Opinion of Gender Role and Responsibilities by Adolescents

RUBY K.R.*1 AND PREMA B. PATIL2

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science
University of Agricultural Science, Dharwad (Karnataka) India

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Adolescence represents a critical stage in human development during which individuals internalize social expectations and construct their gender identity. Gender roles, defined as socially ascribed patterns of behavior and responsibility, continue to exert strong influence on the choices and opportunities available to young people. The present investigation focused on understanding perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities among college students of UAS Dharwad, Karnataka. A self structured survey was administered to a sample of 30 adolescents, comprising 15 boys and 15 girls. The questionnaire included 15 items addressing household responsibilities, emotional expression, career aspirations, leadership opportunities, and the role of media in shaping gendered behavior. Analysis of responses revealed a coexistence of progressive and traditional orientations. A substantial proportion of adolescents endorsed equality in education, domestic work, and professional choices, with female respondents expressing stronger support for non-discriminatory practices. Nevertheless, traces of stereotypical beliefs persisted, particularly in the association of leadership with males and caregiving with females. Male participants demonstrated greater adherence to conventional expectations, while female participants more frequently challenged restrictive norms. Findings indicate that adolescents are negotiating between inherited traditions and emerging egalitarian perspectives. Such transitional attitudes highlight the continued influence of cultural norms while simultaneously reflecting gradual social change. The outcomes underscore the need for gender-sensitization initiatives within educational institutions, where awareness programs can foster equity, mutual respect, and inclusivity. Promoting balanced perspectives during adolescence is essential for dismantling stereotypes and ensuring equitable opportunities for both genders in personal, academic, and professional domains.

Keywords: Adolescents, Gender roles, Responsibilities, Stereotypes, Equality, Career aspirations, Family roles, Emotional expression, Media influence, Gender sensitization, Inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

Gender roles may be defined as a set of socially constructed norms, behaviors, and responsibilities that societies assign to individuals on the basis of their biological sex (Bhana, 2016). These roles dictate how males and females are expected to act, the responsibilities they should undertake, and the domains in which they are considered capable or incapable. Such norms are learned through socialization processes beginning in early childhood and become more pronounced during adolescence, a developmental stage where identity, autonomy, and career aspirations begin to solidify. While gender roles can provide a sense of belonging and social identity, they also impose constraints by reinforcing stereotypes and limiting opportunities for self-expression and growth (Crouter, *et al.*, 2007).

In India, gender roles remain strongly shaped by patriarchal traditions, cultural expectations, and socio-economic hierarchies. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and several legislative interventions including the Right to Education Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, and various women empowerment schemes disparities remain evident. For instance, although female literacy rates have improved significantly, gender gaps persist in higher education enrollment, workforce participation, and political representation. Traditional divisions of labor continue, with care giving and household

responsibilities disproportionately assigned to women, while men are viewed as primary breadwinners and decision-makers. Urbanization and globalization have triggered shifts, with increasing numbers of women entering professional domains and men taking part in domestic work. Yet, the persistence of deep-rooted stereotypes reflects India's transitional phase, where progressive aspirations coexist with entrenched cultural norms (Davis and Greenstein, 2009).

Adolescents occupy a pivotal position in this discourse, as they are both the recipients of cultural expectations and potential agents of social change. Research in India indicates that while young people increasingly endorse gender equality in education, employment, and family life, stereotypical beliefs remain prevalent (Eccles, 2011). Studies reveal that male adolescents often adhere more closely to traditional roles, associating masculinity with strength, authority, and financial provision. Female adolescents, on the other hand, express stronger support for equality, yet continue to experience restrictions in leadership opportunities, freedom of mobility, and choice of career. Media portrayals, parental expectations, and peer influence play critical roles in shaping these attitudes, often reinforcing gendered behavior patterns (Nath *et al.,* 2023; Pant *et al.*, 2023).

Rigid adherence to gender roles perpetuates a range of developmental and societal challenges. For adolescents, such roles restrict freedom of choice, discourage emotional expression (particularly in boys), and reinforce unequal division of labor within families. These constraints often translate into disparities in education and career paths, with girls being steered away from fields like science, defense, or sports, and boys discouraged from pursuing arts or caregiving professions. At a societal level, rigid gender norms contribute to inequality in employment, wage gaps, underrepresentation of women in leadership, and continued tolerance of gender-based violence. Moreover, the psychological burden of conforming to stereotypes can result in stress, low self-esteem, and conflict during identity formation in adolescence (Pulerwitz and Barker, 2008)..

