctions made between boy and girl and man and woman are of age and usually again represent differences in societal expectations that go along with increases in maturity (Diamond, 2002b, p. 5).*” Based on this definition a person’s gender identity is not limited to their sex, but also it is related to their society and the culture in that society.

A society such as Iran, might ask if you are a man you must have the harder work, or a culture must ask to wear a hijab for women in that society. Who decide what is the correct for the genders? Furthermore, do genders consider these elements, rights for themselves? Growing up with these questions and gaining knowledge about this area, made me to think about what children in contemporary Iran think about their gender. How much are children today informed about the gender and different aspects of it. Have these children asked themselves why I should act like a boy/girl. Who decides for us to think in this way. Why my culture and my society should decide about my behavior.

These concerns are one side of the coin, whereas the perspective of children and hearing their voices are the most important part of the coin and this research. Children’s opinion must be heard, because their feelings and thoughts might be different than me as an adult. They may have different ideas about gender and things related to them.

## Context

This study is after gaining information and knowledge about children's perspectives after decades passed Islamic Revolution in Iran. The aim is to gain understandings of individuals in school where they are in a different space than the other schools in Iran.

The revolution in Iran had resulted to success in year 1979. By April 1979, the referendum which took place put a confirmation on Islamic revolution and government in Iran. That was the time for area of Islamic has started in Iran. The governments have started their jobs with Islamic version laws in the country, they have put them based on the notion of "*Neither East nor West*", and more influenced by Islamic notions which has been collected from Quran (Behrooz, 2012). One of the consequences of Islamic influence on the laws was on schools and the universities. The government by the year 1979, has decided to shut down all the educational centers especially the universities in all around the country and clean them from the western ideology which has been implanted by previous governments (Behrooz, 2012). The main aim of this revolutionary ideas was to develop a better place as an Islamic country for male and females in the study intuitions and in the society. Putting laws such as Hijab for women was concerned as a protection which has been given more freedom to Iranian women; "*This revolution has transformed everyone, all personalities, all relations and all values. Woman was transformed in this society, so the revolution can occur, this shield verily is her veil (Moghadam, 1992, p. 343).*"

All of these laws and the ideas for those laws built up the core ideas behind this research which is to gain the perspectives of the individuals in the same society which they grow up and learnt about these structures and laws.

## Terminology Explanation

**Child:** *Every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable under the child majority is attained earlier (UNCRC, 1989 ,Article 1).*

**Gender Identity:** *"Gender identity refers to an individual's personal sense of identity as masculine or feminine, or some combination thereof." (D. Morrow, Messinger, L., 2006, p. 6).*

**Co-Educational School:** or Mixed-sex schools, is a system where both sex, male and female has been educated together in the same school and class rather than separately. In Iran, the schools are



not co-educational model, instead they are separated based on the sex/gender of the students such as boys' school or girls' school.

## **Research Questions and Purpose of the Study**

This study tries to investigate the knowledge of Iranian students in a co-educational school from second and third grades, in gender identity (Iranian students' gender identity) and gain their perspectives on this topic. Furthermore, the investigation in this research is based on the experiences and the challenges of the children particularly in the co-educational schools, who are having PR of another country and living and growing up in Iran for specific reason. The amount of information which children have about gender identity and different aspects of it will be touched upon, as well. The main research question of the study that I seek to find an answer to it is:

*How do Iranian children in a co-educational school and system perceive and practice gender in their daily lives?*

To find a proper answer to the main question, there is a need to go through some areas and aspects which are related to the main question of the study, such as children's perspectives on gender and womanhood or manhood, the peer's relationship, challenges they are facing based on their gender, and last but not least, the topic of separation related to the gender. All of these areas can research and being analyzed through children's perspectives, researching through common ideas and aspects on the gender, their experiences on the daily lives routines and different ways of doing life.

## **Significance of the study**

In general, little empirical experience and data have been carried out about the specific topic of gender identity in Iran. This study, therefore, tries to put light on gender identity itself for school children with reference to play, responsibility and general education on the topic of gender identity. Moreover, this study is supportive to develop the body of knowledge on gender identity and the personal knowledge of children about their gender. The research gives due importance to participants (children's) perspective.

My study on the gender identity will help to improve knowledge of the children about their gender and their identity related to their gender. Furthermore, it develops the understanding of how Iranian children cope with social aspects of gender in an Iranian culture and society.

The research is believed to be useful for the school and educational system to raise their knowledge about the gender identity and gain more data about children's perspectives on their own gender. Based upon this data they can make new guides and policies for children and the future of the society.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is constructed as follows: Chapter one declares an introduction to the study, including topics such as research question, problem statement, explanation about terms and the main aim of the research and study followed by justification of the study. Chapter two presents an overview of Iranian laws and the situation and position of gender in Iranian society. First, it glances at the historical background of Iranian schools and laws towards the separations of the gender before and after the 1979 revolution. Furthermore, it presents the situation of the schools and the history of non-o-educational schools. Chapter four addresses a broad discussion of theoretical and perspectives which affect the path of the study. The main theories include peer culture, gender, identities, agency/structure. The main theoretical framework in this research is based on the social studies of children and childhood. Chapter three includes the methodological framework of the research. It tries to explain and validate the use of qualitative research's methods and the researcher's role in this regard. Moreover, it contains some strategies to achieve access and the recruitment of the informants, analyzing data, methods which were used to collect the data, limits that the research faced and the ethical issues in the research.

Chapter five includes the analysis of the data which were collected during fieldwork and discuss the findings. It describes the main issues faced by the participants in the study, and the connected reasons to those issues. Also, this section introduces children's conversations and negotiations of their everyday lives. In this part of the thesis, the structure is talking separately about genders such as the girlhood section, boyhood section and the emerge of these two concepts with the influence of the social structures combined to show.

Finally, chapter six contains a summary of the whole research and concluding remarks. Furthermore, there is an attempt to connect the empirical data to the theoretical perspectives which were introduced in chapter four. This chapter contains a summary of fundamental findings plus some suggestions and recommendations for the future research.



## 2. Context of Study

In this chapter, I will try to introduce Iran, system of education and the laws and how gender will be perceived by laws in Iran. In a part of this chapter, I will talk about historical background of Iran, to look at how the gender was perceived on those days, and in the end in continue I will talk about gender in Islam and in Iran and in the last part I will try to draw upon daily of children in Iran.

### **Geographical and Demographic Contexts of Iran**

Islamic Republic of Iran is a country in Asia specifically in Middle East which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. It is on a high plateau enclosed with three chains of mountains. Furthermore, Iran is a landlocked country bordering Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkmenistan. Iran has sea borders with Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kazakhstan (UNESCO, 2013).

Iran is a diverse landscape covering 1,648,195 km<sup>2</sup> (636,372 sq. mi) (CIA, 2012), which put it in average of 1,200m above the sea level (UNESCO, 2013). The total population of Iran by the years 2016-2017 was 79,926,270 (SCI, 2017). Iran is a big country which includes 31 provinces. Tehran is the capital of Iran as well as the main urban center of Iran (UNESCO, 2013). The large number of the population lives in the urban areas with the percentage of 74.0 in 2017. The scale of gender portion in total is 1 to 3, which means that for 1 boy there is 3 girls, the portion in the urban area is 1 to 2 which shows that for each boy there are 2 girls. The urban area is where the fieldwork took place. The life expectancy for male population is 72.5. And the number for female population is 75.5 (SCI, 2017). Since the Islamic Revolution, the population of Iran has been doubled, the main reason for this increase is high rate birth during 1980s (UNESCO, 2013). However, the trend of society in 1990s following the change of population policy has been changed and this resulted in Iran has young population with 50.2% of 79.9 % aged under 25 (UNESCO, 2013).

Iran is a country of diverse traditional cultures and ethnic population. Iran has been home to many different ethnic groups including the Persians (50%), the Azeri Turks (20-25%), the Kurds (10%), and the Arabs (3%), as well as the Lors, the Turkmens, the Baluchis and Ghashghaees (SCI, 2017). The main religion in the country is Shia Islam (approximately 85-90%). Though Shia is the main religion, there are other religions in Iran such as Sunni Muslims (approximately 5-10%), and Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews (approximately 0.1 - 0.5% each) (SCI, 2017).

## **The Historical Background of Iran**

The emperor of Iran was the biggest emperor in the history of any emperors, with the rule of the Cyrus the Great, it was from the Central Asia till middle of Black Sea, on those days Iran included 44 % of the world population (David Sacks, 2005).

During history Iran has been tore apart by wars and other emperors and other powerful countries. In the war of 602-628, and the era of Sasanian Empire in Iran, there were open ways for Arab's interfering in Iran (Liska, 1998). Iran was taken by Muslim Arabian society and culture. Furthermore, Islamization has been followed. This religion was targeted Iranian main religion at this time in history and the first religion in Iran which was Zoroastrianism (Boyce, 2001; Meri, 2006; Stepaniants, 2002) By the Arab invasion in Iran, a new era begun in Iran with a new religion.

After a long period of wars between Persian and Arabians, Iran was once again free from foreigners and ruled by Iranian and Persian government. up until the revolution of 1979, Iran was a kingdom ruled by kings. The last Kingdom in Iran was Pahlavi, which has been removed by Islamic revolution of Khomeini.

The Islamic Revolution started in the year 1978 with a major disagreement between the leader of the revolution who was a religious leader also and the king of Iran. After a year of struggling and fighting back, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi left the country and Ruhollah Khomeini came back from the exile and built up the new government and after holding a referendum in April 1979, Iran became an Islamic Republic (Hower, 2011).

By the year 1980, the Cultural Revolution in Iran had begun, and the aim of this revolution was to clean up all the educational systems and clean the culture from all the previous training systems. Due to this inspection, all the universities became closed for more than three years(GlobalSecurity.org). Furthermore, the government which consisted of people who were chosen by Khomeini, decided to bring the education in line with political Islam (Mojab & Publishing, 2004). When the universities reopened in 1983, the leaders of the revolution banned many books and many students, professors and teachers were banned to return to universities (GlobalSecurity.org). The purge of the students and teachers continued for five years until the revolution stopped. After reopening the universities, the task of ensuring an Islamic atmosphere in

the educational system was upon "Committee for Islamization of Universities" (Jahanbegloo, 2009).

In the next part on this chapter, I will explain the education system in Iran before and after the Islamic Revolution.

## **Education System in Iran**

The education system in Iran by the law in year 1911 consisted of the primary education for six years, and then after that it is a high school system where the remaining seven years will be divided to first part of high school and second part of it. Education in these six years were free of charge and compulsive for every person in the country (Journalists, 2010). By the year of 1966, the educational system changed, and it turned to 5 years of elementary, 3 years of secondary and 4 years of High school and by the year 1991 the system of education has built up: Pre-School, Elementary School, Secondary School, high school.

Before year 1991, students would enter a four years program were only to subjects of Theoretical and Technical Vocations. After 1991, the system has shifted to credits-semester system for three years of high school, with three topics of Mathematics, Science and Human science. There are high school for art topics separately. Pre- University: it is a One-Period of education were students were prepared for the exam which would allow them to enter the universities. By the year 2010, the educational system has changed, and it shaped as: Pre-School, Elementary School (6 years), First High School (3 years), Second High School (4 years) (Journalists, 2010).

One of the main issues of the education is separated schools by genders. In Iran, the schools are separated by the genders of the children, this law is for both private and public schools. According to Hossein Khani and Mohammadi (2015), the result and the children's work is better in the same sex classes, their progress is better and more useful for the society (Khani, 2015). In male schools, the female teachers are not allowed under any conditions or circumstances. The separation of the genders in elementary school became a compulsive law after the Islamic revolution in year 1979. In next section in this chapter, I will write about the separation and the laws for the genders in Iran (Khani, 2015).

## Gender

To talk about gender in Iran, first I need to explain gender in Islam. The importance of explaining gender in Islam is because the main religion in Iran is Islam since Safavid Dynasty (1501 to 1722).

## Islam

The religion Islam has been identified as the second largest faith in the world (Barazangi, 2009). Based on what has been said by the prophet Mohammad in Qur'an, Islam is the "*din wa dawla*: a system which is for both individuals and a guide for systematic organization in a society and states. The religion has political, social and cultural aspects of an individual and a society (Barazangi, 2009). People who believe in Islam and follow Islam are called Muslims. There is a framework for adherents of Islam which called The Five Pillars of Islam. These five pillars serve as the main elements of followers' commitment to this religion.

Based on Nasr (2003) identification of these five pillars, they are categorize as: 1) *Shahada*: the testament of the faith which is completed by saying *La ilaha illa Llah* ("There is no god but God"); 2) *Salat*: praying; 3) *Sawm*: essential fasting in a special month which is called Ramadan; 4) *Zakat*: Alms-Giving, Muslims believe to share their wealth with the less fortunate people; 5) *Hajj*: pilgrimage to Mecca: the main pillar of the Islam (Galloway, 2014; Nasr, 2003).

In regard to the positions of the gender Islam has a clear view, as emphasized by Smith (1979), "*Islam provides women a position of honor and respect, with clearly stated rights and obligations*" (Smith, 1979, p. 577). Meanwhile, Cooke (2002) posited that "*Islam has been misconstrued by secular women as repressive of women's rights and aspirations*" (Cooke, 2002, p. 84). Muslims have believed in the theory of the equality which was presented to them by Qur'an, which recognizes men as the main power and control (Galloway, 2014). Based on this notion, equality in Islam means that a man has physical power more than woman in total, this give him the strength which is needed for some jobs which needs the strength. For female gender and women, Islam put them as equal as male in front of God, but not in the society (Galloway, 2014).

The theory of *patriarchal monopoly* (Galloway, 2014), has been argued by Arkoun (Arkoun, 1994), "*the Qur'an has been ripped from its historical, linguistic, literary and psychological contexts and then been continually re-contextualized in various cultures and according to the ideological needs of various actors*" (Cited in: Galloway, 2014, p. 5).



As Al-Ghazzali claimed that the concept “*of the supposed inferiority of a woman as such in Islam is pure fiction and should be completely disregarded*” (Cited in: Smith, 1979, p. 526). For the support of this claim, there is an evidence in Qur’an which it says: “*Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds*” (74:38), also “*...so their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying): I will not suffer to be lost the work of any of you whether male or female. You proceed one from another...*” (3:195). However, Al-Ghazzali counteracts his words by posing “*the marked difference in the physical, mental and emotional constitution of man and woman is a brute fact*”(Cited in: Smith, 1979, p. 527). The Qur’an has shown the differences between female and male, yet it is clear in recognizing the differences (Davis, 2006; Dickens, 1998) and identifying roles of men and women (Roald, 2001).

All the data, which are mentioned above, want to show the conditions and how the law in Iran has been produced during and after revolution of 1979. Islam has been introduced shortly and in connections with its perspectives to genders, in the next part, the gender in Iran will be continued.

## **Gender in Iranian Law**

Iran is an Islamic country and more than 95% of Iranian are Muslims and the main religion in country is Islam (CIA, 2012)The basics norms of the country are based on the Islamic laws and most people follow the rules which are based on the Islam and Qur’an. As it is said in the second principle of the law:

*“The Islamic Republic is a system based on the believing in one “Allah” (God), Divine revelation, God’s justice by using the Holy Book Qur’an (Law and Regulation Portals.”*

Or eleventh principle in law;

Based on what has been said in the Qur’an “*This is one nation, and I am your Lord, pray for me*” (21:92), *all the Muslims are one nation and Islamic Republic of Iran must work for uniting all the Muslims and make this their one and main goal (Portal, 2015).”*

Furthermore, based on what Islam has proposed to its adherents, the law of Iran has been built upon those proposals for men and women. There is the principle of equality in Iran which is:

*“All the people whether male or female, all have the same rights and they all benefit from all political, human, economic, social and cultural rights (Portal, 2015).”*

In the main principles of the laws in Islamic Republic, the gender of female has been parted and has been put in the separated principle:

*“The government is responsible to respect all the woman’s rights based on Islam’s rules and apply all the below:*

- *Building favorable fields for development of their personality and revival all Her material and spiritual rights.*
- *Protecting mothers, especially during pregnancy and Child custody and protecting derelict children*
- *Establishing a competent court to keep the family safe*
- *Establishing special insurance for widows and elderly women without support*
- *Granting the children's guardianship to competent mothers (Portal, 2015)”*

All these laws and more sub laws in Iran, are showing the place of the genders in Iranian society and the differences which has made by the law for the genders. In analyses part it can be seen how these laws has been routed in the society and culture.

## **A Child in Iran**

A child in Iran is consider by law whoever is under the age of fourteen (Portal, 2015). After this age, they are considered grownups in the society and by the law’s perspectives. A normal child in Iran has eight years of free schools and they are mandatory years for the children (Journalists, 2010). In Iran, children in the law, perceive as children of a person, they are not perceived as a separated being for themselves (Portal, 2015). Even after the age fourteen, they are still being consider as children of a person such as parents not separated from them. Children in Iran until they get married would live with their parents and live with them (even if they work).

## **Summary**

At this chapter I tried to show different aspects such as geographic and historical background of Iran with Islamic laws and how it routed in the laws of Iran. Also, I attempted to show how law look at the gender overall and how they perceive them based on the Islamic law.



### **3. Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

David Silverman defines methodology as “*A methodology refers to the choices we make about the cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study*” (Silverman, 2005, p. 15). Also, it has been referred to by Connolly and Ennew as, “*The body of theory that determines what should be researched and what research techniques are appropriate*” (Connolly. Mark, 1996, p. 114). Accordingly, methodology is a process which is used by researcher to study a topic. Methods are research approaches which includes qualitative techniques such as observation, interviewing, etc., or quantitative methods like statistical correlations. According to Silverman (2005), choosing any of those two techniques depends on what we are trying to investigate with, and we should choose methods which are applicable for our research and theories (Silverman, 2005).

In this study the main aim is to gain knowledge of children on gender identity in coeducational school on their daily lives. For this goal, the study engaged in different methods, including drawings, body-mapping, interviews and participants observations.

