



Gender Stereotypes and Classroom participation in 21st century Education

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Abstract: Gender stereotypes continue to shape educational experiences, influencing how students engage, participate, and are perceived in classroom settings. Gender refers to the state of being manly or womanish. Frequently, it's primarily characterized by social and artistic distinctions rather than natural differences. Gender conceptions are current in society moment. Although there's a tendency to challenge some of the being conceptions related to gender, this frequently arises from a lack of acceptable understanding of the complications girding gender issues. Generally, women tend to be victims of gender conceptions, while men suffer from the negative consequences of crimes associated with virility. Gender conceptions help individualities classify gestures and streamline diurnal tasks and cognitive functions; still, societal gender bias hinders mortal growth and the consummation of eventuality. The geography of gender conceptions in education has experienced significant metamorphosis in the twenty-first century.

Key Words: Gender stereotypes, classroom participation, educational equity, teacher behavior, student engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is crucial for every facet of individual development, encompassing both socio emotional wellbeing and economic growth. It is often referred to as the third eye, which empowers individuals, fosters innovative and creative thinking, and motivates them to aspire. Education not only imparts reliable knowledge about the external environment but also aids individuals in self-reflection and analysis. Those who are educated tend to adopt a systematic and practical approach to daily life. They are capable of recognizing their potential and enhancing their productivity. Nonetheless, foundational education primarily starts at home, with parents and family members serving as the first teachers for a child. In the early stages, toddlers acquire language skills not from formal schooling, but from their home environment, where they spend their formative years. Home is where children learn to walk, talk, and grasp fundamental concepts about society. Subsequently, the next phase of education occurs in school. The knowledge gained from school equips children to become more informed, rational, and skilled individuals.

Although education is a crucial element for the advancement of individuals and society as a whole, there are those who are unable to access either basic or higher education. Numerous social constraints hinder individuals from obtaining an education. One significant social constraint is gender stereotyping, which transforms education into an unattainable aspiration for many. Gender stereotyping refers to the broad generalizations made about the traits and behaviors of individuals based on their gender. Such stereotypes assist individuals in categorizing information and simplifying daily tasks and cognitive functions. Society distinctly delineates the characteristics of males and females, establishing clear boundaries. Consequently, individuals are anticipated to act in ways deemed suitable for their gender. The gender bias prevalent in society can sometimes impede individuals from realizing their aspirations, as societal norms dictate that certain roles are not suitable for every gender. It is unjust that some individuals are barred from educational opportunities due to gender biases perpetuated within society. This paper examines the educational disparities that arise from gender concepts within society.



2.LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Societal Stereotypes in Education

Societal stereotypes related to gender roles significantly affect education, shaping students' views of their own capabilities, interests, and future possibilities. These stereotypes are frequently embedded in culture and reinforce the notion that certain academic fields, especially science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), are more appropriate for boys than for girls. This largely unconscious bias begins early in a child's life and can influence their academic path long before they enter formal schooling (Cimpian et al., 2016).

B. The Nature of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes in education often arise from wider societal beliefs that portray men as more logical, analytical, and technically adept, while women are seen as more nurturing and better suited for roles in the humanities and social sciences. These stereotypes are perpetuated through various societal avenues, including media, family expectations, peer interactions, and even the behavior of teachers (Cheryan et al., 2017). For instance, male figures in children's television programs and textbooks are often shown as scientists, engineers, or inventors, whereas female figures are more commonly depicted in caregiving or artistic roles. This biased representation affects children's understanding of which careers are suitable for their gender.

C. Early Impact on Girls' Academic Interests

From an early age, girls may absorb these stereotypes, resulting in reduced confidence in their capabilities to excel in disciplines such as physics and mathematics. A study conducted by Bian et al. (2017) revealed that as young as six years old, girls begin to link intellectual excellence with males, a view that can adversely influence their readiness to participate in demanding subjects perceived as necessitating superior intellectual capacity, like physics. These initial beliefs can have a lasting effect on their academic decisions, leading to a decrease in the number of girls pursuing higher education in STEM fields, including physics.

