

EXPLORING GENDER STEREOTYPES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

*** Sumaiya Abdulla Khan**

* Research Student, VESASC (Autonomous) Chembur- 400071 (Affiliated to University of Mumbai)

Abstract:

This study investigates the persistence of gender stereotypes among young adults in India. A mixed-method approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative data. Sixty students from Vivekanand Education Society's Arts, Science and Commerce College participated in vignette-based interviews, while 200 students aged 18-25 from across India completed a structured questionnaire. Results revealed that gender stereotypes continue to influence young adults' perceptions and behaviours, particularly regarding career choices, domestic roles, and interpersonal relationships. The study highlights areas for future research, including examining the long-term effects of exposure to diverse role models and the intersectionality of gender biases.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, Young adults, India, Vignettes, Qualitative Analysis, Quantitative survey, Gender roles.

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Introduction:

Gender stereotypes are , Overly Simplistic beliefs about characteristics , abilities, and roles based on gender (APA,2020). These arise from societal norms, the shared expectations of behavior within a community, and gender roles, which define responsibilities based on gender. This study examines the persistence of such stereotypes among young adults aged 18–25 using a mixed-methods approach. The Traditional Gender Roles are Historically, gender roles at home have been defined by a clear division of labor. Men were expected to provide financial support, while women were responsible for cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing. Gender stereotypes in academics are related , Teachers may subconsciously treat boys and girls differently, often

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influenced by deep-seated biases. For instance, boys might be encouraged to engage in more competitive and active roles, while girls might be steered toward passive or supportive activities. Gender roles at

workplace can be understand through , example of gender stereotypes in the workplace is how qualities like intelligence and agency are assigned to men versus women. Gender stereotypes often reframe these characteristics to portray women as “bossy,” whereas in men they're considered good leadership qualities.

Literature Review :

The gender stereotypes often impact academics , career aspiration and job satisfaction among young adults . Societal norms impact men and women's choices in various aspects of life from childhood to adulthood .The following studies will explain how gender stereotypes have an impact on young adults' lives .

Research by (Mundt ,2019) determines that girls are discouraged to choose STEM (Science , Technology , Engineering , Maths) subjects because of societal belief that girls are not good at math and science subjects as compared to boys . Similar to finding of the research done by gender difference vignettes , that most respondents suggest that female character is more likely to become artist , or corporate employee and the research by (Mundt 2019) suggested that the

participation of young girls in stem fields can be increased through introduce them females role models who are succeeding in stem fields at schools , in social media platform and community programs to empower them to pursue STEM fields and to reduce the gender stereotypes related to it .

In the later research (Linran et.al ,2020) stated that societal norms and expectations shape high school students to shape their career choices , with 85.9% male participants choosing science.

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and technological fields and 52.94% female participants choosing humanities fields . This finding indicated the importance of promoting gender neutral values and equality in education to reduce the impact of gender stereotypes on career decisions . indicating similarity with finding vignettes based research that males choose more leadership based work than females in society .

In the Indian context research by (Verma , 2021) regarding stereotypes related to occupations in Indian society the research determines that societal norms and workplace discrimination leads to women stuck in small positions rather than moving to managerial positions . The study suggests inclusive policies ,skill development programs and initiatives to encourage women's participation in diverse work fields and to broaden their career opportunities . indicating similarity with vignettes based research finding that gender stereotypes related to career aspiration exist as most participants suggested that females will opt for less challenging roles whereas males are more likely to engage in higher and challenging posts .

In another research based on Indian context (Kwatra.etal ,2022) determined the role of gender stereotypes in choosing career path and job satisfaction .The research findings suggested that traditional gender stereotypes not only influences career choice but also

the job satisfaction and opting for better workplace policy and fostering a supportive environment can boost job satisfaction as per the research findings. The research correlates with the vignettes based research finding that most responses suggested that if a female participant is at a higher position she will be more friendly with friends and family and in the case of male most participants suggested he will too have friendly relations with friends and family indicating job satisfaction .