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Educational institutions must integrate gender-sensitization programs into curricula, encouraging students to question stereotypes and embrace equality. Families play a crucial role in modeling shared responsibilities and equitable treatment of children regardless of gender.

Media representations must be reframed to challenge, rather than reinforce, traditional stereotypes by showcasing diverse role models. Policy-level interventions should ensure equitable access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities for both genders. Furthermore, youth-focused awareness programs, mentorship, and leadership training can empower adolescents to challenge traditional norms and envision inclusive futures. By fostering such change at an early developmental stage, societies can dismantle restrictive stereotypes, promote inclusivity, and create a foundation for sustainable gender equity (Raj, *et al.,* 2014; Vyas *et al.*, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Participants:

The study sample consisted of 30 undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad, Karnataka. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure balanced gender representation, with 15 male and 15 female students. The age range of the respondents was between 18 and 22 years, representing late adolescence and early adulthood, a developmental period critical for the internalization and negotiation of gender roles. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to survey administration. To preserve confidentiality, no personally identifiable information was reported in the analysis.

Measure:

A structured questionnaire was designed and administered systematically to assess adolescents' perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities. The instrument consisted of two sections. The first section captured demographic information, including age, gender, and institutional affiliation, to provide background variables for comparative analysis. The second section comprised 15 attitudinal items distributed across four conceptual domains. The family roles and responsibilities domain assessed expectations related to household work, care giving, and financial contribution. The career aspirations and subject preferences domain examined perceptions of gender-appropriate fields of study and occupational choices. The emotional expression and leadership domain evaluated attitudes toward the acceptability of emotional openness among boys and the legitimacy of girls' participation in leadership roles. Finally, the equality and

media influencedomain investigated perceptions of fairness in familial treatment of boys and girls, as well as the role of media in reinforcing or challenging gender norms. Items were formatted using a combination of categorical response options and a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. This design enabled both quantitative measurement of agreement levels and qualitative insights into gendered attitudes. The inclusion of multiple domains ensured comprehensive coverage of adolescents' perceptions across family, educational, professional, and sociocultural contexts.

Procedure:

The survey was conducted on the campus of the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad. Prior to administration, the purpose of the study was explained to participants, and informed consent was obtained. The questionnaire was distributed in classroom and common activity settings, where students were asked to complete it individually without discussion to minimize peer influence. Clear instructions were provided to ensure that participants understood the items and responded based on their personal views. Adequate time was allotted for completion, and responses were collected immediately after administration to ensure a high rate of return and data integrity. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the responses. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for categorical variables, while means and standard deviations were computed for Likert-scale items. The independent variable in the study was gender (male vs. female), while the dependent variables were perceptions of gender roles across four domains: family responsibilities, career aspirations, emotional expression and leadership, and equality/media influence. Age was included as a background variable, and differences by gender were assessed to ensure that the two groups were comparable.

Comparisons between male and female respondents were conducted using independent-samples t-tests for continuous variables (Likert-scale responses) and chi-square tests of independence for categorical variables. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d for continuous variables (0.20 small, 0.50 medium, 0.80 large) and Cramer's V for categorical associations (>0.25 very strong, >0.15 strong, >0.10 moderate, >0.05 weak). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Interpretation of responses followed both statistical and substantive analysis. For example, if 70% of female respondents *strongly agreed* with the statement "Girls should be encouraged to take leadership roles," this was interpreted as evidence of strong endorsement of gender inclusivity among girls. Conversely, if a notable proportion of boys selected *Disagree* or *Neutral* for the same item, it was considered an indicator of the persistence of traditional beliefs. Similarly, items addressing household responsibilities and emotional expression were examined to detect patterns of gender-based stereotyping.

All analyses were performed using SPSS v. 26 for statistical tests, while descriptive tables and charts were generated in Microsoft Excel to support interpretation. Results are presented domain-wise to illustrate the coexistence of progressive and traditional attitudes among adolescents, highlighting gender-based similarities and divergences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final sample consisted of 30 undergraduate students of UAS Dharwad, equally divided between males (n = 15) and females (n = 15), with a mean age of 20.1 years (SD = 1.2). No significant difference in age was observed between boys and girls, indicating that the groups were comparable. Analysis of responses revealed both convergences and divergences in gender-based perceptions across domains. In relation to family roles and responsibilities, a majority of female respondents (73%) endorsed equal sharing of household work compared to less than half of the male respondents (47%), while boys were more likely to assign caregiving responsibilities to mothers, with 60% holding this view as