D. Teacher Influence and Classroom Dynamics

Educators hold a significant position in either upholding or contesting societal stereotypes. Regrettably, teachers, often without intention, may contribute to these biases by offering boys more complex problems, commending boys more often for achievements in technical fields, or presuming that boys will naturally excel in disciplines such as physics (Tate, 2019). This unequal treatment can dissuade girls from engaging in class or pursuing advanced studies in physics. Furthermore, educators might not extend the same degree of support to girls in STEM fields, operating under the belief that boys possess an innate superiority in these domains. This results in a cyclical pattern where girls' self-assurance wanes, and their academic performance may decline, thereby further entrenching the stereotype.

3.GENDER

Although the terms "coitus" and "gender" are constantly used interchangeably, they retain distinct delineations. Coitus refers to the natural and physiological traits associated with being manly or womanish, including reproductive organs and hormones (Council of Europe, 2019). Gender encompasses the social places and connections, morals and actions that boys and girls are informally tutored, similar as how they should engage with others, what bourns they might have, and what openings they may anticipate grounded on their coitus (Ibid.). These socially constructed places and actions may or may not align with the coitus assigned at birth. The Council of Europe defines gender as "socially constructed places, actions, conditioning, and attributes that a given society deems applicable for women and men" (Council of Europe, 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that the "characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed" include "morals, actions, and places associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as connections with one another. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can evolve over time" (WHO, 2018). Gender is distinct from coitus, as the ultimate pertains to "the different natural and physiological characteristics of ladies, males, and intersex individualities, similar as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs" (WHO, 2018). The term "gender" was first introduced in the 1950s to articulate the social expression of manly and womanish identity. Psychologists sought to establish a clear isolation between natural coitus – joker and lady – and social places – virility and femininity (Muehlenhard and Peterson, 2011). Since the 1970s, the term has been decreasingly espoused in feminist propositions to punctuate the distinction between coitus and the social construct of gender, including an analysis of societal prospects regarding the places enthralled by girls and boys, men and women.



4.GENDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the current era of the twenty-first century, gender is often misunderstood as merely the advancement of women who have taken on a significantly more active role across various sectors and professions, despite the fact that some cultural norms still regard women as inferior within their communities. As various examples from Indian societies illustrate, women continue to emerge from traditional, demanding households; they have embraced their identities as well. The feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960s in the United States, alongside other human rights organizations that advocated for equality among all genders in recent centuries, after witnessing the subjugation of women's gender by societal norms; religious beliefs, and conventional marginalization. However, a few women who emerged as vocal role models provided significant hope. Gender roles in numerous fields have transformed in recent years, with women now occupying an equal position to men in leading major corporations, being actively involved in their families and communities, owning their enterprises, managing large organizations and prominent political groups, and achieving advanced academic qualifications in all disciplines on an equal basis with men, to mention a few. Both genders actively participate in sporting events; frequent bars and other outdoor activities previously dominated by men alone. Gender disparities have been noted in the internalization of attitudes among teenagers. Further research is essential to identify the most effective strategies regarding self-esteem and body image in school-based prevention programs and their preferred implementation (Agam et al., 2015)

5.TEACHERS AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes are socially constructed beliefs about attributes, roles, and behaviors considered appropriate for males and females. In educational contexts, stereotypes may suggest that boys are more analytical and girls are more compliant, affecting how students participate in classroom discussions and activities.

Educators assume the role of parents outside the home within the school environment. Following parents, teachers exert significant influence over children. Students often view teachers as exemplary figures in society, possessing extensive knowledge. Consequently, students adhere to every directive from their teachers without hesitation. The beliefs and perceptions of teachers are readily absorbed by students.