The chapter to be read is concerned with characterization and explanation of the qualitative techniques which are used in this research, and furthermore, an explanation of the process of analysis and ethical issues will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **Access and Recruitment of Informants**

Accessing school was effortless, the main reason for this was due to a previous relationship between me and the principal, also in the line with this I was working for the school before moving to Norway for studying. The participants who were students in the school, short of three or four, were my old students. Nonetheless, knowing participants did not allow me to go to the field work without information letters. I needed the right to do research with them and in order to conduct ethically sound research.

To receive permission for the school and class observation, I provided the school with a letter of introduction which is signed by the NTNU and the program coordinator. Furthermore, to receive

parental consents, first, I asked for verbal permission through face to face conversations, considering that they already knew me and my work, and afterward I gave them the forms to sign. Moreover, all along with each method used, I built up contact relationship with children's parents who I did not know before.

Subsequently, the total number of the participants reached 18, 9 girls and 9 boys in interview method, and 16 in drawings, and in the observation, since the class was merged with third graders, totally they became 23. These participants were selected due to studying in the first coeducational school in Iran to find that if this co-system will affect their knowledge toward the subject. The ages of the participants were 7-8, under the age of nine, since children will be separated based on their gender by this age, when they start in the third grade. I decided to do my research with them before the school would separate the children into same-sex classes.

## **Methods**

Different methods for collecting data were used in this research to obtain the sufficient knowledge: participation observation, Interviews, Body-mapping, Drawings and group discussion. The data were collected over a period of two months and half, between June and August of 2018. All interview conversations and discussions carried on with children and students under observation at school, their voice was recorded with a voice recorder, and later they were transcribed and translated from Persian to English.

## **Participant Observation**

Participant observation can be applied as a convenient method to collect useful data from participants in research and in this study, children are the participants (Fine, 1988). Based on Hanne Warming (2005) statement that this method is an ethnographically inspired method in which the target is to gain knowledge about 'the other' (H. Warming, 2005), by participation in participants' daily lives. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) refers to this method as "research that involves social interactions between the researcher and the informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected." (Cited in: Fine, 1988, p. 12). Based on this, this method has significant potential for listening to participants (H. J. B. I. C. s. p. o. e. c. s. Warming, 2005). In this research, the aim of listening is to hear children's voice and experiences

in their daily routine on the topic of gender as boys and girls. Giving children a voice to be listened to is a part of the childhood research paradigm (A. James, C. Jenks and A. Prout, 1998).

I started my research with participation observation as a data collection method, which is necessary for comprehension the content of data (Ennew, 2009). This method seemed to me a beneficial way to prospect the daily lives of these children in the school and in interaction with opposing sex or gender. As gaining access to the research field is the nature of participant observation (Fine, 1988), I established contact with the only school with co-educational classes in Iran. This is the first school in Iran with coeducational classes after year 1979. Also, this school is an international school and it is a bilingual school, there are many bilingual schools in Tehran, Iran. For being accepted to this school, student must know English. The school provides a certain schedule for daily routine. According to the principle and the supervisor of the school, the students who are attending this school for certain reasons such as immigration or they want their children to learn English from early ages. I would like to observe the experiences of children in this coeducational school.

I tried to attend the school every day over a period of two months- from the beginning of June to the middle of August. I used to sit in the classrooms and followed students' daily schedule. On some occasions I tried to participate in their games and leisure time. I watched them playing and joined them in some of their activities. Sometimes, I spend time with them and walked with some of the students in the schoolyard. In the rest of the time, I observed them from a distance. Sometimes, I sat on the ground in the schoolyard and watched them, on other times I watched them from a balcony which was positioned on a higher level than schoolyard, from there I could see the whole schoolyard and observe my participants. The observations continued through the whole research fieldwork, at the same time with other methods. I stopped the observation when the fieldwork was finished.

### **Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group interview or discussion *“is characterized by a non-directive style of interviewing, where the primer concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for the group”* (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 150). The aim of the method is to authorize the participants to bring in various perspectives to a topic. Focus group discussion is a precious research tool for research.

Because of the live interaction individuals pose more expressive and emotional views than in individual interviews (Kvale. S., 2009). Especially, when we are investigating sensitive or taboo topics, this method may facilitate self-expression of each participants' perspectives which usually are not attainable during individual interviews (Kvale. S., 2009).

As this research is an exploratory one, the main aim given for using this method was based on this notion that the “dynamic of group discussion often brings out feelings and experiences that might not have been articulated in a one-to-one interview”(Kitchin & Tate, 2013, p. 215). Based on this notion, I could ask the participants to take a part in the discussions and talk freely about sensitive topics without fear and expel their feelings and personal experiments which in solo interviews cannot be expressed. Hence, an interview guideline was developed and designed with a table of main questions or themes to be explored and questioned during the discussions. It helped the session to be on the track (see Appendix 1).

Based on Kvale and Brinkmann's statement, a sufficient interview should lead to information and knowledge production and brings a good interview interaction. Thus, the question should be direct and concise, and without academic language, also, it should encourage interviewees to keep up with conversation and talk freely (Kvale. S., 2009). Indeed, “open questions provided the fullest answers” (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 134). Based on this idea, I designed open-ended questions to fulfill aims of using the method.

The interview session included 9 boys and 9 girls, and it was conducted in the school where they study. The session lasted for 3 different days for all the questions, each day I would have asked one question in their group and tried to keep the discussion on the major issues and encouraged the participants to feel free to involve themselves in the discussions and trying to ask proper question in order to obtain participants' cooperation. In addition, I attempted to stay neutral as possible and just be the moderator. To do this, I was just asking the question and stood by and listen to them, they would have raised their hands and they managed the class themselves, like they were waiting for the next person, they said like can I say it first? I was just a listener. On the first day, the participants thought I am their teacher, when I told them that I am here only to ask questions and listen to you guys and stayed in my natural positions, they understood that and felt free to talk.

Despite my effort to give every student an opportunity to speak out their voices, some students were not very active. They were silent or repeating what other have been said before. I ended the interview session by asking questions if children want to add or change their answers or if they forgot to say something during the session.

### **In-Depth Semi-Structured Interview**

Research interviews can be administered with different degrees of constructions, from well-structured interviews which track a series of standard and formulate questions, to open interviews that centralizes on specific themes, but without a sequence and formulated questions (Kvale, 1996). This method *“is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire”* (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 27).

Although, it is a qualitative method of research in which a list of interview questions is prepared before the interview. However, these questions are only prepared partially in advance. It means that they must be open enough to allow for follow up questions that are arranged in a theorized way by interviewer. This method opens up the possibility of unpredictable answers from participants. Rather, this is a common production of knowledge by participants and the researcher. Therefore, designing this method requires thoughtful planning and preparation, as long with creativity (Wengraf, 2001).

The method provided me with in-depth information on how gender and the separation in the school in Iran are understood by children. For that, based on the age of participants and their class and their background, as interview guide with different questions was designed (in Persian). However, as Kvale (1996) mentioned, it is important to follow an openness to change of sequence of the questions to pursue the answers given by interviewees (Kvale, 1996). This method had helped me to understand and listen the participants' gender and separation experiences from their perspectives.

Most of the interviews were held in Persian (native language of participants and me), to understand each other very well. The interviews conducted in the participants' favorite places such as the yard, classes or labs.



## **Body-Mapping and Drawings**

Considering gender as a part of a whole body, body-mapping for this research became useful. Also, because some children are not comfortable with talking about the sensitive topics specifically this topic, the body-mapping manufactures the process of research easier for children. According to Ennew et al. (2009), this method is a pleasant technique to gain children's perspective in a sensitive topic such as gender (Ennew, 2009).

In this method, I asked the school principal to give the art time for body-mapping, afterwards I talked to Art teacher about the method and we decided to do with the method in her time. Doing the method in the session of the school time, made children at the beginning to think about it as a school task, after I explained to them and told them that I am asking them to do it, they felt free and they were happy to do it for me. I brought some big sheets and together we draw two boys and two girls. I made 4 groups, two male groups and two female groups. I asked girls to draw me a boy and asked boys to draw me a girl or complete the body-mapping based on their perceptions of the opposite gender they have about opposite gender.

In the analyzing chapter, the pictures of the body-mapping will be provided.

In this study, creative methods were also applied. On my request, in the daily school life, children were asked to come to a classroom with me for drawing. Drawing was participants' favorite method; all the participants enjoyed it. That was an advantage for me, *"because children's drawings can often give adults a deeper insight into a child's faith and thought than their words"* (Herzog, 2005, p. 132). Moreover, this method is a child-friendly method and it does not count on the participants especially the young participants' verbal or talking skills (Herzog, 2005).

Base on this method, I asked children to draw me six drawings with different topics. I started with topic what does girlhood/boyhood look like, and I advanced my topics with how it is to be a woman/man; prior to giving their drawings to me, they were kindly asked to explain about their drawings after finishing each one. I asked them what did you draw and why did you draw it? This helped me for gaining valid data and get their interpretation of their own drawings. According to Ennew et al. (2009), the participants must explain their drawings, because adults' perspectives on the drawings might depart from children's perspectives. I asked children if I can keep the drawings or make copies of them.

## Data Transcription and Analysis

The research in hand is a study on the perceptions of students in a co-educational school, their knowledge about gender identity and their experiences of their genders. Field notes from observation and transcriptions of my interviews with children and drawings and body mapping are the main data which will make the main core data for the analysis. The central ambition of analyzing data is to build a path to make a meaningful understanding from information. As Wangari (2011), mentioned the process of building this path depends on discovering, exploration and learning themes which are hidden through data, furthermore, the analyzing process does not occur after finalizing the data collection, but it happens concurrently with drafting process and encompasses referring to themes and groupings in data (Wangari, 2001).

Analysis in this research started with making the audio-recorded interviews transcribed to written format. As reported by Kvale & Brinkmann, “A *transcript is a translation from one narrative mode-oral discourse-into another narrative mode-written discourse*” (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 178). I started the transcribing the records by listening to them and writing them and reading the fieldnotes and evaluating the drawings and body-mapping. I did that over and over to gain a deeper understanding of my participants’ experiences and knowledge. Transcribing all the voice-records became very time consuming and spent a lot of time doing this process. That is based on the Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) states, researchers who take time on transcribing the interviews will gain more knowledge about the interview style. The researchers will also rearousal the social aspects of the situation and because of this, the analysis will start in a meaningful way(Kvale. S., 2009). Subsequently, transcribing word by word all the interviews and reading them over and over, for uncovering the main meanings and themes inside them. After this, they were classified in different themes and word-coded with the aim of fulfilling the research questions and aims. In many ways, also start during fieldwork the day I finished field work and continue while reading and writing the thesis. All the data were re-read and overviewed, by using different resources and reviewing data, the structure of the data has been improved. Moreover, data were categorized over and over to take as Wangari states to fulfill the details needed (Wangari, 2001, p. 25), and to build a consequential story about gender experiences.

## **Ethical Considerations and Issues**

The interaction between participants and researchers is soaked with ethical issues (Kvale. S., 2009). In a research with children, ethical issues are in the center of attention (Abebe, 2008a; Alderson, 2004), notably in terms of participants' consent and confidentiality (Punch, 2002b). Ethical issues in children research are connected to "*the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair*" (V. Morrow, 2008, p. 52). As Morrow and Richards (1996) has mentioned participants, particularly children, must be protected from the aspects which will be harmful and affect them, both during the research or from the result of the research (V. Morrow, Richards, M., 1996). Furthermore, Kvale & Brinkmann clarify that ethical issues are not only considered to be important during live interviews but also through the entire process of interview and research. In result, potential ethics must be taken in to concern from the beginning point of a research to the final point (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 61).

Awareness of ethical issues can be weighted as the main differences in the research with children and adults. And the reason for it is because of power imbalance between researcher and participants, especially the adult and a child research. According to Punch, "*The adult researchers have the power to determine which data from the children to include and how to interpret*" (Punch, 2002b, p. 329). This implies that the adult researchers have an urge for imposing their power over children. These imbalances can be seen in all the stages of a research. Consequently, to secure child participant's interests, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) states the following principles should be taken into consideration; confidentiality, consequences, and the role of researcher. In the following parts, first I will speak about the notion of informed consent, also the rest will be explained in detail below.

### **Informed Consent**

The informed consent applies to someone who voluntary agree to be part of a research. The duty of the researcher in this part is that to inform the participants of all the objectives and the main aspects of the research, also mentioning the benefits and the dangers of the participants. They should be acknowledged about their right to depart from the project at any time for any reasons. They also need to be informed about the privacy of the data (Kvale. S., 2009).

In my research, I have tried to follow all the principles which were mentioned above. The children in my research were informed about the aim of the research which is the study of children and their knowledge in the matter of gender identity in the first co-educational school in Iran. They had been informed of the guidelines and the project of the study, furthermore, they had been aware of their rights to withdraw and voluntary participation. Also, I received their permission to record their voices.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to prevent the revelation of the private data that classifies the participants in the research. Therefore, the privacy of the participants needs to be important and taken into close consideration by the researchers (Kvale. S., 2009).

In my study, I gave assurances to my participants that all their personal information will be kept secure and their anonymity will be held through the research. Since I was their previous teacher in pre-school, and I knew most of the participants, it was very crucial to make them assure that all the data will be kept private and they will not be revealed. After the research and data transcription, all the information was kept on secure laptop with special password for the files of data to protect the identities of the participants.

### **Consequences**

Taking into concern the consequences of the study is the researchers' ethical accountability. They must to reduce the risks of the informants and maximize the data which the participants produce (Kvale. S., 2009). This study is related to the experience of the children with their gender. It is a sensitive topic for children in Iranian culture, they might not want to talk about their experiences or share their perspectives in this matter easily. Hence, I was careful not to ask questions in a way which put the participants under stress and pressure. Furthermore, I tried to ask question in a form which will not be stressful and harmful for them. As Leech mentioned (2002), if it was important to ask sensitive questions, I should include them in the middle or at the last part of the interview, also in an indirect way (Leech, 2002).

### **The Role of the Researcher**

Based on the Kvale & Brinkmann's statement, the quality of a research and the knowledge in that study is depends on the researcher's "*integrity, his or her knowledge, experiences, honesty, and*

*fairness* (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 74), based on this, the main tool to gain data is that the researchers must be cautious of moral issues during the research (Kvale. S., 2009, p. 74). Furthermore, the main role of the investigators is producing and publishing accurate knowledge. Combination all of these may cause in ethical issues. The interaction between the researcher and the informants might lead to gain important data, this is the natural part of a research. Not keeping the “*personal distance*” might reveal the identity of the participants in the research. Also, personal interaction between the informants and the researchers may cause creation of a way to go into some aspects of the participants’ lives, where they are not invited. Therefore, the role of the researchers is very crucial in a study, and it is more important when the informants are children (Kvale. S., 2009, pp. 74-75). According to Punch (2002), this is because children are more faced with harms and have diminished roles in adult society (Punch, 2002a).

Accordingly, in my all methods, I did not demand my participants to provide their information and their responses. Instead, I tried to make my informants to feel comfortable with me and in answering my questions willingly. When they were in an uncertain condition whether to answer or not, I gave them some space and time to think whether they want to answer or not. In my case, many of the participants who knew me, feel free to talk to me and make efforts to answer my questions willingly and with desire.

In this school, the teachers and the grownups were not called as MS/Mr. X, they were called by their first name plus Joon. This Joon means dear. The participants called me as Gelareh Joon.

### **Limitations of the Study**

According to Martin Heidegger (1962), researches cannot do a research and gain information with “*totally blank slate*”, this means that we are always having experiences, theories, knowledge background and these affect our perspectives on the data (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). This becomes more important if the researchers are closer to the issue. The researchers who do their studies in their own area such as culture, may have some assumption because they are familiar to the area of research. They do not have ‘*critical distance*’ from their own subject of study and this might misdirect them from observing and gaining some important points (Mc Cracken, 1988, p. 22).

In my research, I was close to the topic and the issue and it had its advantages and disadvantages. As I was doing it in my country, we were all speaking the same language (Farsi), we shared the

same culture and society. A common and shared language may help me to prevent any misassumptions and misunderstandings. Furthermore, there was the risk of effect of my prejudice. To prevent this problem, I needed to gain an awareness or better to explain, create a critical awareness. Based on McCracken, a better way to create distance is the choosing of participants. A researcher should pick '*perfect strangers*' as participants, a person who is unfamiliar to the interviewer and other participants (Mc Cracken, 1988). On this part, my first limit came up, my participants were my previous students and I worked with them for a year, since my study was in the first co-educational school, this problem was irresistible, so I decided to ask some stranger students in the same school. Consequently, five out of eighteen were strangers.

Another restriction for my research was the gatekeepers. In my research gate keepers were the supervisor of the school. She wanted to have all the information on the topic and listen to voices. In one of my interviews she came in, and the participant stopped talking and said about your question I do not know anything and do not want to know a thing. But when the supervisor left, the informant started to talk. Because of the happening, I started to ask everyone in the school to not come in the interview room in a friendly way.



## 4. Theoretical Perspectives

### Introduction

As the theory is very important part of a research, it goes hand in hand with the practice of research, they took the same path in the same time. In Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, there are many definitions offered for the word *Theory*;

- *An idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain something about life or the world, especially an idea that has not been proved to be true;*
- *General principles and ideas about a subject;*
- *An idea or opinion that someone thinks is true but for which they have no proof (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).*

Generally, the word theory is a usable word to define a phenomenon or as Strauss & Corbin (1990) mentioned that theory find a meaningful explanation for data in our research and helps us to characterize relevant and non-relevant data (Nilsen, 2005). As C. Wrights (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009), simulate a social research to “*intellectual craftsmanship*”, and the researcher is a craftsman and the research is a craft, whose abilities are in usage of applicable merge of methods and theories. To become a talented craftsman, there is a need to “*let theory and method again become part of the practice of a craft*” (Kvale. S., 2009, pp. 82-87).

