

UNIT-1

GENDER ROLES IN SOCIETY

Introduction

The word ‘**gender role**’ was first coined by John Money in 1955, during the course of his study of intersex individuals, to describe the manners in which these individuals expressed their status as a male or female in a situation where no clear biological assignment existed.



The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender roles as “socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women”.

A gender role is a set of rules followed by the society and are those behaviours that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on their sex.

Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have on individuals based on their sex and based on each society values and beliefs about gender.

Gender roles are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals clues about what sort of behaviour are believed to be appropriate for what sex.

The man worked outside for family's income and women stayed at home cared for children. So the men were clearly dominative in early days.

But today gender roles have completely been altered. Today men are more likely to be "stay-at-home" women are now working outside of the home and taking higher positions in the workplace. So men are no longer known as dominant gender.

GENDER: MEANING AND DEFINITION

Meaning

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between and from masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or intersex), sex-based social structures (including gender roles and other social roles), or gender identity.

The term gender refers to the economics, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities, associated with being male and female. In most societies, men and women differ in the activities they undertake, in access to and control of resources, and in participation in decision-making. Add in most societies, women as a group have less access than men to resources, opportunities and decision-making.

Gender is a concept that humans create socially, through their interactions with one another and their environments, yet it relies heavily upon biological differences between males and females. Because humans create the concept of gender socially, gender is referred as a social construction.

The social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex, yet these ascriptions differ across

societies and cultures, and over time within the same society.

Gender assigns different and unequal roles and attributes of “masculine” and “feminine” to men and women. In practice, it categorizes these “masculine” and “feminine” roles and attributes as “natural” differences; this makes unequal relations seem normal.

DEFINITION

“**Gender** refers to the cultural, socially-constructed differences between two sexes. It refers to the way a society encourages and teaches the two sexes to behave in different ways through socialization” – (**Browne, 1992**)

The biological definition refers to a person’s self-representation as male or female, or how that person is responded to by social institutions based on the individual’s gender presentation. Gender is rooted in biology and shaped by environment and experience.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENDER AND SEX

S.NO	GENDER	SEX
1.	Gender describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine.	Sex refers to biological differences; Chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.
2.	Can be changed since gender identity is determined by society	Difficult to change (we are born as male or female)
3.	At different times in history and in different societies, gender roles are different	Throughout history and across cultures, sex difference exists.
4.	It is natural	It is man made
5.	It is used to refer culture and social	It is used to refer biological differences.

	Differences	
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GENDER ROLES IN SOCIETY

A gender role is a set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviours which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality. In the society that decides that man is superior and women is inferior wages paid for men's work are higher than for women's work that man is powerful and women is weak.

GENDER ROLES IN FAMILY

Gender roles are defined by the socio-cultural norms of any society. In most of the societies the family systems are based on the gender roles and it is the pre-designed gender roles that help members of the family to run the family with bound responsibilities.

But today, the modern life has very much changed the family structure and the gender roles have been diverting from the traditional responsibilities and path of performance.

In fact, the gap between different genders has already melted down, creating an all equal society and more equalized families. Today, there are no monarchs in families and no bout-to-obey members in families.

All live together, taking decisions together, expressing opinions openly, criticizing and encouraging mutually and yet being independent and responsible. The society-defined gender roles may crash with the modern roles of family members and many families experience the dilemma of the crashing gender roles.

GENDER ROLES IN CASTE

Caste in Indian society refers to a social group where membership is decided by birth. Caste not only determines social division of labour but also sexual division of labour. Certain tasks have to be performed by women that certain other tasks are meant for men.

For centuries, the untouchable caste were the worst oppressed by the caste system. They were condemned to live outside the village or town, confined to polluting occupations that involved dealing with human and animal waste, concerned into serving the higher castes at all times. After independence, untouchability and other practices of cast-based discrimination were abolished.

GENDER ROLES IN CLASS

1. Based on income

In lower class, females earn the major portion of the income which makes the female the breadwinner

2. Based on education

Gender biased behaviour is often linked with literacy. People in lower class are usually more illiterate and unskilled while upper classes consist of highly educated and knowledgeable people.

3. Based on family structure

The third factor is the existence of nuclear versus joint families. In lower classes presence of joint families complicates the situation.

Thus based on one's education and income, his socio-economic status is assessed.

GENDER ROLES AND RELIGION

All religions of the world, define the appropriate gender roles and norms of behaviour for men and women in the society. However religions portray women as home makers and men as bread winners of the family.

Behaviour and practices to be followed by women as per religious belief:

- Going to bed late and getting up early
- Husband is the known God
- Husband is to be respected whether he is agile and strong or weak and timid
- Being a good mother
- Marginalizing the widowed and divorcees.
- Upholding religious rites and traditions.
- Culture prescribes the dressing code for men and women, patterns of interactions among them.

Religious Responsibilities to be followed by Men:

- Protecting the family at any cost, uplifting the status of the family, taking care of the parents
 - Being a role model for their children etc.,
 - Appreciating, striving for family unity and peace.

CULTURE AND GENDER ROLES

Culture is shared by a large group and transmitted across generations; i.e. ideas, attitudes, behaviours and attitudes. Gender role can change over time within the culture and it is different in different countries. Father staying home with kids and mom working may have been ridiculed in 1950's but not considered odd today. More women are entering formerly male dominated occupations.