Altogether these studies indicate that there is a critical need to make intervention to reduce gender stereotypes , either through educational initiatives , workplace inclusive policies , to

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1. To Examine Gender Stereotypes Among Young Adults
2. To Recommend interventions to challenge Gender Stereotypes
3. To lay groundwork for future research

Methodology :

To examine the persistence of Gender Stereotypes among Young Adults both Quantitative and Qualitative method was used to collect data from the students of VESASC College and those students were chosen who were active members of college communities Women Development Cell , National Service Scheme and Students Council .

In quantitative method survey questions were taken from Gender Equality Journal NZ , following scales were taken to make Survey Questionnaire ;

- 1) Gender roles in home
- 2) Gender roles in Education
- 3) Gender roles in the workplace

From many scales in journal based on gender roles only above three scales were taken for the study as these three scales were related to research topic . The survey

questionnaire was made through google forms and circulated among college students in mumbai , the google form was circulated among 300 students between the age group of 18 to 25 years , and a total 200 responses were received, 100 male and 100 female responses . The demographics collected of participants were their Locality , Gender , Parents occupation of the respondents .

The collected **Exploring Gender Stereotypes Among Young Adults 6**

data was analysed through descriptive analysis . Convenience sampling was done to get the responses from different colleges in Mumbai to get a large number of responses .

In qualitative method Gender based vignettes were used to explore gender stereotypes among young adults . According to APA, Vignettes are a qualitative tool for collecting data from healthcare professionals here vignettes have been used to collect data from participants ,Vignettes are short , descriptive narratives about fictional characters , used to elicit responses about perception ,attitudes and beliefs . Two vignettes were created , each consisting of fictional characters male name Sanjay and female name Sanjana .Participants were asked to respond to five questions about one of character potential career hobbies in future , based on the brief description provided to them regarding the character .The study incorporated 60 respondents between the age group of 18 to 25 years , all students of VESASC College , Chembur . Participants were members of different communities such as National Service Scheme, Women Development Cell , Outreach and Student Council . The different communities participants were from can

be an indicator of difference in their perspective .A purposive Sampling method was used to maintain inclusion of different College representative students including both the gender male and female . The responses collected in following distribution :

- 15 males responding to the male vignette
- 15 males responding to female vignette
- 15 females responding to male vignette
- 15 females responding to female vignette

Vignette Questions :

1. Where do you see him/her in next 10 years in career perspective ?
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2. Where will he/she settle with their family in the next 10 years ?
3. What kind of family he/she will have in the next 10 years ?
4. What kind of relationship will he/she have with friends ?
5. What hobbies he/she will pursue after 10 years ?

Participants wrote their responses independently after reading the questions , this written format allowed them to reflect their perspective without getting influenced by external factors . Collected data was analysed through finding common themes in responses .

Results / Findings :

The research done on our topic is support by three scales out of which first one is about the chores that are supposed to be done around a house and in the family . the chores include watering the plants, disciplining the kids, taking trash out etc. this section have four options which are the boys and men , the girls and women, all genders and don't know.

SECTION ONE

In your opinion, who do you think should be mainly responsible for the following in families with children?

Chores The boys and men The girls and women All genders Don't know

Chores	The boys and men	The girls and women	All genders	Don't know
Shopping for food and	6.7%	16.4%	75.8%	0.7%

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Groceries				
Cooking meals	2.2%	27.5%	69.1%	1.1%
Looking after the children	2.6%	19%	74%	4.1%
Disciplining the children	5.7%	10.2%	82.3%	1.9%
Cleaning the bathroom	4.8%	17.5%	72.5%	4.1%
Mowing the lawn	13.9%	12%	61.7%	10.9%
Driving for family outings	36.4%	3.7%	55.4%	3.3%
Putting the rubbish out	20.1%	4.5%	68%	7.1%

In the first section, the majority of responses have all genders as their response to the respective question. Although two questions stand out, the first one being a chore which is cooking meals, the majority response still sides with all genders but a notable percentage that is 27% is the

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option for girls and women. The other question being about driving for family outings and the majority percentage being 55% responses are with the option for all genders but the stand out percentage being 36% stands with the option for boys and men.