In this part of the thesis, the emphasis is to show the theories and the main concepts which influence the path of the research and study. The clarification of some theoretical points such as gender and generation will be based on the goal of the research and research question. Furthermore, the principal theoretical angles which directed my research are the social studies of children and childhood which perceive children as competent social actors with agency (A. James, James A., 2004). Based on this approach, a historical review, various concepts in this field of study, and the relationship between agency and social structure are important to be explained. The focus will be on the structural to find more about the relation between each individual agency and the structure of a society. Moreover, there has been attempts on how individuals develop their agency and how they are affected by the social structures and how they interact with this society condition (A. J. P. Giddens, Cambridge, 1998). Furthermore, this research wants to delve into the perspectives of the



individuals who are children about gender and the influence of their gender on their relations and their agency.

## **The Essential of Research in Social Studies of children and Childhood**

There are various perspectives about the concepts of childhood and children. Different disciplines, especially from psychology and sociology, have given strong influence on current understandings of childhood. Children and childhood became the center of attention by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and different studies accomplished in this area. Out of many theories and concepts which has been proposed for childhood, it can be pointed to theory of stage development of Jean Piaget, which is very authoritative in building the notion of childhood. Based on the theory of Piaget, children, despite of the limitations they are captured in, are developed over “*a series of predetermined stages which lead towards the eventually achievement of logical competence*” (A. James, Prout, A., 1990, p. 11). In this theory, children’s biological factors are the bases of childhood. The biological facts, without considering social and cultural differences, were used to clarify social facts of children and childhood. In this image children are pointed in society as immature individuals and dependent (A. James, Prout, A., 1990). This has been discussed by James and Prout (1990), although “*the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. It is these facts which may vary, and which can be said make of childhood a social institution*” (A. James, Prout, A., 1990, p. 7). This signifies that culture affords different kinds of variation which affect both children’s way of growing up and the meaning of children and childhood. Culture here, means a ‘*way of life*’, which has a meaning for a special group of people in a society (Williams, 1989 in Kehily, 2004), furthermore, it is a ‘*form of action*’, it is not just the action of individuals, it is the reason and the forms they are doing those actions in them (Kehily & Swan, 2003 in Kehily, 2004, p. 9). Based on this, the concept of childhood cannot be a universal concept also not fixed term, but rather a cultural production, which differs in different places and times (Kehily, 2004).

The sociology of childhood has been brought up from a critique of how childhood and children had been categorized in what was named ‘*mainstream*’ research, which it means that it relied on ‘*the socialization functional sociology*, as well as developmental psychology from Piaget (A. James, Prout, A., 1990). In such a perspective, children were seen only from an adult’s aspects and their voice could not be heard (A. James, Prout, A., 1997). By giving children the right to speak

and let them to be heard, does not mean we are giving them the full rights of being heard, in research with children the researchers choose the words and the quotes they want to use to illustrate an argument which they want to be argued in their researches (a. James, 2007).

Chris Jenks (1996), has provided a critique which makes us informed of that different theoretical images of childhood, as expressed in the sentence: “*There is no such thing as ‘one essential child’. There are many ‘theoretical’ children.*” (Jenks, 1996). In the 1970s, a new perspective has been produced, a new paradigm, which is the base of today's childhood studies. This new paradigm unlike the traditional perspective of children and childhood, which had a passive aspect towards children and included looking children as deficient adults, brought a new look on children which says children are not passive, nevertheless they are active members in their constructing of their own lives (A. James, Prout, A., 1990; Woodhead, 2003). This new paradigm looks at children and childhood as they are representing a socially constructed category, that children themselves participate in these constructions (Adler, 1998). Also, we must see the world from children perspectives, because it might differ from adults’ perspectives.

## **Approaches of Childhood Studies**

With their new approach as ‘*new paradigm*’, James and Prout (1990, 1997) put their debates on an urgency to go over models which are based on psychology, that look at the childhood as an active agent who can build the structures around them and their lives (Cited: V. Morrow, 2008, p. 50). The importance from this theory has built a change in the childhood studies and its foundation.

Many researches have been contributed to social studies of childhood and children which their aim was to study children in their own rights and with their own voices (P. Alanen, Morrow, V., 2004). There have been four different approaches in theorizing childhood studies which they are categorized as the socially constructed child, the tribal child, and the minority, the social structural child. group child (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998). Although they are all not adaptable in the research and works, children and childhood researchers do “*combine elements across the boundaries in their work*” (A. James, C. Jenks and A. Prout, 1998).

The socially constructed child has a focus on the ‘*variable content of childhood*’ (James et al. 1998 Cited in: V. Morrow, 2008, p. 51). This perspective sees children as a social group, who has been built in social, historical and cultural contexts (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998; Jenks, 1996; Kjørholt, 2004). In this approach children are not seen as biological stage of

development or human becomings, they are considered as human beings who have their own rights and voice. Therefore, the emphasis will be on the present life of children and their childhood instead of their future lives. Based on this perspective children are living in a meaningful world which is constructed by their interaction with adults around them and themselves (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998, p. 32).

The next approach is The Tribal Child. This view has emphasized on characteristics between adults and children and children autonomy and peer relationships(V. Morrow, 2008). As Jenks (1996) said: *“What this model encourages is an emphasis on children’s social action as structured but within a system that is unfamiliar to us and therefore to be revealed”* (Jenks, 1996). As it has been quoted by Opie & Opie argue (1977), *“the children’s world is to be not unaffected by, but nevertheless artfully insulated from the world of adults; it is to be understood as an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints. This is the world of the schoolyard, the playground, the club, and the gang”* (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998, p. 29). Children in this approach are individual with active agency who are practicing within their own rights and social culture (A. James, Prout, A., 1990).

Third approach in this field is minority group child. This perspective sees children as they have a minority place which gives them less power in the society and culture. They are considered as women group as they are led to discrimination and marginalization. One of the aims of this approach is to challenge the interaction between children and adults rather than confirming it (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998). This view does not refer to the perceptible sense in society, since there can be more children than adults in a society, but as in power perspective they do not have the major power and they are the least powerful in the society. *“The key point is thus that they collectively, as a category is denied rights and opportunities that are at the disposition of the corresponding power groups”*(J. Qvortrup, 1987, p. 9).

The last one is the social structure child which has this belief : *“children are not pathological or incomplete; they form a group, a body of social actors, and as citizens they have needs and rights”* (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998, p. 32). The children are a group which has universal characteristics, who is driven by society and culture they are living in. Living in the society will creates special kinds of circumstances for children (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998). By this perspective, children are constant component of all societies. In this regard, Corsaro have

an argument which says that childhood is a temporary period for the child him/herself, but this category of life is a permanent stage period in the society, which always exist though the member will be changed by time (Corsaro, 2000).

However, as Ansell argues, we always should take into consideration how social structures have influence on childhood and children (N. J. P. i. h. g. Ansell, 2009). Because of this, in studying children, the contexts that they are living in and deal with, should not be independent from them. In that case we should do research and study childhood and children in relation to other social structures which childhood is in interacts with (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998).

James et al. argues that these four approaches should be seen “*within a set of dualisms: structure and agency, voluntarism and determinism, identity and difference, continuity and change, global and local, change and continuity, universal and particular*” (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998, p. 199). Meaning these approaches are not deserted, they “*combine elements across boundaries in understanding children*” (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998, p. 26).

By the social studies of children and childhood, the research attempts to approach children as social agents who are active in their own lives, as active research participants and a social category with needs and rights who are managed through adults (V. Morrow, 2008). Indeed, the combination of these four approaches provides me with a background to this study. In this research, Iranian school children will be seen as active agents with their own rights which is restricted by adults’ actions and beliefs.

In the next part of this chapter I will make use of one of the dichotomous pairs listed above; the relationship between agency and structure.

## **Agency / Structure**

Agency and structure are connected, and Giddens (1984) reconciliation of these two has been a major issue with aim of searching for aspects of children’s social abilities and figuring out how children build their socialization (Kehily, 2004). The importance of structural perspective on childhood has been argued by Jens Qvortrup. His focus is on macro level of structure. From his view structures of a society are what control people’s lives. With this perspective, we should be aware of who is in power and who has less power in controlling sources (J. Qvortrup, 1987). He also argues that children are the minority group which make them with the less power in the

society, with this position in the society where makes sources available for adults who make choices for children (J. Qvortrup, 1987).

Other researches and point of views have been made by Alanen and Mayall, who put the emphasis on generation as a relational concept, as Alanen (2015) argues to understand children and childhood we need to understand relationally. The researchers put emphasis on generation as a relational aspect and look at it as “social structure as a system of relationships among social positions” (L. Alanen, Brooker, L and Mayall, B., 2001, p. 19). Alanen argues that “*the notion of a generational structure or order refers to a complex set of social processes through which people become (are constructed as) ‘children’ while other people become (are constructed as) ‘adults’ (...).*” She also continued with that idea which says that children have their own agency and this agency can be researched and heard by researchers (L. Alanen, Brooker, L and Mayall, B., 2015, pp. 20-21).

There has been many arguments and debates on relations between agency and structure, both of these perspectives are powerful and active. And their relation is the most important issue in social studies. In this regard, Hay (1995) said, “*Every time we construct, however tentatively, a notion of social, political, or economic causality we appeal, whether explicitly or (more likely) implicitly, to ideas about structure and agency*” (Cited in: McAnulla, 2005, p. 2). As it has been mentioned earlier, in structure approach human being is passive and the structures are outsider factors which control lives in a society, in other words, there is no place for agency (A. James, Jenks, Chris., Prout, Alan., 1998). Giddens argues that we can see the complex relation between these two in our daily lives, between routine life and societal level (A. Giddens, 1984).

## **Theory of Structuration**

The theory of structuration has been developed by Anthony Giddens who tried to go beyond the dualism face of structure/agency. He argues in his theory “*argues that there is a false dichotomy between structure and agency for, social action or agency and social structure presupposes one another in the same moment*” (A. James, James A., 2004, p. 38). This theory also has been formulated by James, Jenks and Prout (1998), which is built on Giddens, “*social action continuously and reflexively creates and is produced by both agency and structure at one and the same time (A. Giddens, 1984)*”.

The argument in Giddens is that according to this theory, structuration, the sphere of social science is not only the individual experiences or social universality, it includes social practices across space and time. The theory says that the social activities of the human are recursive, it means they can be built by active agents and they can be recreated by the social actors through time and space (A. Giddens, 1984). As Giddens pointed out, theorizing is a social practice, which has come through time and space (A. Giddens, 1984)

Giddens put emphasis on the idea that social structure is something that is going to be created through practicing every day of social life (Jones & Karsten, 2008). As Giddens himself pointed out directly: *“We should see social life, not just as society out there or just the product of the individual here, but as a series of ongoing activities and practices that people carry on, which at the same time reproduce larger institutions”* (Cited in: Jones & Karsten, 2008). These productions and reproductions of the structure by the actions of the individuals may not be built as the way they are expected to be, there might be some unknown conditions and some accidental and unwanted results to those actions (Jones & Karsten, 2008). Furthermore, the reproduction of a behavior which may appear to be a accepted behavior or an action may cause an undesirable behavior (Jones & Karsten, 2008).

In this theory, Giddens shows a balance between agency and structure as a combination of structure in this idea that the social structure and social actions are made and ruled by each other (A. Giddens, 1984). Based on this, the social structures only come to live when they are built through agency and the activities of the human who are living in those structures. Moreover, the emphasis is on the interplay between individuals and society, rather than on one of them without the other one. The agency of the humans will be built in between, which these actions are defined as rules and resources, that constraining their own actions. Moreover, these actions of individuals may cause in reconstruction of the structure or rules and resources. The changes in the rules and resources will affect the actions in the future (McAnulla, 2005). As it has been said before, these reconstructions will both bring the new abilities for the individuals, yet they also can put limitations for the individuals' behavior and make them to work and behave in the certain ways (Tucker, 1998).

Giddens presumes that individuals are conscious agents who are highly informed about the rules and structure, also they are informed of their conditions and consequences of their actions in their

daily basis lives and the reasons behind their actions. As a result, they can engage in highly complicated social actions (A. Giddens, 1984; Tucker, 1998). On the same level, their actions and work are implanted in social constructions (A. Giddens, 1984). In this theory, *actions are situated practices* which means that these practices connect individual and social structure. The social structure is not separated from the human action, they are implanted in daily practices of individuals, which is connected to time and space as a combination. In fact, structure coordinate the social activities, but they do not exist out of social practices. This idea is the basic of Giddens's theory of the duality of the structure (Tucker, 1998). Putting time and space in the center of the social activities, means that humans are not apart from the social structures which they knowledgeably reproduce. Based on this, social structure is connected to the both conditions and the results of the individual practices, they cannot be without each other(Tucker, 1998). Though this theory appears to be an advantageous perspective in gaining knowledge about social phenomenon, it has received some criticisms also.

For instance, there has been this critic from Hay (1995) towards Giddens's theory, on the matter of conceptualization of structure, and contends that with the statement of the Giddens's theory which is said that structure cannot exist outside agent and cannot work independently of the information of the humans which they have about their daily lives. The main problem is that there is an argument which shows structures with its power and tendencies can exist independent from agencies' knowledge of them (Kort, Gharbi, & Research, 2013; McAnulla, 2005). Moreover, Archer (1995) has a critic about Giddens' *conflationary approach and argues for the analytic distinction of structure and agency*. Based on what Archer is saying, agency and structure are not reducible from each other and their meanings can be defined without each other, because they have their own power and properties (McAnulla, 2005).

How we are theorizing children and childhood is the main goal of social studies of children and childhood. As Alanen makes her points in this regard, most of new approaches have focused *"directly on 'real' children, their activities and experiences, understandings, knowledge and meanings"*(P. Alanen, Morrow, V., 2004, p. 4). Children's activities are their own social lives, their contribution in there and their transactions within themselves and the world around them should be the center of the focus and attention (P. Alanen, Morrow, V., 2004). On the other hand, specific childhood can be created through special situations, ranging from universal political-economic to families structures thus the influence of different communities (P. Alanen, Morrow,

V., 2004). Thus, alternatively of searching and studying children separated from their context, there is a need to study how social constructions will affect children's lives from their own perspectives and how children as agents shape their agents and relationships in their social structures. Children's daily lives are influenced by the social structure they are living in it and the conditions of that social (P. Alanen, Morrow, V., 2004).

As of Giddens (1984) argument, social structure can enable and construct effects on individuals' lives. As gender is a structural condition and will have influence on the children's lives. Child's social class, family economic conditions and the political laws and conditions of the society they are living in it, affect their gender which is a part of their agents (A. Giddens, 1984).

In this study of gender, children are facing both restrictions and possibilities in their daily lives when they are practicing their agencies as a boy or a girl. When constraining structure limit children, they might not have many chances to confront them. Also, children may resist in a way that they do not complain. Regarding this some questions will raise also; how structure of Iranian society shapes the agency of children within their gender.

## **Gender as a Social Structure**

As a main aspect in this research, gender needs to be defined, to explain where its position is in the research and what are effects of gender on the identity, and to clarify the relationship between sex, gender and identity.

In an existing Western world model, the word *sex* is defined as "*the biological status of a person as either male or female based on anatomical characteristics*", but on the other hand *gender* is defined as a socially constructed acts and cultural descriptions, which includes gender roles and acts that itself refers to *the socially ascribed characteristics and expectations* (L. K. J. C. c. p. Newman & psychiatry, 2002, p. 154). Based on the biological approach sex is seen as the fundamental of gender in the aspects of social and cultural forms, this model refers to gender as there are only two gender. In this dual model which there are only two sexes, gender should be adopted to sex of the body and normality is an agreement between physical sex and gender identity (L. Newman, 2002).

On the other hand, the constructionists are arguing that gender is not a product of biological sexual dissimilarities, but rather it is an expanded social structure within the interpretation of biology,



gender should be seen as a prior to physical sex differences (Laqueur, 1992; L. Newman, 2002). This theory emphasizes on the social practices that make a special gender category in a culture, and they do not see a fixed term as the dual theory of sex in gender (L. Newman, 2002)

The term gender is a separated aspect from sex and it can be shown as social category and as Risman (2004) has said that gender must be defined in contemporary social science (Risman & society, 2004). She has mentioned four different theories which have been developed in social science related to gender; the first one as Udry (2000) mentioned is *focused on how individual sex differences whether biological or social in origin (Udry, 2000)*. The second tradition is as Epstein's (1988) *deceptive distinctions focuses on how social structures create gendered behavior*, the third tradition *emphasizes social interactions and accountability to others' expectations, the focus here is on how doing gender (Risman & society, 2004)*.

However, as England and Browne (1992) has argued that; all structural theories must take to account all assumptions about individuals and on the other hand all the individualistic must take some assumptions about social control also (England & Browne, 1992; Risman & society, 2004). The more recent researches show that gender is a socially structured system (Risman & society, 2004). A structural theory must help us to see and understand how and why individuals choose one choice over other existing ones. This theory in action tells us that individuals contrast themselves in compare with those who are in similar social positions (Risman & society, 2004). Although, the actions are made by the interests of people but their ability to choose between the actions is built up by the social structure. The social structure as the daily life contexts builds individual's actions indirectly by forming actor's perspectives of their interests and directly by structuring their choices. In the modern world where forming humans by two types is a must, the separation spreads both demand to and expectations for gender. This theory is true when we realize that gender is a structure which is deeply rooted in society (Risman & society, 2004).

As I mentioned the Giddens's (1984) theory, this theory will go in a better depth for showing gender as a social structure with the emphasis on circular relationship among social structures and actors, which says that individuals are the ones who shape the society, but at the same time the society shapes the individuals' actions. His point is clear: *"Social structure not only act on people, people act on social structures (Risman & society, 2004)*. The social structures are indeed made by human and individuals, but when they are acting based on those structures, they have their own

reasons for that. Giddens (1984), suggested that the reasons are not laying only in individuals' meaning which can easily be accessible through verbal justification, and that is because so many lives are routines to be followed and so taken for granted (Risman & society, 2004). These taken for granted routine belongs to the situational context where the cultural components of the theory may carry the interactional expectations which we interact with them in our daily lives (Risman & society, 2004)

This theory will provide us with so many benefits in understanding gender; First, this theory sets order on the research findings of gender which have developed an understanding of it better. Second, this theory would left behind the new warfare of science, where theories are set against each other, when there is a winner among them, here in this research this theory is combined with theories which were mentioned before in this chapter. The third benefit of this theory is that it will allow us to explore the path and strength of the relationships among gender and interactions and culture (Risman & society, 2004).