MEDIA AND GENDER ROLES

Media are powerful in that they are unavoidable. We are constantly bombarded by media in the form of commercial bill boards and other

advertisements. Media and entertainment also has a suitable influence on society's way of thinking. "Every message you see or hear will have some impact on you, however small".

Among all the information and misinformation present in the media, one particularly damaging representation is that of male and female roles.

The media also defines the good and bad woman to be like. A good woman is submissive, sensitive and domesticated. "A woman who stands for herself is no longer a woman". The media presents two lifestyle choices for women by glorifying a good, obedient woman and making the bad, disobedient woman miserable and horrid.

GENDER ROLES AND POPULAR CULTURE

The term popular culture was coined in the 19th century or earlier. The abbreviated form "pop" for popular as in pop music dates from the late 1950's. This term "pop" and "popular" are in some cases used interchangeably.

Popular culture spreads through media or technology and one of the biggest concepts is 'gender'

According to gender discrimination, men always have more power than women and women always need help of men.

GENDER ROLES: LAW AND THE STATE

The 19th century social reforms achieved some marginal changes arising from humanitarian considerations of social demands. The most significant achievement was the law against the practice of Sati. Such social legislation however was not attempted after 1857.

With the strengthening of the national movement and the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi brought various changes in law, for removing the legal inferiority of women and ending the discrimination against them in matters like

marriage divorce, inheritance or guardianship of children, affected the life and personality.

GENDER INEQUALITIES

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure and hormonal differences.

The following are the various causes of gender disparity:

- Poverty
- Illiteracy
- Lack of employment facilities
- Social customs, beliefs and practices
- Lack of awareness of women

The following are the various reasons for Gender inequalities in India

- Education
- Religious belief
- Weaker sex
- Lack of resources
- Lack of awareness
- Giving importance to male child
- Dowry system

Gender—just education outside school settings

Education on gender and gender issues outside of school settings can be approached through various methods and platforms.

1. Community Organizations and Support Groups

2. Online Platforms and Social Media

- **Webinars and Online Courses:** Websites like Coursera, Udemy, and platforms such as YouTube offer courses and talks on gender studies and gender identity.
- **Social Media:** Influencers and educators on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter share personal stories, educational content, and advocacy work related to gender.

3. Media and Entertainment

- **Documentaries and Films:** Movies and documentaries like "Disclosure" and "The Trans List" provide in-depth looks at gender issues.
- **Books and Podcasts:** Books such as "Gender Trouble" by Judith Butler and podcasts like "Gender Reveal" offer comprehensive insights into gender theory and personal experiences.

4. Workshops and Training Programs

- **Workshops:** Organizations and activists often host in-person or virtual workshops on topics like gender inclusivity and awareness.
- **Corporate Training:** Many companies now offer diversity and inclusion training that includes education on gender identity and expression

5. Advocacy and Activism

- **Campaigns:** Participating in or supporting gender equality campaigns raises awareness and educates the public.
- **Volunteering:** Volunteering with organizations that focus on gender issues provides hands-on experience and education.

6. Peer Education and Mentorship

- **Peer Groups:** Peer education programs in communities or universities facilitate discussions and education on gender topics.

- **Mentorship:** Mentoring relationships, where someone with more experience in gender advocacy guides another, can be highly educational.

7. Religious and Cultural Institutions

- **Faith-Based Programs:** Some religious institutions offer educational programs on gender inclusivity, aligning with their broader values of acceptance and equality.
- **Cultural Groups:** Cultural organizations often address gender roles and work towards more inclusive understandings within their communities.

8. Health and Wellness Services

- **Counseling and Therapy:** Mental health professionals can provide education on gender identity.
- **Health care Providers:** Clinics and hospitals, particularly those focusing on transgender and gender-diverse healthcare, offer educational resources.

9. Government and Policy Initiatives

- **Public Campaigns:** Government-sponsored campaigns can raise awareness and educate the public on gender issues.
- **Policy Changes:** Advocacy for policy changes often includes public education components to garner support.

10. Informal Networks

- **Friends and Family:** Discussions within personal networks can foster understanding and support.
- **Community Events:** Local events, pride parades, and fairs often have educational booths and activities.

Children in this society learn at a very young age that there are differences between boys and girls. This idea permeates daily life and is discouraged by parents, peers, school, and the media. Little girls learn that

they are supposed to like dolls and pink, while little boys learn that they are supposed to like trucks and the colour blue. Through various forms of guidance and direction from external influences, children experience gender role socialization (Albert, 1988). They quickly learn what behaviours are encouraged by their parents and peers, and which ones are not. These ideas are further reinforced by the media's portrayal of traditional gender roles. As a result, children internalize these beliefs pertaining to gender roles and their behaviour is modified accordingly. During the second half of the twentieth century there was a dramatic shift in society's perception of gender roles. This was due to many variables but the most prominent influence was the increase of women in the workplace. The public began to see men and women from a more equalitarian viewpoint. Researchers hypothesized that this would result in a decrease of gender role stereotypes throughout the society. However, there has not been a significant change in adults' perceptions of gender roles as they relate to children. Children may also form their own stereotypes based on the stereotypes they observe in the adults within their environment. Adults, whether intentionally or not, influence children in regard to gender role socialization through the family, media and school system.

CONCLUSION

Teachers need training to recognize their own explicit and implicit biases and how these biases affect their classroom behaviours. Additionally, teachers should receive explicit training in confronting children's biases, so that they reduce peer policing of gender normatively. Parents should seek educational settings for their students that are gender integrated and that make use of curricula that directly teach about, and challenge, gender bias and inequality.