SECTION TWO

Are the following academic subjects more suitable for boys or girls?

Academic Subject M

more suitable for boys

More suitable For girls

suitable for all Genders

Don't know

Accounting 13.4 % 2.6 % 81% 3%

Biology 4.5% 15.6% 74.3% 5.6%

Digital Technology 13.4% 2.6% 81% 3%

Fashion and Textile Technology 3,7% 30.9% 63.6% 1.9%

Food Technology 3.7% 18.6% 74.3% 3.3 %

Materials Technology 44.4% 2.2 49.3% 4.1%

Maths 8.2 % 5.6% 83.6% 2 .6%

Physical Education 13.4% 3.7% 78% 4.8% Physics .7% 4.9% 9% .4%

Exploring Gender Stereotypes Among Young Adults 10 visual arts / photography 9.7% 4.9% 79.1% 6.3%

The second section contains the questions about academic subjects and poses the question if they are more suitable for boy or girls. In this section the questions which stand out are one about the subject Fashion and Textiles technology here majority with 63% goes with all genders but 31% responses were for the option girls with 31%. The second question was about the subject materials technology (metal work) the majority was with 48% and parring response 44% is with the male option.

SECTION THREE

Are the following jobs more suited to men or women ?

Jobs	More suitable for Men	More suitable for Woman	Suitable for all Genders	Don't Know
Cleaner	12%	10.2%	73.7%	4.1%
Engineer	21.7%	1.9%	73%	3.4%
Family Doctor	5.2%	8.2%	83.9%	2.6%
Farmer	32.3%	1.1%	62%	4.5%
Hairdresser	6.7%	21%	68.5%	3.7%

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Waiter	28.6%	1.5%	65.8%	4.1%
Leadership roles/bosses	10.1%	7.1%	79.8%	3%
Nurse	1.5%	42.1%	53.8%	7%
Politician	19.1%	3.4%	73%	4.5%
Professional Athlete	12%	1.1%	81.6%	5.2%
Scientist	12%	4.1%	79.4%	4.5%
Retail Assistant	14.7%	2.3%	76.3%	6.8%

Social Worker	5.6%	6.8%	85%	2.6%
Surgeon	10.9%	2.6%	81.2%	5.3%
Teacher	0.8%	21.4%	75.6%	2.3%
Armed Forces(army,nav y,etc)	30.3%	1.9%	64.4%	3.4%
Builder	37.5%	1.9%	56.6%	4.1%

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Software Developer

13.5% 1.9% 80.1% 4.5%

The three section deals with career and job choices and the options are more suitable for men, more suitable for women, suitable for all genders and don't know. Out of these questions a few questions and their responses are the ones we took note of majority and the second highest response that were above 20%.

Occupation	Majority Response	Second Highest Response
Hairdresser	All genders 68%	Female 21%
Waiter	All genders 65%	Male 28%
Nurse	All genders 53%	Female 42%
Teacher Armed force	All genders 75% All genders 64%	Female 21% Male 30%
Builder	All genders 56.4%	Male 37%
Farmer	All genders 61%	Men 32.5%

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Out of 272 responses, 124 were from males and 148 from females. Among the females, 15.65% reported having both parents working, and of these, 34.78% believe that all professions are completely gender-neutral and suitable for all genders.

Similarly, among the 124 males, 21.77% indicated that both working parents, and of these, 11.11% expressed the view that all professions are gender-neutral and equally suitable for everyone.

From this data, we can infer that individuals with both parents working tend to lean toward gender-neutral views about professions. However, more women than men hold this belief. This suggests that women with working parents may have higher perceptions of gender equality in the workplace than the males. Differences in these percentages may reflect cultural or family influences in men and on the roles of women.