Finally, to study gender we must know that gender is deeply rooted as a main for stratification not only in individuals, our cultural rules, or institutions but in all of them, also not in a simple way but a complicated way they are merged and rooted. The gender as a social structure will bring differences in opportunities and consequences for those opportunities based on sex category plus it has consequences on three things: first at the individual level, for the development of gendered selves, second during the relationships and interactions as men and women face varied cultural expectations, and the third at the institution level where the explicit regulation regarding distribution of the resources are gender specific (Risman & society, 2004).

The gender in this research is explored with identity which as the gender is something that is a social structure partly not completely. Gender in Iran and Islamic countries is something based on the Islam's provisions. I am studying this gender, which is embedded in a society where they are keeping the old culture combined with modernity and Islam to find the individuals' opinions and interactions with these schemas.



## 5. Interpretation and Data Analysis

### Introduction

Gender is the areas characteristics pertaining to and recognize differences between masculinity and femininity. Depends on the definition, these specifications may consist of biological sex, sex based social structures or gender identity. A few decades ago, gender was only referring to “*the male/female classification*”(Aldous, 1967). On that time, John Money proposed: “using *the term sex to refer to the biological classification of female\male and gender to refer to differences in behavior by sex* (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972). But these days everyone uses gender, but almost no person uses it as John Money proposed.

Social science refers to gender depending on three concepts: gender role, socialization and opportunity structures. A gender role is a sphere of acceptable behavior that is based on the biological sex (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972).

Gender Identity as a part of gender is the personal sense of one’s own gender (Messinger, 2006). Gender identity as an aspect of the gender can be specified with birth sex or it can be different from it. Each society has a set of the categories which can be guide as person’s social identity in contrast with other members. In most societies, there is a main division between genders’ properties assigned to both genders (Carlson, Heth, Miller, Donahoe, & Martin, 2009; Moghadam, 1992). These attributes can have some influence on responsibilities of the gender also.

For example, in an interview with one boy named Alireza, 8 years old, who just started summer school for the second grade, in answer of the question “*what the responsibilities for the boys and girls are? Are there any differences in their responsibilities?*” said:  
*of course, there are differences, ladies do work for the home and children and men or boys do the outside jobs like my father’s job.*

However, when I asked him,

*you think ladies cannot do that or do works outside of the house like selling,*

he responded:

*You know what Gelareh Joon, my mother told me they can, but my father said ladies are only for the homes and giving birth to children and money making is a man business.*

At this point, I asked him

*I want your opinion what do you think?*

He responded:

*Gelareh Joon it is difficult to answer, because I am a boy I think like a man or boy, so I think my father is right.*

Similarly, a girl named Banoo, she just turned 9 years old, who has the separations and division idea between the genders to answer the same question she said:

*For sure there are differences, such as ladies and girls are for the kitchen that's what my mom does, and men are for the outdoor activities such as bringing money and goods for the family. Responsibilities for young boys and girls are the same to play and be respectful towards their adults. But even their games are different, boys play rough games and girls play girlish games.*

Furthermore, when I asked her,

*do you think ladies cannot bring money or do the outdoor activities?*

She responded with a two minutes delay:

*Maybe they can, nowadays anything is possible, but not in my family. And I think not in Iran also. It is hard to be an independent woman in Iran Gelareh Joon, you know that?!*

These two from 18 interviewers are the small sample of these perspectives in the society for the division between genders. The processes of the gender identity in country like Iran is not a clear process due to the family expectation on one hand and on the other hand, these expectations and confusion will make gender identity process harder and complicated for the children. Furthermore, as children is a part of society and gender as I mentioned in the theory chapter is a social structure,

children's gender identity will be affected by the social structure and in reverse children's gender identity and the decision they will make, will affect the social and cultural structure.

In the analysis chapter, I will introduce my information which I gained during my research field from my participants in International School in Iran. Because of participants different experiences and the vary of methods and the information which were obtained from those methods, I have decided instead of one main chapter, based on my finding the chapter is divided in three parts; *Girlhood, Boyhood and Gender and other effects on it*. I have decided that to make it three parts, so I can cover the main issues and aspects of the gender topic in the analysis.

I will try to mention all the important and related data and children's experiences.

## **Girlhood**

In this part of my analysis, I will try to go through perspectives of the girls in my research, and analysis their thoughts and their language on gender topics and themes. I tried to categorize and bring out some themes which are connected to the gender and they are also connected to daily lives of children in society and individual lives.

Gender is a part of our identity and in some cultures such as Iranian or Islamic culture, a main source for differences. Furthermore, people in different societies have ideas about how men and women act and work, or they are supposed to act, also they have ideologies about how they have to talk, also they have values for different acts and talks (Cameron & discourse, 1997). In this research, gender is the main topic of the research methods, and what children know about gender. Gender was a question for more than one of my participants, when I interviewed them about gender they answered me this:

I asked a girl named Setareh, 8 years old:

*G: What is gender*

*Setareh: Gender?*

*G: Yes, what is it? Do you know the meaning of this word?*

*Setareh: No. I think I am too young for this word.*

*G: Young? What do you mean by young?*

*S: I mean I think this is not a word for my age.*

*G: You mean not proper word? Or too hard to understand?*

*Took her time to answer this question, eventually she answered;*

*S: Hard for me to understand.*

*G: Can you tell me when a baby is born what do they call it?*

*S: You mean if it is a boy or girl?*

*G: Yes*

*S: Boy or Girl, it depends on its sex.*

This was my first question in my interview to gain knowledge about what children know about the gender. Gender as topic, is a sensitive topic in Iran, based on this, it is a sensitive topic to discuss it with children. Also, the reaction of children was different with this question. Similarly, another girl named Vania answered my question in the same way of not understanding it but in different words:

*G: What is gender in your opinion?*

*V: Gender?!!*

*G: Yes, Gender. Do you know your gender?*

*V: My gender? I am a girl?*

She was asking me with a fear and tried to not talk about the word “gender”. As I realized that I changed my question as below:

*G: When a baby is born, how do we describe them?*

*V: A boy or a girl.*

*G: Do you think this is gender?*

*V: Yes, gender shows that we are girls or boys.*

*G: So, if I ask you what is a gender, what would you answer me?*

*V: I would say being a boy or girl.*

*G: Do you think it depends on the physical aspects?*

*V: I don't know, this I cannot talk about.*

*G: Why?*

*V: it is a private thing.*

Talking about gender was an issue for them and that give me an idea to go beyond just the word gender and gain knowledge about different aspects of gender such as responsibilities, friendship or future of these children and the relation between gender and agency which they are practicing. As gender is something which is connected to the social and cultural aspects, it is difficult to change it from the norms and practices of the societies which has been learnt to the children in their early childhood. This means that gender is buried in values, and gender constructions have “*one foot in two cultures*”, one is the perspective of the individuals and the other one is society’s cultural values which is internalized in the parents’ culture and perspectives (Rysst, 2015). Furthermore, gender as Nielsen (1994 in Rysst, 2015) suggests that gender is not only “Doing” but also being and having, this means:

*“In my opinion the perspectives on ‘being’ gender and ‘doing’ gender are not alternatives, but functionally related perspectives: You have to be someone in order to do something, and when you do something you also become/it gradually changes who you are (Rysst, 2015, p. 493).”*

Based on these words and the information which I obtained, there was a feeling of need to study gender and the doings and being in a gender are the main theme in my analysis. In my theory chapter I talked about gender as a social structure especially and about the structuration theory which are the main pillar of the analysis where I want to show how my participants are doing and being in gender as a social structure and combine it with the participants’ perspectives.

My participants as girls and boys shared their feelings and Intellectual aspects of the gender they are living with and how society will perceive them as boys and girls. As the beginning I started with the girls, I named this part of this chapter “I am a girl”. Furthermore, I decided to categorize my information which I gained through my fieldwork in Iran about gender in to main part as Gender and some subsets as Responsibility, Activity, Relationships.

I will start with the main them the Gender and explore the girls; world within more depth.



## Gender

As gender is a part of our daily lives and becoming a major part in our growing lives, I chose it as my main theme and I want to discover how girls find gender for themselves, also how they understand it for themselves.

Many studies has made an analytical distinction between the sex and the gender; regardless of the culture or individuals' perspectives, sex refers to the biological differences which are unchangeable in being a male or female; while gender specifies the roles and expectations which are given to male or female in a society and it is changeable through time, place and lives' stages (Phillips, 2005). Based on these notions I started my interviews with girls to obtain their information about the differences of sex and gender, or to be specified, what does it mean to them. Some interviews are examples of their level of knowledge in this regard;

*A girl named Pary 9 years old:*

*Gelareh: In your opinion what is a gender?*

*Pary: Gender?*

*G: Yes, Gender. Not Sex, I mean Gender.*

*P: AHA, it is easy, Gender is when a baby is born the Dr will announce whether its a boy or girl. That is gender, right?*

*G: Imagine like I don't know what's gender and you want to explain it to me.*

*P: So, I said it gender is whether a person is a boy or a girl.*

*G: So, what is sex?*

*P: Being a girl or a Boy.*

Other examples of the girl's information about gender, she gave me same answer as Salma;

*Salma, 10 years old:*

*G: In your opinion what is a gender?*

*S: I think it is being a girl or boy, like I am a girl, or you are a woman, or Sam is a boy or Daddy is a man.*

*G: do you think this is gender?*

*S: Yes, also our physical physics of us defines us as boys or girls.*

*G: Physical physics? Like what?*

*S: Yes, like my long hair.*

*G: The long hair is a sign of gender in your opinion?*

*S: Yes. Otherwise how can people recognize us, if we are boys or girls?*

In this interview this girl has decided to show me that gender is specified in our physical appearance such as long hair. She was defining the word sex instead of gender. As I mentioned in the beginning, the word gender is a sensitive word in communities like Iran, because of this I decided to ask her is it only physical physics or more:

*G: Do you think that gender only defines in physical physics and figures?*

*S: Yes.... No.... (Thinking), It depends.*

*G: On what?*

*S: On.... (Still thinking) ... it might depend on our behavior also.*

*G: What Kind of behavior do you mean?*

*S: Like girls talk softly and lower voice, boys ... they are shouting always.*

In this part, she added the behavioral aspect to the gender which she recognizes for female and male. The importance of knowing the meaning of gender and sex will be explained more in next parts.

Gender as social structure may have effects on different part of our daily lives. It may influence the way that people perceive us and interact with us as a male or as a female. Knowing meaning and the definition of the gender may help us to recognize these perspectives towards us. I briefly will discuss some aspects of the gender which were mentioned by my participants and through my observation.

## **Peer Relationships and Friendship**

One of main aspects of our daily lives which can be influenced by gender is the relationship between peers and friends. From early ages, differences have been found in the peer relationship

of the girls and boys. All the relationships have their own way of processing and through this process, it will give and take some benefits for the peer in that relationships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Being in a relationship with peer in your age is something will benefit which youth will derive from those, such as closeness, acceptance, validations, etc. or helping each other to cope with difficult times (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Furthermore, Corsaro (2009), defined the peer relationship as a set of activities, actions and routines which children share and build during their interactions with each other (Jens Qvortrup, Corsaro, Honig, & Valentine, 2009).

Gender can influence the relationships and the way they are made. The children's interviews and my observations showed evidences of these affects which were made by gender among my participants. Here some examples of children experience about relationships and friendship:

*We (girls) only play with each other, boys play soccer or other rough games such as wrestling, ... We do not like these games, they are not made for the girls, also boys do not see us as a friend type person. They told us "you are girls, and we do not like girls to be among us".*

*I can remember that one of the boys wanted to play with us, we accepted him to play with us but when he wanted to go back and play with boys, they refused (ignored) him and told him "go play with girls, you are a girl now" (Sara, 9 years old).*

Another female participant in responses to my question "how did you make friends when you were new in the school", answered me:

*Ooo, it was easy, I became friends with boys, they accept me better than the girls. They were nicer and let me play with them (Salma, 10 years old).*

*When I heard that, I asked her that is she still friend with them or not?*

*I see them every day but not playing with them anymore, I play with girls now.*

*G: Why?*

*Salma: when I started being friends with girls, they told me you are now with girls, we cannot have you in our group.*

*G: How did you feel?*

*S: I felt a bit sad, but now I am happier with girls.*

*G: How come?*

*S: We are playing games which are for girls. Like chasing, talking.*

*G: You think these are only for girls?*

*S: Yes, boys play rough games like Soccer.*

Making friends is a mechanism of coping with a new system and a better way of integration in the new school (Rysst, 2006). As for Salama, making friends was easier with boys than girls. There are different types of interactions between peer such as playgroup size, collaborative plays or conversations, helping in friendship or even jealousy in relationship between genders (ibid). I would like to mention some of the experiences of the female gender interactions as above mentioned. My participants spoke about their relations and their experiences with the interaction's types. Furthermore, it will refer to observation of the relation and interactions between the genders and girls.

On the first day of observation, it could be seen this separation of the gender in the classrooms, girls were sitting next to each other and trying so hard not to talk to the boys, or if the boys were untidy or making noises during classes, the girls tried to control them, there were no collaboration between them. There was these competition among girls. Even when it was snack time, girls were quit and not talking to each other.

Tried to ask girls question about *why they are not talking:*

*One of the girls named Sara told me: it is snack time, we are not like boys we don't want to be noisy, we are girls, as we are told we have to be nice and quiet.*

*G: Who told you?*

*S: Everyone, my parents, my teachers.*

*G: But do you want to talk with your friends?*

*S: Yes, but I think it is not acceptable.*

In the example of the above, the effect of what parents and the other adults who are in control of children's lives are more valuable for them more than what they want and then their relationships.

The criticizing behavior was one of the things between girls and the way they interact with each other:

*Sometimes I feel I am not happy, because the way girls act with each other and gossiping about each other makes me feel bad about myself, this makes me think that they are talking behind my back too. The girls' critiques are sometimes aggressive and sounds like bullying (Banoo, an 8-year-old girl).*

Furthermore, I noticed that being among girls for a girl is better than being among boys. They prefer to follow the words of their parents or being gossiped by other girls rather than be with boys and play. If they start playing with them, at last they will be removed by the boys because they are starting relationship with girls. The effect of gender on the grouping and making friends were shown in some examples of my observations

It is breaktime and students can go and play in the playground of the school, it is about 15 minutes every 45 minutes, boys took a ball and start playing football and girls start playing a game where it is chasing each other. None of the girls played with the boys, meanwhile there was a boy who played with girls in the chasing game, but girls made him the person who should catch the girls (like the villain person of the game). When I asked the girls why is he the catcher? They responded that he is a boy.

In this example, although girls were accepting the boy to play with them in the game, but they gave him the role that they thought it is for him because of his gender. This example shows that even if they want to play with each other they will get the parts which are *bad*, or they can be ignored by the opposite gender.

To put it in the nutshell, friendship is a main part of children's daily lives, in different parts of their day, they need to have a friend, more important for them is to have a friend from their own gender and for that they want to follow what their gatekeepers are telling them.

### **Putting Makeups on or Working in an Office**

Another theme which was raised in my data, was the roles of both gender and what do they think of each other roles. Responsibilities and roles are what a society ask each individual does, in this research is based on their gender. In new world of today, many researchers have shown stereotypes as a mental structure that would be recognized by social environment to stable, furthermore people

use stereotypes to help them categorize their information and data about the society and the culture they are living in (Hughes & Seta, 2003). As Allport (1954), characterized it as an “exaggerated belief associated with a category [that justifies or rationalizes] our conduct in relation to that category” (Hughes & Seta, 2003). There are different social stereotypes, but in this study and for analyzes, the gender stereotype is the mainly to be adapted. Gender stereotypes, similar to different social stereotypes, mirror individuals’ perspectives and observation of what people do in their lives (Eagly, Steffen, & psychology, 1984). This can be connected to idea of Giddens (1984), about rules and resources. The requirements for gender, also the expectations to gender can be seen as the rules and the resources of Giddens. Both of them are building social structure which will bring the expectations for the gender in the society.

The stereotype thinking about gender is the activity or the roles/responsibilities an individual take based on their gender, in a society like Iranian society, the stereotyping is a common assumption about gender, people based on their gender would be evaluated or recognized. Iran is a country with traditional perspectives about genders, and as it is mentioned in the context chapter, even in the laws of Iran, women and men have different laws which are dedicated to them based on their gender, like a woman must be a mother in a certain age, and there are individuals who will question the decision of a girl who has decided not to be a mother or even get married. Although, Iran has made many changes for females in their laws, as mentioned in contexts chapter, the law does not look at the women individually as a person for itself, though it has notes on those laws which say that a woman is considered as mother or a married person.