6.GENDER STEREOTYPES AND GENDER EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Since education represents a crucial social domain where gender segregation and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes occur, it is evident that significant improvements can be made in this field. Regarding teachers and teacher trainers, the challenge of employing gender stereotypes arises when educators make assumptions about individuals of their own or the opposite gender. Some researchers assert that "one of the more significant factors contributing to the disparities between sexes is the teachers' stereotypical attitudes towards girls and boys in the classrooms. These attitudes can be characterized as sexist, even though the teachers themselves are often unaware of such responses." (Ben Zvi-Mayer, Hertz-Lazarovitz and Safir, 1990) This implies that if a teacher subscribes to the gender stereotype that boys should not cry, he or she may react with anger towards a student who displays emotions during class. Similarly, if a woman adheres to the stereotype that girls should refrain from participating in sports, she might feel discontent towards a friend who chooses to enter a sports competition. Such scenarios can result in the affected individuals feeling uncertain about themselves and questioning their reactions or intentions.

7.ADVERSE EFFECTS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes influence self-image, relationship attitudes, and participation in the workforce. Within an educational setting, they can impact a young individual's classroom experience, academic success, subject selection, and overall well-being. The assumptions we hold regarding boys and girls may be either conscious or unconscious, leading to students receiving different treatment or being presented with varying opportunities based on their gender.

8.SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION

Socialization is a fundamental element that contributes to the gender gap in education. Interactions with parents, peers, teachers, and others within educational settings shape children's perceptions of gender differences and the perceived varying capacities associated with gender for different tasks (Bigler, Hayes & Hamilton, 2013). Consequently, children often base their self-belief in their abilities not on their actual skills but rather on the gender appropriateness of tasks they have learned from society. Engagement with parents helps children develop attitudes and behaviors concerning gender-appropriate education (Molla, 2016). This gender-specific educational attitude and behavior are further reinforced through interactions with peers and teachers.

Classroom socialization occurs through various interactions, school activities, and participation in educational responsibilities (Kangetha, Lyria & Nyamanga, 2014). Through socialization, children come to understand that certain

fields are deemed suitable for their gender. In addition to the influence of teachers and the school environment, educational materials play a crucial role in perpetuating gender disparities in education. Many educational resources propagate gender biases through images, activities, and language. The characteristics of gender depicted in educational materials reinforce stereotypical gender roles, leading students to associate these roles with their gender identity. The representation of female occupations in educational textbooks often includes housewives, with traits depicted as introverted and passive (Islam & Asadullah, 2018). Such misrepresentations of females in educational texts reflect male attitudes towards females and influence females' self-assessment.

9. THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender distinctions arise from natural forces rather than from upbringing. Consequently, the societal roles of women and men are influenced by biological differences between the sexes. Nevertheless, the understanding of gender differences should not solely focus on hormones and chromosomes; it must also consider social norms that dictate distinct behaviors for men and women. These social norms are often referred to as stereotypes.

At this juncture, one might pose questions such as, "Why do we feel compelled to adhere to gender norms and expectations? What drives us to validate gender roles?" Primarily, we are subjected to normative pressure, necessitating compliance with specific rules and the justification of societal expectations. Additionally, we face informational pressure. From a young age, our culture imparts lessons on what it means to be a boy or a girl. The messages begin early, influencing everything from the colors of our clothing to the toys we engage with.

In essence, before determining what is right or wrong, we seek to understand what is deemed acceptable by others. We perceive our actions as correct when they align with those of our peers. The significant impact of gender norms on our behavior can be attributed to the interplay of informational and normative pressures. On one hand, gender stereotypes simplify our lives and diminish the complexity of our decision-making processes. During childhood, we recognize this and learn to conform to these norms without questioning or exerting effort to alter them. Conversely, gender stereotypes hinder the growth of individual personalities and contribute to social inequality.