The responses gathered about the hypothetical female and male character, providing insight on the gender stereotypes among young adults; the responses are

categorized under various aspects of life. Here's the thematic analysis , interprets the collected data :

1. Career Perspective

Here the data reveals significant difference in career aspiration regarding Female vignette by male and female respondents .

- **Female Respondents perspective :**

Females respondents mostly envisioned female character in roles associated with creativity and career opportunity in singing or businesses

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- **Male Respondents Perspective**

Male respondents associated female character with traditional nurturing careers like teacher , and civil servant and creative professional such as singing .

2. Family and Settlement

The analysis of responses regarding female characters family life

- **Female Respondent**

Female respondents suggested female character in metropolitan areas like Mumbai emphasizing job convenience and urban lifestyle

- **Male Respondents**

Male respondents associated female characters family life as neutral family structure .

3. Friendships

- **Female responses**

Female respondents suggested that female characters friendship as good , empathetic and supportive

- **Male Responses**

Male respondents suggested that female character will have more dominating and casual relationship with her friends.

1. Family type

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- **Female Responses**

Most females respondents suggested that she will have financially stable , healthy family , and educated family

- **Male responses**

Most male respondents suggested that she will have well settled and educated family

2. Hobbies

- **Female responses**

Most female responded singing and sport as hobby pursued by female character

- **Male responses**

Most male mentioned singing , sports and philanthropy and learning new things . Here are the responses of Male and Female respondents based on Male vignette

1. Career Aspiration

- **Male responses**

Most male respondent suggested that he will be in high position job in an organisation or Multi National Company`s employee .

- **Female responses**

Most female suggested that he will be Singer or Sportsperson .
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2. Family Settlement

- **Male Responses**

Most male responded that he will be settled either in Mumbai or Abroad as per job postings .

- **Female Responses**

Most female responded that he will settle in Mumbai or Abroad as per his job .

3. Family

- **Male Responses**

Most males responded that he will have well educated and supportive family

- **Female responses**

Most females suggested that he will have well educated and supportive family

4. Relationship with Friends

- **Male Responses**

Most males suggested that he will have healthy relationship and will have group of like minded people as friends

- **Female Responses**

Most females suggested that she will have dominating behaviour with her friends and will have less friends .

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5. Hobbies

- **Male Response**

Most males suggested that he will be pursuing hobbies such as sports and related activities or learning a new skill based on his interest .

- **Female Response**

Most females suggested that he will have hobbies such as Singing or Sport activities .

Discussion :

The research was based on three main sections, each exploring people's opinions on gender roles in household chores, school subjects, and job choices.

First section focused on household chores here the participants were asked who they think should do tasks such as cooking, driving, watering plants, and taking out the trash. Most people responded that all genders should do these chores. However, some responses stood out. For example, 27% of the participants thought cooking was more suited for girls and women, even though most people i.e 55% believed it could be done by all genders. Another notable task was driving, where 36% thought boys and men were better suited, but the majority still chose all genders.

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The second section dealt with school subjects and whether certain subjects are better suited for boys or girls. Most participants again said all genders should study all subjects. For example, In Fashion and Textiles, 63% said all genders should study it, but 31% believed it was more suitable for girls and women. Moreover in the Materials Technology (metalwork), 48% said it was more suited for boys and men, while 44% believed it was for both the genders.

The third section focused on careers and job roles the participants were asked which jobs were more suitable for men, women, or all genders. The majority of people said all genders could do these jobs, but some careers had different opinions. For example, 61% believed farming could be done by all genders, but 32.5% thought it was better for men. Similarly, 68% said all genders could be hairdressers, but 21% thought it was more suitable for women. In nursing, 53% believed it suited all. In the case of teaching it had a strong response of 75% for all genders, while only 21% thought it was more for women. For the armed forces, 64% believed it was for all genders, but 30% thought it suited men more.

Through qualitative method , research studies society's young adult by analysing how participants envisioned the future of two fictional characters named Sanjana and Sanjay . Through examining , responses across various dimensions , such as career, family , friendships, Family settlement and hobbies , this study helps to recognize societal expectation and biases that shape young adults views on gender roles .