There are many ways of this stereotype thinking which has been found in my data:

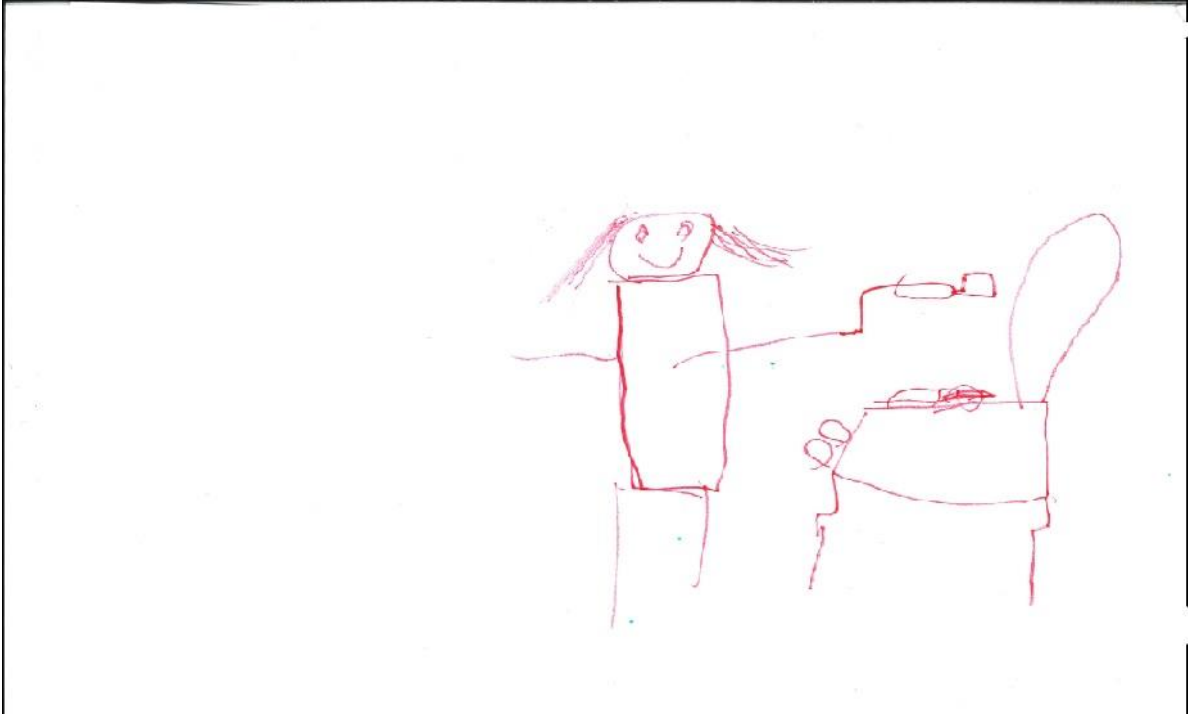
*Here is a drawing from a boy named Alireza 8 years old, the topic was to draw a woman/girl who is doing something;*

*Alireza: Something like what?*

*G: Like what do women/girls do?*

*A: Aha...*

*After few moments of thinking he gave me this:*



Draw by Alireza, 8 years old.

*G: Can you tell me what have you draw here?*

*A: I drew a woman who is putting on makeup.*

*G: Make-ups? Why Make-ups?*

*A: Because this is what a woman or a girl would do. They are always in front of the mirror.*

*G: Does your Mom do that?*

*A: Actually no, but I know many girls and that the best thing that girls can do.*

Or

*a girl named Vania, 8 years old drew a picture of a girl also in front of a mirror, putting make-ups on her face. (as it has been in the next picture).*



*Drew by Vania, 8 years old.*

*She told me that a girl's responsibilities is to look pretty and the make-up helps her to be. And to answer my question why she should be pretty? She said to get married and have beautiful kids.*

Make-ups, marriage and having kids, these are the titles for the stereotype thoughts for women. They perceive the woman as a person who have to look good and be a married one. Not only make-up or marriage is the stereotype thinking, also the jobs and their roles is stereotyped and predicted for the females.

As the next participants, a boy named Babak, 8 years old answered my question of what should a woman do as for job?

*Babak, 8 years old;*

*I think a woman can work as a teacher, or as principle of the school for children, but as you know Gelareh Joon, they cannot work full time, they should be a mother, a job of a woman or even a*



*girl is to feed her babies at home, OOOO... they can also work in the kitchens at home for their families.*

Or

*Sara, 8 years old answered the same question with different perspective;*

*I think a woman only can work outside her home until she is not married, when she is married she has to stay home, cooks and clean or be a good wife and mother to her family. Mainly I think the most important role for a woman is to become a mother and for a girl is to become a wife.*

It has been seen that traditional stereotypes of women and men is controlling thoughts and perspectives of individuals in a society (Heilman, 2001). Even Though these children are coming from wealthy and educated families, but they are having stereotypes of thinking towards female gender. Even these assumptions were taken further where in the classes with female teachers, boys were not listening, and they were talking and being loud, but when they had a class with a male teacher boy really quiet and not talking. When I asked them why are they listening to him but not to the other teacher?

*Gelareh Joon, she does not have enough power to make us listen to her (Babak, 8 years old)*

Or

*He is stronger, and men are normally strong and with power to keep us quite in their courses. But ladies are not powerful, they can only shout at us or give us time out (Ramin, 8 years old).*

Being not powerful is one of the main stereotype assumptions about women, in societies like Iran and the religion like Islam, there are more to these assumptions. For instance: there are these quotes about girls and boys as;

*“Boys are like Lion, look like a sword, Girls are mouses, like rabbits”<sup>1</sup>*

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پسرها شیرین، مثل شمشیرن، دخترا موشن، مثل خرگوشن<sup>1</sup>

These examples of quotes, shows that emphasizing how different values and connotations are connected to the different genders. Based on these quotes, it can be said that society is looking at female gender as weak as a rabbit or a mouse, and male gender is strong as a lion and powerful as a sword. These examples of the gender in Iran is coming from childhood and even before a baby is born, or even they can be put in between the siblings, such as grandmother would say to their grandsons compare to their granddaughter:

*“Boy a Boy is sugar, Girl a girl is ashes”<sup>2</sup>*

In this quote, again boys are sweet like sugar and girls are useless as ashes in a chimney. These examples show stereotype thinking is routed in children’s mind from as early ages, when they are only infants. If we decided on that children are practicing their agency not only by themselves, but also with the structure of the societies; the society and the culture is teaching them like the examples has been given previously.

To sum it up, traditions and culture in a society give children this perspective about genders; women are weak, made for working in home or in the jobs were there is no value for them in a society, a powerless gender where they have been stereotyped by the societies’ ideas and views about the female part. The stereotype perspective has many themes which they will be discussed in the next parts.

The next theme is also based on the stereotype thinking of the gender from the point of the society and children combined. In the next theme, there has been tried to gain knowledge about society expectations of the females in a society based on children’s perspectives.

## **Expectations of Gender**

In any culture, there are some expectations from any individuals, such to be a responsible person or obey the laws. But these expectations may differ from an individual to another, also they may be some dis-similarities between these expectations based on the individual’s gender. In this part of the analysis, there has been attempts to gain participants’ information about their gender expectations in social contexts. As it has been said in the contexts chapter, the law in Iran recognize

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پسر پسر قند عسل، دختر دختر کپه ی خاکستر<sup>2</sup>

female gender as a mother, a divorced woman or as an old lady. This put an aim for this research to see how these laws are routed in daily thoughts and behavior of the participants. There are different perceptions based on the gender that how they perceive the social expectation from them, also a child perception of these expectations may have been affected by different social structures (Raag & Rackliff, 1998). Some models of these schemas can be named in an Iranian culture; separated schools, early marriage, etc. In interview with children, there was a question about the expectations where they were asked for their perceptions on the expectations of their gender in Iranian culture and society;

A girl named Shohreh, who was not raised in Iran, in answer to *my question of what are expectations of female gender in Iran?* Answered me like this:

*Sh: I think the expectations are in our culture (pausing for one minutes) ... of female? So, it is easy now I am thinking about it. I think they are as wearing proper clothes, putting on hijab, get married and having children.*

*G: Are these must for females in Iran?*

*Sh: Yes, this is what I saw in Iran.*

Or furthermore, Salma 8 years old answered me with confidence and no doubt about it as below;

*S: I know this, it is, the society or the culture ask them to wear hijab or be a mother, also... I know the women do not like this, but the society do not want them to work.*

*G: Work? What do you mean by that?*

*S: Like work outside their houses.*

*G: What do you think about this?*

*S: I think it is nice o let women stay home to be with their children. Like my mother is home and I love to go home to her and the food is warm.*

Between these two participants, there are similarities as wearing hijab for females and being a mother. In a society like Iranian society, the perfect image of a female is when she is a mother. As in laws it has been mentioned also too. To see a female independent from these pictures is a forbidden imagination for my female participants, they did not want to see a woman out of these

pictures. As the next participants tried to convince the researcher with that if she is working outside her home, she is doing wrong;

*Think about it, your children are going home, there is no mother to say hi to them or hug them. Your children need you Gelareh Joon, working out is something that can ruin your life (Setareh, 8 Years Old).*

*G: Ruin their lives? How?*

*ST: You are working out then you come home tired and cannot cook for them or play with them.*

*G: What about their father?*

*ST: He is not a mother, he should work outside of the house and bring money for you to buy things for your house and your kids.*

Since to be a mother is an essential for female from these participants, this brings the sources they are referring to them. Their resources are their families and their friends that they are communicating with them through their daily lives. They are all coming from wealthy families, and since the father is mostly working out, and the mother is home with children, this has become a vision of the expectation of the society for the participants in this research.

As Amir 9 years old in answer to my question said;

*I cannot talk about other females, but as what I saw from my family, the expectations from a woman is to be a good mom and wife, be married. A female can only be complete when she is a mother, that's what my grandmother told me.*

Or Alireza 8 years old said;

*Expectations are coming from family I think, like my mother ask my sister to wear hijab in front of unknown men. Or once my grandmother told my young Aunt that she does not need to study in math, she has to study in something that will help her marriage in future.*

As it can be seen, these boys have little knowledge about what are the expectations of a female in an Iranian culture, they shared what has been said and trained to the girls. For boys the family and their behavior are the main sources, not their friends or even their communication with the girls in their school. This brings to the other school in Iran where the children are separated by their genders, the sources will become only their families and what they see in the society which can be changed or censored by parents or gatekeepers. But these visions from different sources can be different from source to another one, it depends on the reaction to those behaviors, jokes that might be said about the topic, television shows (Raag & Rackliff, 1998).

After addressing the analysis on girls, it is important to underline boys-male genders' opinion about these topics and look at these topics from their angles and point of views and the factors that influence their perceptions of genders and how do they feel about it.

## **Boyhood**

On the first part of analysis chapter, it had been tried to show and discover female and male participants knowledge about female gender in Iranian society and how they perceive this gender based on their information, and their families' manners. On this part of the analysis, it will be tried to see male gender from again boys' and girls' approach about male gender in the same society. As the same path for the girls, there are some themes for the boys also which there had been analyzed in order to discover more about them.

In many societies, the word male has been defined as *Masculine*, which may be defined as attributes, behaviors, actions and production of the male sex in answer to some essential quality such as strength (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). The main notion of the masculinity and what has been described to be a masculine is what enhance as male gender in some societies (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). But the word masculinity is aimed to described male in a straightforward way, but this idea brings some questions such as; is a man only or always a man? The images which has been shown as the masculinity can be different, they might be competing or undermining the male gender. The meaning of the male gender depends on the individuals who is speaking about it and who is doing it (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). By doing it, it meant that individual is practicing and living that gender in their daily lives and in interaction with other individuals around them or in the society.

In interviews that has been recorded during the fieldwork, there are some conversations and perceptions made by participants about male gender, how they perceive it and do they emphasize masculinity or see male gender as it?

In an interview with a girl named Camelia (8 years old), she responded to the question *what does male gender means?*

*C: Male gender? You mean being a boy or man?*

*G: you think like this? Male is boy or man?*

*C: Yes... I think. To be a boy or a man with power and fight always.*

*G: Power and fight?*

*C: yes, these are for boy's ad they do these all the time. They have more power and they are free to show their power.*

*G: Show their power? Like how?*

*C: like in the fight or in the class they can be freer than girls like us.*

Power and being free were two main themes in more than one interview conducted during fieldwork. The girls were said it as a powerful thing to be a male, even a young male. This girl gave example of how boys can be freer than girls in the class. The male gender in a society in Iran powerful and be more relaxed towards their expectations that a society has expected from them. This interview and the data which has been collected in the field will provide some themes for analyzing male gender in a separate part for itself.

In the further part of this part of analysis, the themes connected to the gender male will be explained and analyzed for more details and to gain more knowledge about how the male gender has been perceived in Iranian society. Some themes might be same with female gender. But the data which will explained can be different. The first theme which is going to be discussed is male or masculinity, further the peer relationship among boys, and their relationship with other gender in their classes, the last theme would be about stereotype thinking of male gender in Iran.

## Being a Male

The first theme which will be analyzed and discussed is based on one of the main questions in interview; *what does male gender mean*, and the data which has been collected from interviews and other methods will provide it with information which will be useful for this theme.

In a society and culture like Iran male gender is a certain form of masculinity where strength and power is in focus. And the aspects which has been implanted to it can be the meaning of the male gender. This can be argued by Stratherns as she said that gender differences are constructed by local discourses such as agency, identity, society and culture (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). From this point, putting male gender as equal to masculinity is not only about men, it is also about the relation of the gender and the individuals of the same gender and the opposite gender, it is rather a part of a system for bringing out the differences (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016).

To understand the gender male in Iran, there has been tried to gain knowledge about how these differences are made by both genders' perceptions and their experiences about male gender. The male gender may influence perspective of opposite gender or the same gender about themselves. As for this interview, it can be seen that this girl perceives the male how, in response to question of *What does male gender mean to you?*

*Nila (8 years old): Male gender means... (a few seconds of thinking) .... That to be a great fighter, have a enormous power in your body, and being free.*

*G: What do you mean by fighting or having power?*

*N: They are having bigger bodies and they can fight and also the bigger bodies have more power  
Gelareh Joon.*

*G: Just bigger bodies bring them power? Some girls have big bodies too?*

*N: Yes, but they are not allowed to use their bodies to fight, that is why boys are free to fight.*

The perception of having a bigger body means they are powerful is a topic which has been repeated through the interviews and also these can be seen in some drawings in further analysis. As the next interview emphasizes such values in a similar way;

*A boy named Mardan, 8 years old;*

*M: I think the male gender means to have a lot of power and a lot of fighting, and a lot of powerful works and games.*

*G: Can you tell me what are the powerful games and works?*

*M: games like football, wrestling, boxing. Works are .... Like going to war or being a boss.*

*G: Are these only for male gender?*

*M: Yes, of course. Girls are weak, they don't have enough strength to fight or be a boss. Men are powerful.*

For this boy and many other participants being a male means to be a powerful person who can fight and be a boss. This notion of male is equal with power or more freedom is perspective which can be seen during the interactions of the children with other children and their teacher with them.

*In a point where the teacher was teaching, and she needed some cardboards, she asked who of the boys can bring me some cardboards from upstairs? The girls asked why only boys? She answered that the boys are stronger, they have more power.*

The look that has been given to boys as a masculine person who has power is something which is routed in Iranian culture, the girls and boys can see this discrimination towards their gender in their daily lives. For boys, doing the gender means that to be a powerful person and not show the weakness they are carrying with themselves, which might ruin their reputation as a strong, powerful individual.

*To be a male gender... means to be powerful and this means not to show you are weak or otherwise you will not be called a man by your family or friends. A man never cries (Kian, 9 years old).*

He continued in response to this question why a man never cries?

*K: A man should not cry because he will be seen as a weak person.*



The image of a crying person is equal to being weak person, this, based on the society's perspectives, is not a thing for men to be shown or even done. The crier is a less-powerful person which is not a wanted image for male individuals to be shown as. The weakness such as crying, not being able to carry a heavy object, etc. may not be a good image to show a male individual.

As of the next participant explained how this weakness points can destroy image of the male gender in society;

*Gelareh Joon, think about it like this have you seen a man rely on woman's money? Not that much, so if a man shows weakness it means he is relying on something else such as emotion or a woman. It is ugly for a man if this happens to them (Aryan, 9 years old).*

*G: Ugly? How?*

*A: Like ugly, they do not call him man anymore.*

*G: Who?*

*A: People around him such teachers and parents.*

As it can be seen a weak male individual can be seen also as an ugly image to the family and the society they are living in it. In a society like Iran, people always can be judged by their actions and their thoughts. These conversations and more of these are examples of how society can perceive the male gender and how do they judge them based on the actions which can be recognized as masculinity.

By giving to the participants the topic of what *does manhood/boyhood looks like?* They drew some men with different abilities and power, some with male individuals with jobs which has been described as only for males.

For instance, in this drawing it can be seen a man as a police officer who is catching a thief who is a man also;



*(Drew by Babak, 8 years old)*

*G: Can you tell me what you have drawn?*

*B: Yes, I drew a thief and a police man.*

*G: How do they present manhood?*

*B: They are both men and they are doing that only men can do in Iran.*

*G: In Iran?*

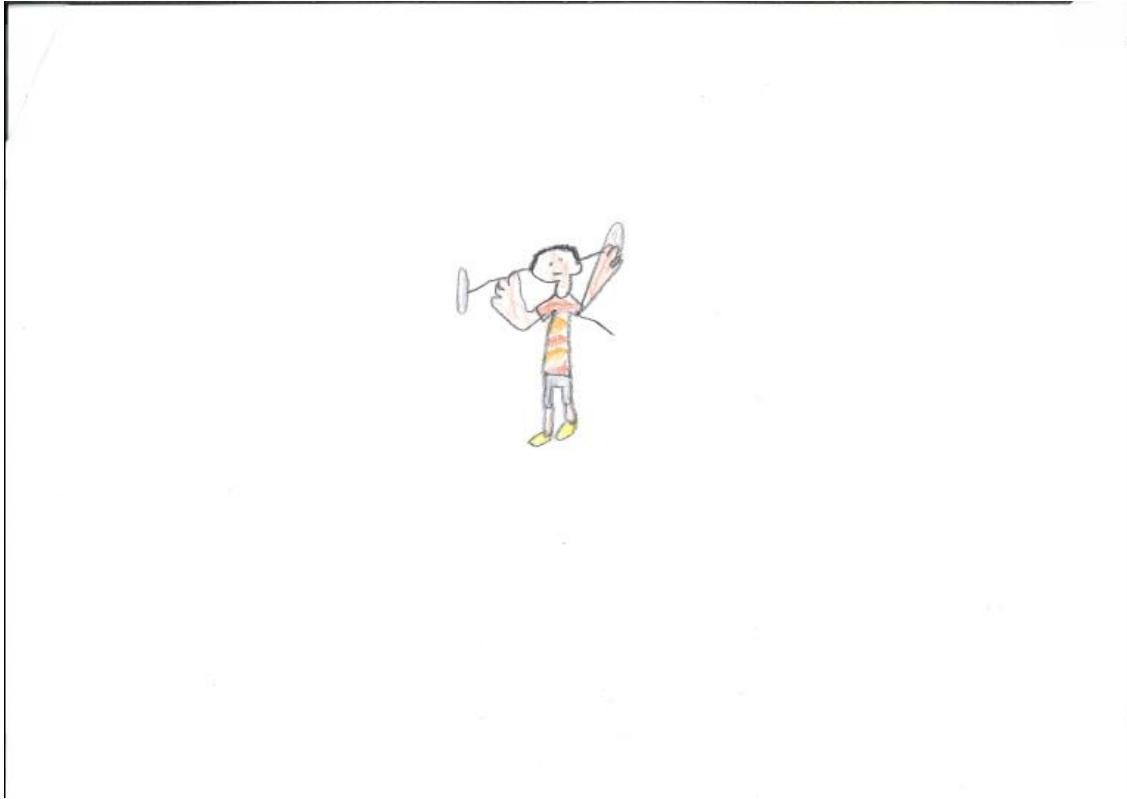
*B: Like in Iran only men can be police or thieves are men always.*

*G: why?*

*B: Men are stronger than women. Also, these things are for men in Iran.*

The opinion of the participants are as what they have been taught and have seen in the society. In Iran when you walk around you can see only male police officers, even though they have female police officers. For being a thief, even though it is not a good job, they also have female thief, but the image in the books and tv series is always a male one.

