



TRAILING GENDER STEREOTYPE

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Abstract:

A gender stereotype is a kind of over generalization about characteristics, attributes and differences on the basis of gender. Gender stereotypes construct certain gender roles. A gender role is a behavior learned by a person as desirable, acceptable appropriate, to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms. In society, the gender role continues through generation. There are certain factors which help to transmit these roles. This conceptual paper will try to explain the role of parents and family members, school, socio-culture, mass media and religion in forming gender role and gender stereotype.

Key Words: Gender Role, Gender Stereotype, Family, School, Culture, Mass Media & Religion

Introduction:

Everything in this world is different from each other. We categorize everything on the basis of some common characteristics. This will help people to function in the society easily. One of the best examples for this is sex. On the basis of sex, people are categorized as men and women. Though this categorization helps people to function better, it causes problems too. When the society starts to perceive people as men and women, it expects certain behaviors from them. These expectations about gender lead to gender stereotype.

The gender stereotype is a kind of over generalization about characteristics, attributes and differences on the basis of gender. People are expected to behave in certain ways prescribed by the society. There are certain behaviors prescribed for women and men. People are really reined of the gender stereotypes and they are not able to fulfill their ideas and dreams because of the gender stereotypes. Gender stereotype seems unfair towards women. There are positive and negative stereotypes like women are good in caring and women are weak in emotional stability. Most of the time the positive stereotypes also turns unfair towards women. For example, as women are good in caring, the responsibility and caring their child and family members rest on her only.

Gender stereotype can lead to unfair treatment of people on the basis of gender and we can call it as sexism. Most of the time victim is women only. This might rein women from their freedom and they are forced to follow the unwritten rules. Women are not able to overcome the boundaries drawn by the society. Though there are feminists, women still are facing lots of problems just because of their gender. So it is very important to know the factors that influence gender stereotype. It is very important to know that how the stereotype still exists in society and the factors which contribute to them. This might help us to work towards the change.

Parents and Family Members:

Children learn the gender roles from our society. Family has the strongest influence on gender role development and parents views about gender role will reflect on child (Witt, 1997). Children develop attitude and behavior regarding gender roles and generally learn it initially from their home only. The parents view has a major influence on the gender role. So, from the time of birth itself parents view them as girl child or boy child and they start to treat them on the basis of gender like choosing names, dress, toys, atmosphere etc. Parents and family members are the first source of knowledge about gender roles. In childhood, the child spends more time with their parents. Children observe their parents behavior and they learn it through imitation. If the parents follow the traditional path, then obviously the child may also tend to follow the same. The parents who follow the traditional path may transfer the existing norms exists in society to the next generation. If the parents who follow or believe androgynous gender role would help the child to stay away from the categorization on the basis of gender. In contrast, child from a single parent family may learn androgynous gender role because their parents do all the work regardless of their gender.

From the early age, parents help the child to dream about their future and they provide guidance for their holistic development. This would help them to move forward through the path. When a girl child dreams about sports, technical jobs and jobs which involve physical strength, most of the parents discourage them and when a boy child choose an art subject, parents disapprove it. Thus parent's expectation influences gender stereotype and gender roles. The chores which parents give to their children also influence gender stereotype. Parents motivate their boy child to do certain behavior and at same time they discourages female child to do the same behavior or vice versa. For example parents encourage daughters to cook and at same time discourage their sons to engage in the same. Parents encourage sons to outdoor works, such as climbing trees. Parents attitude have a major role in development of self and self-esteem of their children. If the parents keep restrict the child's activities on the basis of gender, the child may perceive them self as powerless or inferior to other gender.

School:

Men are more into technical and construction work whereas women are more into the jobs like airhosts, receptionist, etc. Gender stereotype in our society have a major role in selection of one's career. The society and media gives picture about the jobs suitable for men and women. Everyone may have their ideal jobs in their mind and for this they rely on the guidance from parents and significant other especially teachers.

When teachers show gender bias it has an impact on the students. When the teachers expect certain behavior on the basis of gender, it influence children's views and ideas about gender and gender roles. Teachers facilitate gender bias by using gender to organize students. Based on children's academic performance teachers may suggest them to choose higher studies and job. When the teachers' opinion and or suggestions are influenced by traditional gender role their suggestions become biased. Apart from teachers peer group influence is very inevitable one(Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992).