10. GENDER GAP IN EDUCATION

The gender gap in education In India, the disparity in educational access based on gender remains significant. According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD, 2016), the gender gap in India stands at 19.6%. Males enjoy greater privileges compared to their female counterparts due to the prevailing patriarchal norms in society (Sahin 2013). Nevertheless, one challenge that males encounter in education is the lack of encouragement to pursue arts subjects, even when they have a genuine interest in them. The circumstances are markedly different for transgender individuals, as many people do not recognize them as a legitimate gender. A significant portion of society views transgender individuals as a transgression against divine will. Consequently, accessing even basic education poses a considerable challenge for transgender individuals. Only a small fraction of transgender people manage to surmount these barriers and attain higher education. Despite education being recognized as a fundamental right under the Indian constitution, transgender individuals continue to face significant obstacles in accessing educational opportunities due to societal constraints.

11. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RAISING AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADVOCATING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- Dismantling gender stereotypes from an early age is crucial in preventing the adverse effects of inequality and discrimination as children mature into adults; this ensures that children are not constrained by expectations tied to their gender. By creating environments that promote non-gendered norms and expectations, children can feel more accepted and celebrated for their unique identities. This allows them to expand their aspirations and increases the likelihood of achieving their full potential.
- According to India's Census 2011, the youth (ages 15-24) in India represent one-fifth (19.1%) of the nation's total population. It is projected that by 2020, the youth will account for 34.33% of the total population. Thus, the youth form a significant segment of the Indian populace. This demographic presents an opportunity for them to instigate social change, provided they can initiate change within themselves.
- Therefore, it is essential to guide the youth in a constructive direction through appropriate upbringing and education. If the youth can advocate against gender stereotypes and adopt an egalitarian perspective towards gender, they can pave the way for a future generation free from gender biases.
- The youth possess the ability to influence their peers and contribute to the welfare of others; thus, encouraging non-stereotypical behavior related to gender among them may inspire them to mobilize for a greater cause and contribute to the creation of a better society.

12. STEREOTYPES AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Gender stereotyping is a consequence of the unconscious biases that we all possess. Unconscious bias occurs when our subconscious mind makes assumptions about individuals based on their actual or perceived backgrounds. Each person harbors unconscious biases. A person may be influenced by a stereotype without consciously agreeing with it. Recognizing our biases and actively working to mitigate them is a crucial step in addressing the detrimental impacts of gender stereotypes. Unconscious bias emerges because we are required to process a significant amount of information every moment. To prevent being overwhelmed, our brains must make assumptions grounded in past experiences and identify patterns to facilitate quicker decision-making.

Nevertheless, these assumptions often rely on simplistic characterizations of individuals, such as their age, race, or gender. These biases are conveyed through subtle cues, including body language and word choice. This phenomenon is more likely to occur when we are under stress or fatigue, potentially leading to issues that influence our beliefs and interactions with others. While acknowledging and confronting our own biases can be difficult, it is essential to recognize, contemplate, and even engage in discussions about them with our colleagues.

In the educational setting, unconscious bias can reveal itself through the interactions between teachers and students. For instance, educators might be more inclined to commend girls for their good behavior, whereas boys are often recognized for their ideas and comprehension. A girl who disrupts the class may be treated differently than a boy displaying the same behavior. Such expectations can negatively impact both genders. Girls might develop a tendency to be compliant and avoid taking risks, while boys may disengage from their education if they do not grasp concepts easily.

13. CONCLUSION

The educational phase of students in schools holds significant importance; however, the issues arising from gender disparities among students during this period are also quite evident. Some nations have initiated investigations and implemented specific measures to address these concerns. In conclusion, regardless of the various approaches in the twenty-first century aimed at fostering a better understanding of gender, individuals tend to perceive others of both the same and opposite gender in a similar light. Furthermore, they regard themselves as a crucial part of the culture shaped by the prevailing messages of the times, often misinterpreting the true meaning of gender in relation to others. In simpler terms, some individuals mistakenly view gender as solely pertaining to women's progress in the twentieth century.

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