Another example of the images that children have of manhood and boyhood is represented by Sam, 8 years old;



*Drew by Sam, 8 years old*

*G: What did you draw?*

*S: A boy who is weightlifting.*

*G: How do you think this means boyhood/manhood?*

*S: Men are strong, and they have powerful arms.*

*G: Do you think only men can do this?*

*S: Yes, women are weak, they are always crying. Men are strong, they can do anything that they want.*

The powerful and not crying, big arms, they see the physics features which are only can be observed by eyes. For crying, Iranian male gender grows up with this phrase “*Men should ever cry*”. Putting these notions in the head of the children from early ages, can change their perspectives about their gender they are living within and the opposite gender in the society, not

only their perspectives, but also their actions, their thoughts, their behaviors towards themselves and the opposite gender.

In the next part of male gender analysis, the discussion will go through the relationship of male gender and how do they build it, how they manage it and what are the main features in the relationships that make them to call it friendship. Most importantly, to gain knowledge how they practice interaction with opposite gender in their daily lives.

## **Fighting Together**

As it has been discussed in girls' part of analysis, one of the features in relationships and friendship is gender. A friendship or a relationship can bring out so many different aspects of individuals, help them to cope with a situation, or go through it. A friendship is not just being with some people, it is being happy with those people.

In terms of relationships and friendships, I have been tried to look at them from different aspect. And how this aspect can affect it, the gender as an aspect can be effective. Gender can have effects on the process of a relationship, it can make it easier or harder for each individual among the same or opposite gender to build a friendship (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). A gender can not only has influence on the process of a relationship/friendship, it can also influence many other aspects of a relationship/friendship, such as the social conversation among the peers, the way they interact between themselves, the collaboration they have, or even on the size of friendship group (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Furthermore, a friendship or a relationship among peers cannot be only about benefits, it can also be about just being in a group of people who can understand and be with you. Moreover, based on the tribal child theory, which seen that children world and social collaboration are real places which brings out the meaning of the structures and their perspectives on something (Abebe, 2008b). Based on this, friendship among peers and individuals can bring a meaning to their work as an individual and to the social structures which they are living in it.

Also gender in many concepts can influence friendships, in this research, there are many evidences from observations to interviews and drawings, which show how boys and girls perceive relationships among male gender peers and how is it to be friend with boys.

*“Being among boys are more fun for me, the power that we have, girls do not have it, so it makes it hard to play with them, we are stronger, so we can play football or act fighting. Also, boys are not looking for talking, we are men for actions not talking, that is something for girls (Mardan, 8 years old).*

Or as Amir Sam explain the friendship among boys;

*“We are more fun, we do not apply any discipline for our games or acts, we make ourselves free, and because of these we are having fun more. We can play games which are for boys”*

*G: Games for boys?*

*AS: Yes, like football.*

These are the samples which show how boy perceive their friendship and why they prefer to be in male peers. The relationship among boys were that strong that in the classrooms they were all sitting next to each other and avoiding sitting next to the girls or talking to them. Some explained it as;

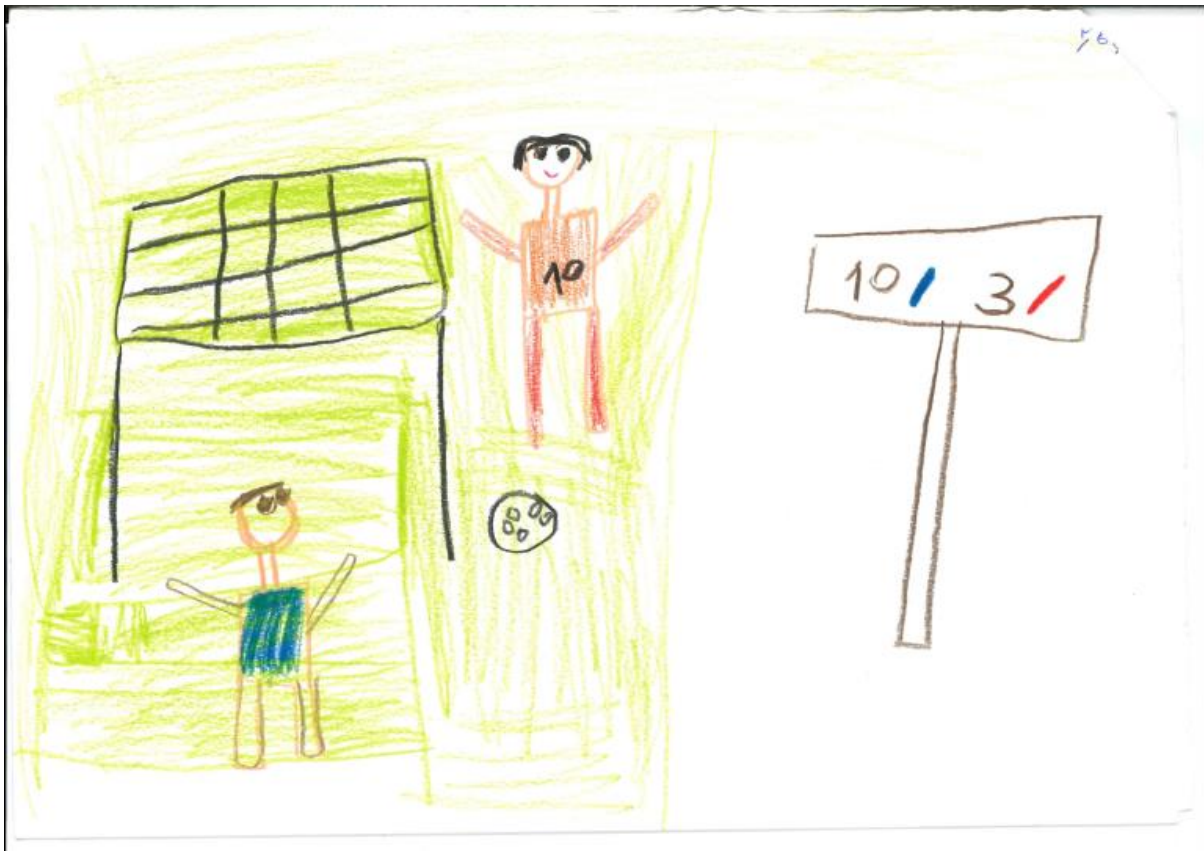
*“Girls are boring, they are always talking, and they want to gossip, but when you are with boys, it is the right thing to do when you are a boy also we do real things not just talking. Sitting with girls shows that we are weak, or we are like girls (Mehdi, 8 years old).”*

Or

*“We do not sit with girls, because they make us angry, we don't like sitting with them, they want to control us and they give us orders. But we do not want to listen to them (Sam, 8 years old).*

The words like these and other conversation similar to these, may reflect upon the idea which the boys see more power in their own body than girls or this will come from the notion that girls are weak, in this case sitting with them makes us weak. Another reason given here is that girls tried to control the boys. Which is true, girls during the class, when boys were answering or making noises, tried to control them or at least make them quit with sentences such as; *stop talking boys, be quiet, it is not the right time for talking or don't answer when you do not know the answer.* These answers and interaction between girls and boys were shown even during their games and break time. Furthermore, this put emphasis on relationality of childhood and among peers, they are doing and

practicing their agency in relationships to each other (N. Ansell, 2017). All of these are part of the intersectionally where different social aspects such as gender interfere to produce different experiences (N. Ansell, 2017). The break-time, boys were playing football only for fifteen minutes and they would not allow a girl in their game. If a girl wanted to play with them, they would say; *you cannot run as fast as us... go away*. Fast for them is another sign of power, the power that is only in male gender based on their opinions. The relationship between boys can be shown even in their drawings;



*Drew by Pary, 8 years.*

*P: I drew a boy and a girl playing football.*

*G: So... boys and girls can play games together?*

*P: I don't think so. They cannot, because are always together and they won't let the girls in their games.*

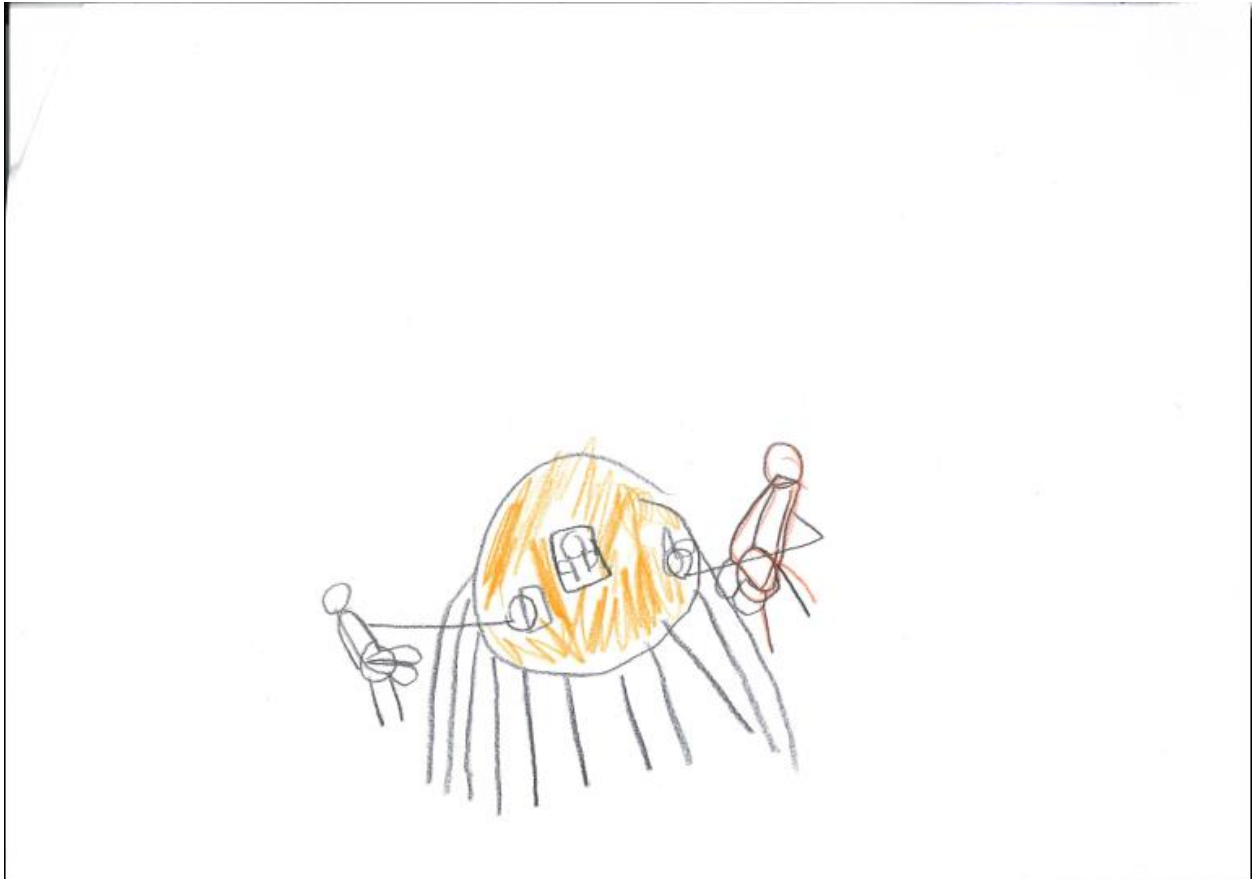
*G: Do you know why?*

*P: They think we cannot run like them or be as fast as them, but you know what? I think these games are for boys. Also, boys do not like to play with girls.*

*G: Why?*

*P: Because they do not like girls.*

In this conversation, this girl mentioned that powerful rules are for boys, she also mentions they do not like, boys in this research did not hate to play with girls, they think they going to be call weak or girly if they play or be among other girls. As the next participants for the topic of the friendship drew this;



*Drew by Mohammad, 8 years old*

*G: What did you draw?*

*M: I drew a boy and a girl playing together.*

*G: A girl and a boy play with each other? Can they?*

*M: Yes, they can.*

*G: Do you play with girls?*

*M: No. (with the look on the face, like what kind of question is this?)*

*G: Why not? You can too.*

*M: No, girls are not the friends type for boys, they want to talk and play girls game.*

*G: So, you do not like those games or talking?*

*M: I do, but... I think the other boys won't play with me or be friends with me after that.*

He was not sure to talk about his will of playing and be friend with girls. Fear of being a weak person or not powerful enough among boys is that high which prevent them from playing or being with girls. A boy only can play with another girl, if they are relatives or siblings. On the break-time, a boy who his sister was coming only for a day, took her sister in his friends' group and they all start to play with her. They felt comfortable with her and none of the boys were showing disrespectful attitudes to her. The reason behind it was explained by Kamyar. 8 years old as;

*"We can be friends with girls, but not the girls that we can see every day or go to school every day, the girls at the beginning are cool but then they become people who are ones order their friends, they will tell you do not do that or do that. The siblings of our friends, they either younger or older, so they do not count as the everyday girls who are with us in school. Besides, we don't want to lose our friend, he is a good boy and friend."*

The losing of their friends and not being among the daily girls they see, were the main reason for the boys to go play with that girl. They just met her, and she was shy, not ordering them around. These are the reasons for the boys to accept a girl only for one day. When they were asked if she was staying for another day, would they still play with her? They answered "NO", Continuing with the reasoning mentioned above.

The power, being cool, not ordering each other, not to be shown as a weak person, these reasons for a community like Iranian is a result of the culture and behavior of the surroundings of the individuals towards their gender in total. As it has been said before, the ideas and the notions which has been in children since they are infants, make them believe and build their relationships and



friendships upon that. On the next part of analyzing male gender, the discussion will be continued by the topic of how male gender is influenced by stereotype thinking of gender?

### **Let's be a man now**

The view of the gender based on the sex they were born with, is something which cannot be negotiable, but the image which is put on the individuals by their society and culture they are living in can be a different image. In world, where an individual can live and behave in the way that he/she wants it and it is based on the personal preferences, not on the social constructions. But as we are living in this real world, an individual from the moment they are born to it, will placed as girl or boy. This will bring the idea of gender stereotype thinking. Based on of Eagle (2000), the stereotype thinking, and perspectives of gender are connected to social trends and occupation (Wilbourn & Kee, 2010).

In this research, there is an attempt to show how male gender as a social role can be seen, is it as stereotyped as girls or not?