- **Career Stereotypes**

The findings indicate different patterns of gender expectation . Male vignette was associated with more leadership , high achieving career option such as CEO , MNC employee and Sports person , Female vignette

was mostly associated with nurturing job options like teaching artistic

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career opportunity as in Singing . Participants envisioned male character with more masculine characteristics such as leadership, successful , financially stable and Female character was mostly associated with feminine characteristic as as nurturing in teaching field and close with family .

The findings correlate with Mundt`s (2019) research study on STEM career barrier , related to women are often turned towards arts or humanities subject . In Indian context , the career related gender stereotypes influence career choice in India as per findings of Verma`s (2019) research Gender roles playing role in shaping career choices .

● Family and Settlement types

Responses regarding Family and settlement differed for both Male and Female Vignettes as Participants suggested that the male character will be settling down as per his job profession and will have well educated and supportive family, whereas female character was suggested to be settling down with family and will have settled and supportive family. The responses suggested that males are mostly associated with independence and females are more dependent on family.

These findings associate with Verma`s (2021) research, which focussed on societal pressure on women to conform to traditional family roles. In the same way Kwatra , and Gautam`s (2022) research identified that societal norms often encourage men to pursue financial independence and females to opt for taking domestic household work .

● Relationship with Friends

The study also recognized expectation regarding social relations . According to findings of study , the Male character was termed as more competitive, or casual relationships with friends

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associated with masculinity and in case of Female character relationship with friends was empathetic and nurturing associating with femininity . The findings correlates with Linran .et.al`s (2020) findings , which indicated that gender stereotypes extend to interpersonal dynamics , influencing how individuals perceive and define relationships .This gender view of friendship states the broader societal narrative of men as less emotionally expressive and women as caregiver in nature.

● Hobbies

Hobby - related responses of participants further indicated gender stereotypes . Male vignette was more associated with hobbies related to sports , skill development, leadership oriented hobbies and Female vignette was more associated with hobbies related to singing and sports and teaching activities . These findings suggest that Men`s are associated with skill development or competitive activities in life whereas Women`s are associated with nurturing creative activities.

● Future Research Direction

This research lays down foundational base for future researches in various ways:

- 1) Longitudinal Research: The future researches done should determine “How perception related to gender roles could be changed with exposure to different role models and intervention”, such as Gender Sensitization workshops .
- 2) Impact on Behaviour : The future research need to focus on how the influence of these gender stereotypes impacts real life career choices .

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- 3) Intersectionality in Gender Stereotypes : The future research need to focus on determining how various factors like socio-economic status and career

choices impacts gender stereotypical thinking will give more detailed understanding of this issue .

● **Recommended Intervention to Challenge Gender Stereotypes :**

- 1) The findings of research suggest that the media representation can play a crucial to challenge gender stereotypes .And also representation of role models can have impact on gender stereotypes
- 2) Introduction of Gender Sensitization workshops in schools and colleges as well as providing counselling can lead to avoidance of increase in gender stereotypical thinking .
- 3) Parents can play a important role in making child have gender neutral thinking in life through encouraging their gender neutral thoughts and behaviour as well as their gender neutral behaviour seen by child can have huge positive impact on child's gender neutral ideology.

Conclusion:

This study reveals how societal norms, beliefs, and expectations influence gender stereotypes among young adults, as reflected in perceptions of fictional characters and survey data . The findings align with previous research by Mundt (2019), Linran et al. (2020), Verma (2021), and Kwatra et al. (2022), highlighting that career aspirations, family roles, friendships, hobbies, education, and workplace roles

are shaped by traditional gender norms. The study emphasizes the need for future research to explore the long-term shifts in gender roles, the real-life impact on Exploring Gender Stereotypes Among Young Adults 22

individuals' choices, and the intersectionality of gender biases. Interventions, such as showcasing diverse role models in the media, gender sensitization workshops, and encouraging gender-neutral behavior from parents, are vital to challenging and reducing these stereotypes in India.

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