Cultural:

All individuals have certain values, beliefs, norms and discipline that they learn from the society and this determines their role as men and women(Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Men are traditionally considered to be tough, independent, powerful, and inexpressive. At same time, women are considered to be emotional, dependent, patient and passive. Moreover, people choose things which the society thinks well than their own interests. People lead a life confirming the societal interest not their own interests.

Mass Media:

Today almost everyone is spending their leisure time with TV, magazine, paper and other social medias. Social issues and problems become known through these media and these penetrate into people's lives and influence their thoughts, perception towards the world, attitude and decisions (Bandura, 2001).

Movies are one of the strongest and popular pervasive medium which tries to express some themes. Though every film differs from one another, most of films shows few common characteristics. One of the common characteristics is male dominance or in other words patriarchal characteristics. People tend to accept the characters in films as ideal and they may imitate these characteristics knowingly or unknowingly. In films almost all superheroes are male (Batman, Superman, Hulk, Thor, Spiderman, X-men, Ant-man, Ironman etc.) and they possess extreme power. At the same time, women are statistically underrepresented especially in creative positions in film field(Lang & Lang, 2015). This can be called as 'celluloid ceiling'. The inequality in payment for top paid actor and top paid actress is a best example for celluloid ceiling(Berg, 2015).

Another influential medium is advertisement. Advertisement carry very important role in socialization in the modern society. It is very influential one because the advertisements initially construct a need and they give something to fill those needs. Advertisements carry a big role in changing the culture and its values and at same time advertisements maintain certain social constructs like gender(Lantagne, 2014). Advertisements are more focused on gender because people define themselves by gender. Gender advertisement gives a partial view about the world with socially defined gender roles and relations. Men and women show the created descriptions of masculinity and femininity through advertisements(Alexander, 2003). Men have to be masculine, physically active, serious, hands in pockets, brave, adventurous, very alert and conscious etc. and women have to be sexy, seductive, submissive, powerless etc. are depiction of gender role. Nowadays women are objectified in the advertisements. Advertisers choose women as a tool to sell their products (Luyvonne, 2011).

Even if the roles are not fully acceptable for the society, people try to imitate those roles. Such advertisement like soap, perfume, home appliance, food and gold are common advertisement for women. Advertisement indicates that house has to be maintained by women and kitchen and cooking is meant only for women(Luyvonne, 2011). A woman in advertisement shows sexuality and at same time men shows power. In advertisements, men always deal with impossible and risky tasks and women always serve others and try to seduce men. According to Bandura (2001), people learn everything through observation. When children watch movies and cartoons, they tend to imitate those behaviors. Children come to know about the different toys which are for the respective gender. Boy's toys like gun represents aggression and girl's toys represent beauty and housekeeping.

Another powerful media is print. Books, magazines, newspaper journals etc. are the most influential in the print media. The gender role and stereotypic views are depicted as the society prescribes in books as well. In most cases, the books tell story on behalf of our society and it simply spread the message of gender inequality in society. Magazine is one of the very powerful media. Magazine really shows the gender stereotypes in society. It mostly shows a little different story than the reality and it influences people. There are lots of magazines which are focused on only one gender. These types of magazines show an inclination towards stereotypical views.

Religion:

Religions in India have a big root. The religion is a very old and traditional concept. These concepts play an important role in sustaining gender stereotypes in this information of digital era(Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2003). People assume that these traditional gender roles in religion are ideal and they follow it. In the case of religious beliefs, people believe what religion preaches rather than analyzing whether it is true or false.

People feel fear to break the religious concept and they are not willing to analyse and criticize the holy books. Holy books explain about an ideal life and positivity and at same time it restricts certain things even if it is good. The norms in religion almost all time acts as unfair for women (Klingorova & Havlicek, 2015). Most of the views and the concepts seem like a patriarchal view.

Conclusion:

The role of parents is very important during childhood and adolescent. They guide their children and sometimes unknowingly give false ideas and knowledge too. Many parents implant gender stereotypes in their children for the fear that they may be blamed for not doing so. Media is another influential factor which shares ideas and concepts to a mass audience. When they present stereotypical views about gender, it will definitely have an impact. People should be able to avoid those stereotypes and be able to think rationally. Most of the time people are unable to do so. Gender stereotypes are strongly influenced by religion. Religion supports traditional gender role and force to follow those gender roles. People who believes and follow religion may not be able to avoid adapting traditional roles. It is very important to change the traditional gender role to an androgyny gender role. Celluloid ceiling, glass ceiling shows the impact of the traditional gender roles.

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