As said before, the physical power, freedom and to be not a weak person were mentioned as the main categories for male gender to be in a peer group or to recognize the male gender from female gender based on the participants' opinion. It has been mentioned in analysis of female gender that Iran is a traditional country and it has traditions which applies to female gender such as being a mother at a certain age. The stereotype behaviors towards genders in Iran, might show that the ideas for stereotype thinking and perspectives might be different for the male gender from female gender. The male gender will not be asked to get married soon or be a father, rather they are asked to be rich or have a perfect job or be brave or do the hard tasks (powerful physics), a protector of the family. These are the ideas which can be seen in Iranian culture for male gender. These ideas can be represented by the participants in this research; Asking question regarding what the expectation of the society or people in a society of male gender are, brought some answers such as;

*In our society, people expect a man to be a strong person to do really hard jobs such as lifting stuffs or have a job, so he can earn money or to be a rich person (AmirAli, 8 years old).*

*G: Women cannot do that?*

*AA: A woman cannot lift heavy things.*

*G: What about earning money or be rich?*

*AA: No, they have to be home and be a mom. A man earns for his family and the woman.*

Or

*In our country, men must go to work and have a car or money, so they can support their family and the children which they will have after marriage (Babak, 8 years old).*

*G: why earning money is important for men?*

*B: I said to support their family.*

*G: Just their family?*

*B: to buy things for themselves, money is important.*

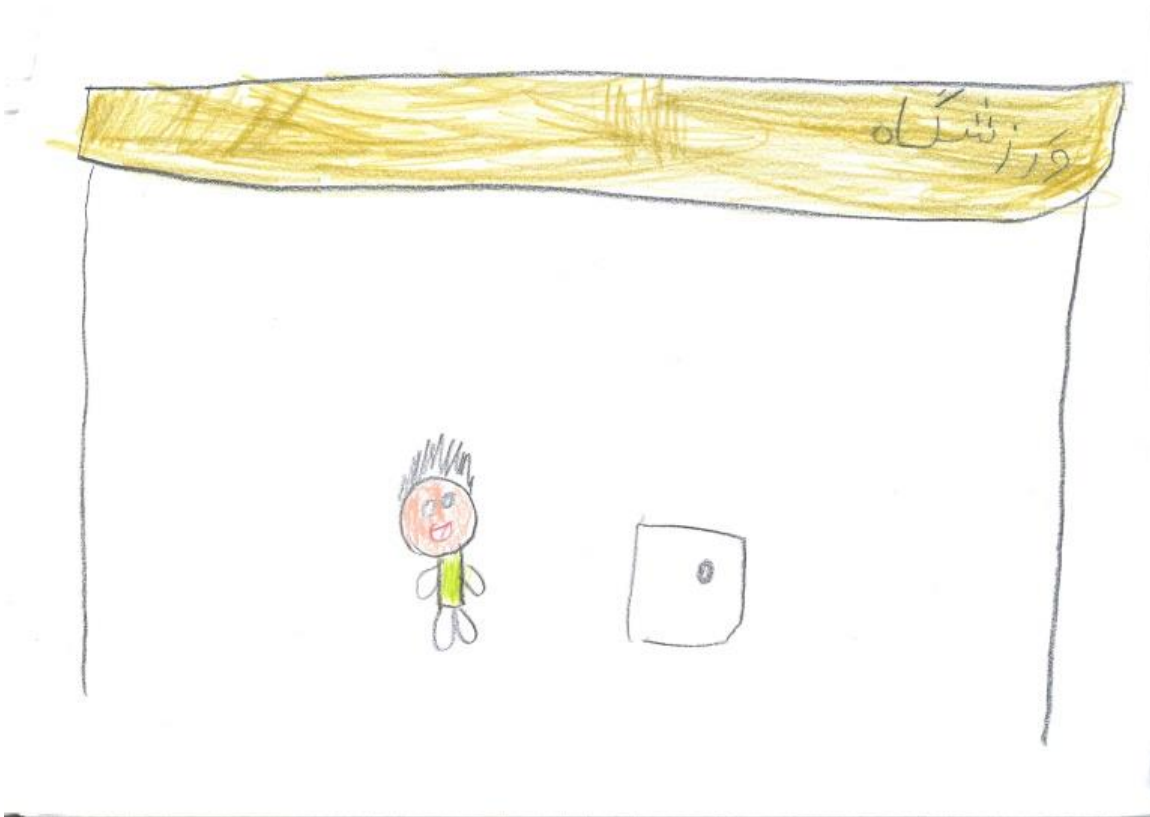
*G: only men need money?*

*B: No, but women get it from men who are their husbands or fathers.*

The expectations of bringing money to families and providing their wives and daughters, also protecting them with their powers, are the main duties which can be said they are building the main criteria for stereotype thinking in Iranian society. A man must work, it is a must. In Iran, the most important aspect to see if a boy is man is having a job which bring money to him. Most of the time men and boys in Iran goes for those kinds of education which they are sure that it has a better career future. Moreover, if a boy does not to finish his studies and wants to find a job and work, it will be encouraged by their friends, families and the society. Even in Iranian jokes it has been mentioned such as: I have a PhD and my friend quit studying at age 18. Now he has his own company and I am nothing.

Not only having a job can be perceived as a stereotype object, but also it brings powers to the male gender. These notions can be named as masculinity ideas in Iran. The cultural perspectives which shows men as a powerful may benefit some people in society and for some in the society will be a disadvantage. Giving men some privileges such as power and define it as the successful way of being a man is called *Hegemonic masculinities* (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). The reason for using *Hegemonic masculinities* is that a man is a man, in any time and in any contexts (Cornwall

& Lindisfarne, 2016). In a culture as Iranian culture, the male gender is equal to masculinity, and this notion may differ culture to another, which in Iran it equals with power, hard work, powerful bodies, interaction with male gender only, etc. This can be shown from intersection experiences of the people in society and their perspectives on the male gender, also in the participants of this research;



*Drew by Setareh, 8 years old.*

*G: What did you draw?*

*S: A man going to stadium.*

*G: Why stadium?*

*S: Because men can only go there.*

*G: Why Only men can go there?*

*S: Because they have more power and sports are for men.*

The repeated notion of the power and the sports are for men, these are the ideas which has been shown by the culture and the society to the children, these ideas come from this part of the law which bans females from going to stadium. And the power notion routed in the perspectives from early childhood as it said before. The laws which make women banned from particular things, make the male gender look more powerful, being more free than other gender in the society. This can be seen in traditional work in this drawing;



*Drew by Koroush, 8 years old.*

*G: What have you drawn?*

*K: I drew a man who is farmer.*

*G: Why farmer?*

*K: That's what men do. It is a hard job.*

*G: Can women do it?*

*K: Of Course not. It needs powers and strong muscles. It is appropriate for men to do these kinds of jobs.*

*G: What do you mean by these jobs?*

*K: Jobs which need energy and a strong muscle. Like farmers, gardener.*

Being farmer is a traditional job in Iran, which can run in families, but since in Iran a woman cannot be seen during such jobs, they have to work in different part of It, the work in the houses and the parts where there are no need for work outside, but what children sees is that the men can do this kind of job only, and since they think it is a hard job and needs strength, they think it is good for male gender.

Money, being strong, power, physical power, not being a weak person, all of these are the signs of masculinity in Iranian society, where a child grows up with ideas such as boys are like lions or boys never cry. These perspectives, these notions are routed in laws, in daily lives of the individuals. They resulted in gender differences and knowledge which may affect the perspectives of the children on their gender.

Talking about gender in separated groups were building two parts of analysis. In addition to these themes, there were some themes which were expressed in discussions with both genders, such as; sensitivity of topic, hijab, separation of the gender in society, their perspective upon opposite gender. These sections will be provided by data from group discussions, body-mapping, individual interviews and drawings which were made during the same fieldwork.

### **Gender: Delicate, Separation and Hijab**

Gender is one of the main reasons which make differences in some culture towards individuals. The differences which can make individuals' lives better or worse, make them work in specific areas and in particular jobs, or in some culture make them to be seen as minor group or a powerful group in the society. In Iranian society, gender is considered as a topic which can be discussed through religion which is mainly Islam and it makes it sensitive topic to talk about in the society. In Iran, at schools, there are not any education towards gender, especially when they separated children based on their sexes in the schools; school for boys and schools for girls. This notion of the separation in schools and also in public areas such as separated parts in buses and subways for women as you can see in this picture;



Sources; padpors.com<sup>3</sup>

The separation of the genders is not limited to schools and students, it is separation of the teachers also, a male gender cannot work in the female gendered school. Furthermore, the separation is not the only thing make the gender topic a sensitive topic in Iran, also the topic of the Hijab for female individuals make it keener topic to talk about, especially with children.

Iranian individuals are growing up with Islamic ideas and perspectives, even the laws in Iran is based on the Islamic believes. Practicing being an individual, is connected it to Islamic beliefs. As Giddens (1984) mentioned that the actions of individuals are a situated practice, which means that a person's actions and beliefs are connected to the social structure. Giddens argued that (1984), that social and cultural aspects such as rules and laws can rebuild and reproduce structures, which have influence on individuals' perspectives (A. Giddens, 1984). Islamic beliefs which has been routed in Iranian lives and culture, made them reproduced and rebuilt their laws, all of these were resulted to changes in beliefs and actions of individuals.

Looking at gender not only as an individual aspect but also as a concept which is built by society and culture that a person living in it. The laws and religious believes in Iranian society make it as a topic which can be sensitive for individuals. In the subsequent part, it will be tried to show how and why gender topic is a delicate one to be touched upon and support it with data from fieldwork.

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<sup>3</sup> It is a webpage which contains information, you ask, and it will answer it

## **Gender: A Delicate Topic**

Talking with participants about gender brought up the idea of the sensitive topic. In a country like Iran, where there is no sexual or gender education for people unless they want to get married and the law is basically separated men and women, talking about gender became a sensitive thing to do. Also, in Iran as it has been mentioned the children from first year of school will be separated. This can be seen as the influence of the society and the culture on the perspective of individuals in a society. But how these aspects will turn gender to a subject which is delicate to talk about in Iran. When it becomes a delicate topic to talk about it can be said that gender as Throne (1993) mentioned is socially constructed, also it has been seen that gender should be a separated structure in the society to be studied (L. Newman, 2002). Gender not only is a social structure, but also it has been made up by individuals who practice and are doing it in their daily lives. The individuals who built the laws and brought out the religious connection between structure of the society and individuals personal lives and thoughts.

The religious beliefs and no education towards gender in culture and society and make it only for people who are married as eligible individuals to understand it and learn about it made it as delicate issue to be consider.

The following examples are how it has affected the perspective of the participants on the matter of the gender, even though they were studying and educating in a mixed gender school; in an interview with a girl named Setareh who is 8 years old she resists to talk about gender as below can be shown;

*G: What is gender in your opinion?*

*S: Gender?*

*G: Yes.*

*S: Why are you asking me this question?*

*G: As I told you before, it is the topic of my research.*

*S: I do not know what it is. I think it is not ok for me to talk about this topic.*

*G: Why?*

*S: Because I am a child. And these things are not appropriate to talk about.*

Or; on the next interview, a person came in the room to get something and she asked to continue with your interview please like I am not here;

*Babak, 8 years old;*

*(when the head were in the room)*

*G: What is gender in your opinion?*

*B: I do not know, and I do not want to know.*

*(After his answer, the head said “OOO, nice, such a good boy”, After this the head left the room and for the second try the question was asked again)*

*G: Are you sure you do not know? Maybe think a bit more!*

*B: I knew what gender is, but I did not to talk about it in front of her.*

*G: Why?*

*B: Because Gelareh Joon, this gender topic is not a topic to be talked about. I must not talk about it with anybody.*

*G: Why?*

*B: Because it is forbidden.*

*G: Who forbad it?*

*B: The adults like teachers or parents.*

Banned by teachers and by their parents to talk about gender and knowing about it or even considering it as an appropriate to talk about, shows how delicate is this topic and how it can affect the perspective of the children about it. The fear of talking about it in front of the gatekeepers. All of these details show that the gender topic is a topic of the taboo. Any matter as a taboo cannot be discussed in society of Iran freely. Considering gender as taboo, makes it an issue which cannot be discussed with other individuals or be taught in the schools. A taboo which asking information about it, needs the marriage permission or being an adult.

Being a taboo made the participants believe that this topic is delicate to face it and discuss it as an individual with opinion about that topic. *Vania, 8 years old:*

*G: What is a gender in your opinion?*



*She surprisingly asked: Why are you asking this? Don't you know that is the bad thing to talk about?*

*G: Why is bad to talk about?*

*V: I do not know, but that is what my parents told me.*

The issue which became a taboo for the parents and without knowledge why this topic is sensitive or became taboo, they will pass it to their children and make them believe that it is a bad issue or a topic which is not good to be talked about without giving any reasons for it. All of these are the results of lack of education in topics of law and religious topics for the children in an Iranian culture. When parents are telling their children about gender, they put it like it is a private matter which cannot be talked or educated about in public. Making gender a taboo is results of not only Islamic laws and believes but also the social structures and behaviors towards genders, the powerful men or wearing hijab for women. They all make it as matter which cannot be spoken of. On the next part of this section, you will be some parts of the social structure which made the gender a taboo.

## **Hijab as Gendered Social Structure**

As Giddens (1984), Argued that individuals with agency and the social structure build upon each other in the theory chapter. It says that the social structure can be built by the active agency in the society and the agency in the society will be affected by these structures also (A. Giddens, 1984). Furthermore, there is an interaction between these two which will be defined as rules and resources. Based on this, these interactions may result in a way which bring not so good causes or bring some perspectives towards genders as a stereotype thinking for them. A structure which has been made in the Islamic societies is that a woman must wear hijab. As it has been mentioned in the second chapter, the law in Iran after the Islamic revolution 1979 has been based on the Islamic laws which is called *Shari'a*, which says that; as it has been stated in *sura "light"*:

*And tell believing women that they should lower their gaze, and not flaunt their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their womenfolk,....., such men as attend them who have no*

*sexual desire, or children who are not yet aware of women's nakedness, they should not stamp their feet so as to draw attention to any hidden charms. (Sura 24:31 in(Metcalf, 2006).*

A woman based on what has been said up cannot be visible to all the male gender which has been mentioned or to be specific whomever she has no blood connection or not married. To put it this way, women are not allowed to go out without hijab or any kind of veils. Hijab after the revolution became a main social structure which was made by individuals who believe that Islam is the main law in the society. This law has given another image to the gender and bring up many assumptions for the individuals in different genders; such as a hijab is way to rule over women. The image that hijab gives women has effects on the social positions of female gender in Iran, a girl has to wear hijab since she is nine years old. For this, there are certainly some consequences of Hijab in the society and on people perspectives towards genders.

There are many examples of how the effects of hijab will present by participants in this research; in interviews with children of age 8 years old with question as *Can you name some differences between girls/women and boys/men?*, they answered such as powerful bodies which belongs to men or being a mother or working in home or other physical differences were mentioned such as having breasts for women or long hair, but the main difference which were mentioned was Hijab.

*"I think the main differences between men and women in Iran, is Hijab, women and girls wear Hijab or scarf or they have to not show their bodies to other man, Mardan, 8 years old"*

*G: Men or boys cannot do that?*

*M: No. Hijab are for girls only.*

*G: Why?*

*M: I think because god ruled that.*

*G: God? What happens if they wear Hijab?*

*M: It means they are women and they cannot talk to men or work outside the house.*

Or a girl named Vafa 9 years old answered in response of why females should wear Hijab as;

*“God wants us to wear it and I think it is good for us. So, no one can bother us. My mom told me we have to wear hijab, so no one can hurt us.”*

*G: Why men should not wear Hijab?*

*V: I think women get hurts more because of the hair.*

Hijab as a law became a social structure which made individuals to accept it without finding any reason for it. The reasons are not giving the whole image of the hijab to the participants of these ages. It has to be obeyed, but when the women put Hijab on, the whole image will be different towards the female gender, already putting a difference between male and females in the society and this will make individuals separated from opposite gender. Seeing something which is not biologically there, it will make a topic which can be brought up by society and the culture where individuals live in it.

*G: How Hijab can make differences between men and women?*

*Ali 8 years old said; it shows that the adults only see the weakness in women and girls. It is like they have to stay home and work there or be a mother.*

*G: Like the society asks women and girls to do that?*

*A: Yes... it is a law and women must wear it.*

As it can be seen here the Hijab as a law was told to these participants, but the reason for it is that female gender is not as strong as men and the adults have seen it in the female gender and that is the reason given by many participants in this research. Even Though, that all the participants knew about the Hijab law, in a body-mapping as below you can see a huge difference;



*Drew by Babak, Ali, Mardan, Mohammad (All 8 Years old).*

*G: What did you draw?*

*B: Drew a girl.*

*G: Why is she like this?*

*B: We decided she is a child who is pretty and colored her hair and is wearing high heels.*

*G: Why is she not wearing Hijab?*

*B: She is a young girl not old.*

The law is implying for the female who are old or working or are not in the primary ages of their lives, which means a girl who is older than nine years old, in this drawing the participants drew a girl who they thought is under nine years old, but also they put makeup on her, which they saw the main sign for female individuals in Iranian society.

In other words', the hijab as a social structure which was made by individuals who are in power, can make differences in the lives of the genders. These differences can change the normal pictures for each individual, showing them, they are weak or strong, in position with power or not, can they be important part of the society or not. All these differences are the results of the social structures.

On the next part and the last part of the analysis, one of the main social structure which has been routed in the society of Iran will be explained and analyzed form the participants' perspectives.

### **A Part for Boys and A Part for Girls**

Risman (2004), believes that the structural theory can be only equitable if the individuals realize that gender itself is a structure which is completely routed in the society and culture (Risman & society, 2004). This perspective can be read in the more depth with Giddens theory, which shows that there is a relationship between individuals and structures of the society, they both shape each other (Risman & society, 2004). It is completely said that the social structure was not only made by secretly forces but also by human forces and actions. When individuals decide to act based on the structures, they do it for their own reasons (Giddens 1984, Risman & society, 2004). One of the main parts of gender in Iran can be called as the separation in the country between the genders in many areas in the society such as schools, or public transportations. Accepting gender as social structure, the separation in the society can put an approve on it. The effect that gender has put in laws and in the society can make it as a social structure.

But there must be a path for understanding why individuals are doing their actions based on the social structures (Giddens 1984, Risman & society, 2004). Furthermore, Giddens (1984) insists on going beyond the verbal justification for the reasons and research on human actions towards the social structure in the society. Based on this, the separation topic has been analyzed and searched in this research individually. The reason for the separation can be connected to the Islamic religious in Iran which has been routed as said before in the society and the culture of families and also in the laws of Iran. The reason for doing this separation can be differ in opinion of the participants also; in answer to question *Why do think they should be separated?* the answers were as below;

*“The separation has been made that the boys and girls won't fight with each other, ..., or will not interfere in each other's lives, by law we should be separated. We have influence on each other (Babak, 8 years).”*

*G: Influence? How?*

*B: Like if a boy goes with girls, he will act like them. Or if a girl plays with boys or be friend with them, he will become like girls, so adults do not want that to happen.”*

Or

*“The separation has been made to control boys and girls better (Anna, 9 years old)”*

*G: Control them? How?*

*A: Like... not to play with each other or be friends with each other.*

The reason mentioned here is to control them and not make them be with each other. The genders are separated based on these reason in the society of Iran by the participants’ perspectives who are 8 or nine years old. The lack of information about the reasons behind the separation can make it for the children to follow the laws and norms in the society without reasoning it for themselves. The participant in this study check it like it is a law and must be obeyed by people and they grew up upon this idea. This separation of the gender can be seen (as shown before), in the games and peer relationships among children and participants of this research. This separation in Iran went that far to only female gender in the schools can teach both in male schools and female schools. Even, in this school which is an international and non-separated school, the teachers are only female except the extra class’s teacher like music teacher. Even Though, that these participants have attending the mix school, but they separate each other, boys on one side and girls on the other side of the class. As it can be seen in the following picture;

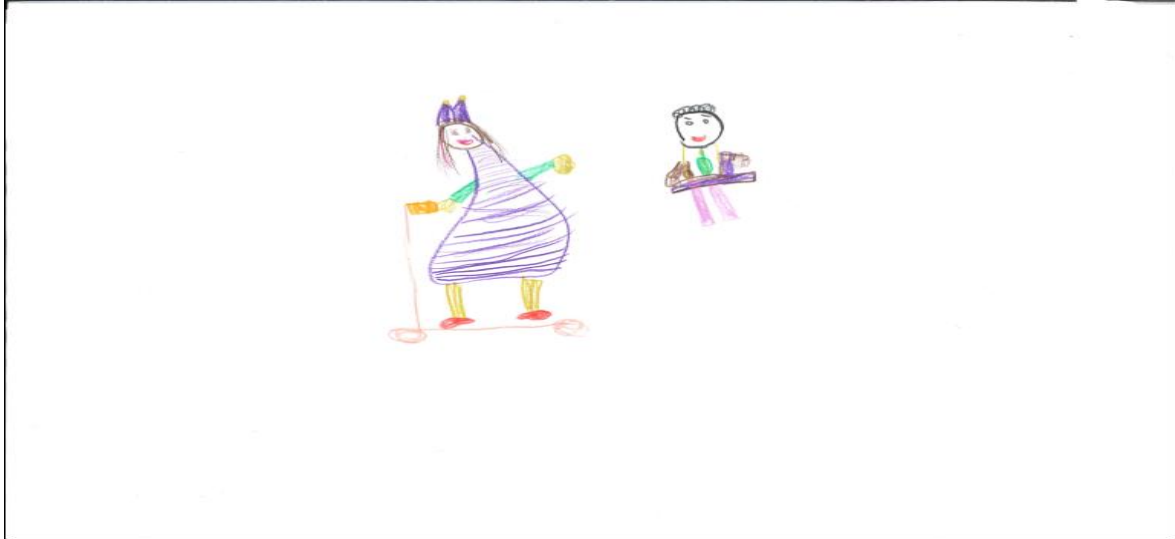


4

The idea of separation of genders has been rooted in the lives of individuals and they are acting upon it, like it has to be done in places that they are allowed to do. The separation as a part of gender in the society even rooted in the relationships and peer cultures of the young generation;

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<sup>4</sup> Photo by Gelareh Safarnegah



*Drew by Kamyar, 8 years old*

*G: What did you draw?*

*K: I drew a girl who is playing with scooter and a boy who play with a car.*

*G: Do they play with each other?*

*K: Nope, they cannot play with each other.*

*G: Why?*

*K: Because girls must play with girls and boys with boys.*

*G: They cannot play with each other?*

*K: No... we are separated, maybe not here but outside we cannot play with each other or be friend.*

Even playing for the participants seems to be a banned thing to do with opposite gender. The separation has made it through the lives of the children and they are acting upon that, without knowing or being informed about the reasons behind of it. The consequences for them is not clear like the reasons. They think this is the best for them to be separated by the gender, but a girl in between had a different idea about this separation;

*“Being separated can be harmful to our society, the boys and girls cannot understand each other, they cannot get information about the opposite gender. This will not help them in the future of their relationships (Maha, 9 years old)”*



She knew if the separation continues, there will be some consequences and those results might not be as good as the situations in the society. Putting gender as a social structure in Iran has made many different aspects for the culture and the society. It made it hard for people to accept or be part of a gender. The Hijab, separation, both might cause some results as making the topic of gender hard or delicate to be talked or researched about in Iranian society. It was mentioned that participants of this research were thinking that talking about gender is not appropriate thing to do. They find the female gender with Hijab a weak person or all of these differences between men and women in such a culture from the beginning of the lives of the children could have caused hardship in the relationship of individuals in the society. Also, those differences have been transmitted to the culture and shaped the individuals' lives based on them. Furthermore, after accepting these transmissions of differences into culture, there are passing to the next generation without convincing or giving any reasons for this transition.



## 6. Summary and Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to capture children's perspectives and their knowledge about gender related to the identity. To be specific, the study answered questions about how gender is practiced during the daily lives of the children in the mixed gender school, the challenges and different aspects they face based on their genders in their daily lives.

Going over the questions and the topics on the first chapter of this study, has been shown that this study has achieved its aims and goals. However, it has to be notified that although the main aim was to go through gender identity, the empirical data showed more challenges and some issues related to the gender identity which effect it for the participants' knowledge of the topic. The data which were collected through different methods and with participants of the ages 8-9 years old, went beyond the first issues and brought out some aspects of the gender such as stereotype thinking, gender as a sensitive topic, Hijab, separation.

The theoretical angles, which this study was based on were social studies of children and childhood, structuration and also theory on gender identity. Moreover, this study went through children's experiences from perspectives of the gender as a social structure, to be clear, what are children's perspectives on gender based on the social structures.

Based on the social studies of the children and childhood, the children as participants in this research were recognized as individuals who are having specific skills that entitled to be study in their own rights, separated from adults and other individuals in their lives (James & Prout, 1990). Furthermore, it has given children a voice to speak with because children have the right speak up their opinions and views (UNCRC, 1989Article 12). Childhood is a social space which is structured by many social structures, because of these children are also social actors with specific roles to have as children, this is where they opinion will come from (a. James, 2007). Also, children and these structures are shaping each other and restructure each other (A. James, James A., 2004).

Alongside with social studies of children and childhood, as well as with emphasis on the theory of structuration, this study also wanted to argue that children are active individuals in their gender experiences. It showed that that they are social agents who are trying to build their agency with the effect of gender in their lives. There are different ways which an individual can practice their cooperation of the agency and the circumstances which influence them. There are many ways of

practicing their agency with gender as a social structure which make for a gender some important differences or make some challenges for both gender and many ways to cope with those challenges and differences. They will show their kindness to the opposite gender, they negotiated their parts in the society with adults. They are using games and classes to overcome their limitations which had been in their culture for their genders to identify themselves or matching their own identity. Thinking that gender is a part of their lives and accepting and living it shows that the participants of this study are active receiver of the social structure which influence them. They are practicing their agency under the effects of the social structures.

Children are living a daily life with practicing their agency in the frame of the social structures, they are influenced by these structures plus the attitudes towards them. The social structures absolutely, form children's activities (A. Giddens, 1984). Being titled as a specific gender is a social structure which can have considerable impact on children's lives. This can be related to the socio-cultural aspect related to the families and the generation, even it includes the policies and laws which has been made based on the individual's gender.

Giddens (1984), that social structure has a two side effects which are enabling and constraints on children's lives. In this study, there are many models that illustrate the constraining effects of these structures. For instances, the relationship between the peers in the school, where the genders were separating themselves from the opposite gender in their games or in the classes, in results of seeing themselves as better gender, or being separated for a long time from the previous generations. Overall, when the participants in this study recognize their possibilities, their relations and their limitations which they are facing based on their gender and bringing out their ideal reasons for them, they are coming across with the effects of social structures on the children's daily gives. Furthermore, when the participants are to deal with all those conditions, they are showing themselves as individuals with agency who are in direct control of their own lives with their actions and agency (A. Giddens, 1984).

## **The Core Findings of the Research**

Considering gender as an issue which has been deal with from early childhood, this research has found some reason for why children are practicing the gender in these ways. In other words,

participants of this study are sharing the same behaviors and relation due to the gender in Iran and Iranian culture. Being in a specific gender bring some limitations and benefits for that gender.

The results which has been made from analysis, show that gender as a social structure is influenced by other social structures such as laws or families, also the participants feel the differences which were made by the structures most especially from their families. Their experiences mostly are being stereotyped or being put in a different position compare to the opposite gender. Another issue which has been brought up by the participants was the separation which has been made through laws and beliefs of surroundings of the participants. The separation in the society has effects in individual's life and in different aspect of it such as friendship and peer culture.

Although, the participants have faced many effects from their gender, but this is not meant that they disagree or behaving against those structure, actually, they are working to learn them, by using them in their daily lives. Also, most of the participants as mentioned were satisfied with these differences and they were practicing their agency within those differences. Another finding for this study is that the separation among children can not only cause in the peer's culture but also in their perspectives towards each other and it might result in a vague picture of opposite gender in the society and culture. As Thorne (1993) mentioned that boys and girls have very diverse ways of interacting and bonding. They react and act with various group of values and goals and they are doing it separately in their individuals' lives. Boys want to play games such as football, or wrestling which they called them as male games, on the other hand, girls want to play games such as chasing which they called delicate games. They found games as a common language among gender for the same gender (Thorne & PLEWIS, 1993) .

Study finding highlighted that there are some factors behind this stereotyped or these images for the genders. The first factor is family and the culture in the family. The way a family treat a gender and the divisions of the roles in the family based on the gender or treating differently a child based on the gender would cause in the perspectives of the children.

The next factor is the culture which an individual will grow upon it. In Iranian culture there are so many assumptions and prejudices towards genders such as boys are stronger, or girls are weaker or a crier. The impact of the culture went beyond their thoughts and it had effects on the way they interact with each other.

There are also many circumstances in the society were put the gender in the position of the prejudice which has been mentioned in this study such as; only female teachers in the school, or the separation of the gender for the classes or from early ages in the school. Findings indicate that although the participants are in the mixed gender school, but their aspects towards gender has been influenced such as teaching are for the female gender only.

### **Suggestion and Recommendation**

- Social values regarding gender in Iranian society and culture can be taught in the schools and give individuals more information and data in this regard. For this, in schools they can have extra topic on gender and teach children about the topic and sensitivity of it. Also, media can play a role key in this regard in showing educational program or articles about education for individuals
- Since there are not many studies in Iran about gender in social studies, there must be more research and gain data on the gender perspectives in the society and what has influenced it and change individuals' aspects towards genders.



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# APPENDIXES

## **Appendix 1:** Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Name of Researcher: Gelareh Safarnegah

Date: -----

Location: -----

(Sitting in a circle in the classroom on their chairs, they will be asked to raise their hand and wait for their turn to speak and discuss the asked questions):

- Have you ever been in a situation which you would feel you had been treated by your gender?
- Have you been to separate by gender school?

## **Appendix 2:** Interview Guide

This interview is a semi-structured interview to gain the information and the knowledge of the children who participant in this research. Each child will be interviewed individually and asked some questions.

This interview is consisted of 17 questions which are mentioned in further lines (they can be changed):

1. In your opinion what is a gender?
2. How do understand that I am a girl or a boy?
3. What are the differences and similarities between girls and boys?
4. What are the responsibilities for a boy or a girl? (Probe until satisfied)
5. In your opinion how does a girl or a boy should behave? (Probe until satisfied)
6. In your opinion what does the society want from a boy or a girl? (Probe until satisfied)
7. What is the meaning of girlhood or boyhood?
8. What are the things and behaviors a girl or a boy should not do?
9. What are the things and behaviors a girl or a boy should do?
10. Are there any differences in clothes of the boys and girls?
11. Are there any differences between girls and boys in mental aspects?
12. In your opinion what are the career for girls or boys?
13. What is womanhood or manhood?

Furthermore, since in Iran boys and girls must be separated by the age of seven in school and nine in the society's opinion, these questions are related to this separation:

1. Have you heard about that the boys and girls should be separated in the schools? (Probe until satisfied)
2. Why do think they should be separated?
3. Do you like this separation?
4. What is your opinion about this separation? (Probe until satisfied)

### **Appendix 3: Request for participation in research project**

#### **“A Gender Study: Children's Perspective of Gender in a Co-Educational School in Iran”**

##### **Background and Purpose**

In Iran, at the age of seven with the beginning of first grade the boys and the girls are separated by the laws and the school rules without giving any information about it to the children. In this case there have been some miss acknowledgment about their gender and the responsibilities for their gender. In this case, the project is about gaining information about children's knowledge and information about their gender identity and the responsibilities they will take for their gender in an Iranian society. What do the children under the age of nine would know about the gender identity. It is a master project and a master thesis project.

The sample which will be used in this project is consist of 10 boys and girls, 5 for each group, they were selected from the first international school which can combine girls and boys before age of Nine. They are all studying in the same class. Girls and boys studying together in the same school and class is the reason for collecting information in this subject, to gain their perspective and Ideas about the gender identity and the responsibilities towards their gender.

##### **What does participation in the project imply?**

The participants imply the main roles in the research project. They are active in the whole project. The data collection methods are the methods which need the active participation of the participants, they are interviewing, observation, drawing, body-mapping and diaries.

The types of data to be collected in shape of interviewing with questions which they are attached in another file, another type will be in drawings, in this method the participants will be given some topics to draw base upon those topics. The next method is body-mapping, in this method, a shape of body which is copied on a paper will be given to participants to draw and talk about the differences between boys and girls by drawing on the body, this method will be held in groups and individually. In the next type of method which is diaries, the children will be given a notebook to write their daily diaries for almost three weeks.

The manners of the data will be collected in notes and some recorded audio and some drawing papers.

### **What will happen to the information about you?**

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher will have access to the information directly. And the data are stored in the files on a locked laptop, also, the files have their own passwords for their security, nothing is stored separately from other data.

None of the participants will be recognizable in the publications, for this, there will be the use of other names for them and no pictures of them will be published.

The project is scheduled for completion by May 2019. By this time all the data will be stored anonymously, and they will be deleted if they are not needed for further researches. If they are going to be used for further research, they will be stored in the personal laptop with password on their files and on the personal computer.

### **Voluntary participation**

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact:

**Gelareh Safarnegah, Tel: 00989125504963, 004747733626, Email: [gelarehs@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:gelarehs@stud.ntnu.no)**

**Supervisor Ida Marie Lyså, Email: [ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no](mailto:ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no)**

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

### **Consent for participation in the study**

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

-----

(Signed by participant/participants' parents, date)

## Appendix 4: NSD Letters



NTNU  
Att. Ida Marie Lyså  
[ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no](mailto:ida.marie.lysa@ntnu.no)  
kopi: Gelareh Safarnehgah  
[gelarehsafarnehgah@gmail.com](mailto:gelarehsafarnehgah@gmail.com)

Vår dato: 30.09.2018

Vår ref: 61391 AMS/LR

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### VURDERING AV BEHANDLING AV SÆRSKILTE KATEGORIER PERSONOPPLYSNINGER I PROSJEKTET: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE OF 9 IN IRAN ABOUT THEIR GENDER IDENTITY

NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS viser til meldeskjema innsendt 30.06.2018. Vi beklager lang responstid.

Meldingen gjelder behandling av personopplysninger til forskningsformål.

Etter avtale med den behandlingsansvarlige, NTNU, har NSD foretatt en vurdering av om den planlagte behandlingen er i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen.

#### Resultat av NSDs vurdering:

NSD vurderer at det vil bli behandlet særskilte kategorier personopplysninger frem til 31.05.2019.

NSDs vurdering er at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, og at lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen er samtykke.

Vår vurdering forutsetter at prosjektansvarlig behandler personopplysninger i tråd med:

- opplysninger gitt i meldeskjema og øvrig dokumentasjon
- dialog med NSD, og vår vurdering (se under)
- NTNU sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet, herunder regler om hvilke tekniske hjelpemidler det er tillatt å bruke

#### Nærmere begrunnelse for NSDs vurdering:

##### 1. Beskrivelse av den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger

Prosjektet skal undersøke barns forståelse av kjønnsidentitet i Iran. Data vil bestå av samtaler, dagboksnotater og observasjon med barna. Det skal innhentes dokumenterbart samtykke fra foreldre og barn.

## 2. Personvernprinsipper

NSD's vurdering er at behandlingen følger personvernprinsippene, ved at personopplysninger;

- skal behandles på en lovlig, rettferdig og åpen måte med hensyn til den registrerte
- skal samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål og der personopplysningene ikke viderebehandles på en måte som er uforenelig med
- vil være adekvate, relevante og begrenset til det som er nødvendig for formålet de behandles for
- skal lagres på en slik måte at det ikke er mulig å identifisere de registrerte lengre enn det som er nødvendig for formålet

## 3. Lovlig grunnlag for å behandle særskilte kategorier

- 1) Særskilte kategorier - Samtykke ((art. 6.1. a), art. 9.2 a))

Det fremgår av meldeskjema vi har fått tilsendt at det vil bli innhentet samtykke fra de registrerte. NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger er lovlig fordi:

- det skal innhentes uttrykkelig samtykke fra de registrerte og
- forsker har oppfylt den særskilte rådføringsplikten

## 4. De registrertes rettigheter

NSD vurderer at den registrerte har krav på å benytte seg av følgende rettigheter: informasjon, innsyn, retting og sletting av personopplysninger, dataportabilitet, protest.

NSD finner at informasjonsskrivet vil gi de registrerte god informasjon om hva behandlingen innebærer og om hvilke rettigheter de har.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har NTNU plikt til å svare innen en måned. Vi forutsetter at prosjektansvarlig informerer institusjonen så fort som mulig og at NTNU har rutiner for hvordan henvendelser fra registrerte skal følges opp.

## 5. Informasjonssikkerhet

NSD forutsetter at personopplysningene behandles i tråd med personvernforordningens krav og institusjonens retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet.

## 6. Varighet

Ifølge meldeskjema skal personopplysninger behandles frem til 31.05.2019. Opplysninger som kan knyttes til en enkeltperson skal da slettes/anonymiseres.

Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan bli identifisert. Det gjøres ved å:

- Slette navn, fødselsnummer/andre ID-nummer, adresse, telefonnummer, epostadresse, IP-adresse og andre nettidentifikatorer
- Slette eller grovkategorisere bakgrunnsopplysninger
- Slette eller slukke bilder/videopptak og lydopptak

NTNU må kunne dokumentere at datamaterialet er anonymisert.

**Meld fra om endringer**

Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD via Min side. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringen gjennomføres.

**Informasjon om behandlingen publiseres på Min side, Meldingsarkivet og nettsider**

Alle relevante saksopplysninger og dokumenter er tilgjengelig:

- via Min side for forskere, veiledere og studenter
- via Meldingsarkivet for ansatte med internkontrolloppgaver ved NTNU

**NSD tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger**

Etter avtale med NTNU vil NSD følge opp behandlingen av personopplysninger underveis, og ved planlagt avslutning.

Vi sender da en skriftlig henvendelse til prosjektansvarlig og ber om skriftlig svar på status for behandling av personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt ved spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet.

Med vennlig hilsen

  
Marianne Høgetveit Myhrén  
seksjonsleder

  
Anne-Mette Somby  
spesialrådgiver