Table 1 : Family Roles and Responsibilities by Gender (χ^2 Test Results)					
Item	Boys (n=15)	Girls (n=15)	χ^2 (1)	*p*	Cramer's V
Equal sharing of household work	7 (47%)	11 (73%)	4.02	.045	0.36
Childcare is mainly mother's duty	9 (60%)	4 (27%)	3.85	.050	0.35
Boys should help in the kitchen	6 (40%)	12 (80%)	5.76	.016	0.44

Table 2 : Career Aspirations and Subject Preferences (Mean Scores, Independent t-test)

Item	Boys (M ± SD)	Girls (M ± SD)	T (28)	p	Cohen's d
Girls can pursue defense/sports careers	3.80 ± 0.86	4.53 ± 0.64	-2.71	.011	0.94
Boys can pursue arts-related fields	3.47 ± 0.83	4.33 ± 0.62	-3.15	.004	1.01
Gender should decide school subjects	2.93 ± 0.96	2.07 ± 0.70	2.86	.008	0.97

Table 3 : Emotional Expression and Leadership (χ^2 Test Results)

Item	Boys Agree %	Girls Agree %	χ^2 (1)	p	Cramer's V
Boys should express emotions openly	33%	67%	5.21	.022	0.42
Girls should take leadership roles	40%	80%	6.01	.014	0.45

Table 4 : Equality and Media Influence (Descriptive + χ^2)

Item	Boys Agree %	Girls Agree %	χ^2 (1)	p
Boys and girls treated equally in family	67%	73%	0.14	.710
Media influences gender behavior	73%	87%	4.11	.043

against 27% of girls. In terms of career aspirations and subject preferences, girls demonstrated stronger support for breaking stereotypes, with 80% strongly agreeing that females should be encouraged to enter defense or sports careers, whereas 53% of boys endorsed the same view. Similarly, acceptance of boys choosing arts-related fields was higher among females (73%) than males (40%). Differences also emerged in the domain of emotional expression and leadership. Two-thirds of girls agreed that boys should be encouraged to express emotions openly, compared to only one-third of boys, suggesting persistent endorsement of emotional restraint among males. Leadership roles continued to be viewed in a traditional manner by males, with 60% indicating preference for boys as leaders, while 80% of girls supported equal opportunities for both genders. In the domain of equality and media influence, both groups recognized the role of media in shaping gender norms, with acknowledgment higher among females (87%) than males (73%). Overall, the findings indicate that adolescents are navigating a transitional phase between traditional and egalitarian perspectives. While girls consistently demonstrated stronger endorsement of equality and inclusivity, boys displayed partial adherence to conventional norms, particularly in leadership and caregiving. These results highlight the coexistence of progressive and stereotypical attitudes and underline the continuing influence of cultural expectations alongside emerging egalitarian ideals (Table 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The findings of this investigation highlight the coexistence of progressive and traditional perspectives on gender roles among adolescents. While many participants endorsed equality in domains such as household responsibilities, education, and career choices, persistent stereotypes indicated that cultural and social norms continue to exert strong influence. Female respondents demonstrated a greater inclination toward egalitarian attitudes, supporting equal participation in domestic work and endorsing non-traditional career options such as defense and sports. Male respondents, however, were more likely to retain conventional beliefs, particularly in relation to leadership and caregiving responsibilities, suggesting slower attitudinal shifts among boys.

These results are consistent with previous research in the Indian context, which has documented mixed orientations among youth as they negotiate inherited traditions alongside modern ideals of inclusivity. The recognition of media as an influential factor by both genders further indicates growing awareness of external forces shaping gendered behavior. Importantly, the observed differences suggest that interventions must be gender-sensitive, addressing the distinct challenges faced by boys and girls in breaking away from stereotypes.

The persistence of traditional views underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to foster equality at multiple levels. Educational institutions can play a transformative role by integrating gender sensitization into curricula and promoting equitable participation in leadership and extracurricular activities. Families must also be encouraged to model shared responsibilities, while media can be leveraged to portray diverse and non-stereotypical role models. By targeting adolescent an age group undergoing identity formation such interventions hold potential to create long-term cultural shifts toward equity and inclusivity.

Conclusion:

The present investigation provides valuable insights into adolescents' perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities within the context of higher education. Findings revealed that while progressive views supporting equality in education, domestic work, and career opportunities are gaining ground, traditional stereotypes continue to persist, particularly among male respondents. Girls consistently endorsed more egalitarian perspectives, whereas boys demonstrated partial adherence to conventional norms, especially in domains such as leadership and caregiving. The recognition of media as an influential factor further highlights adolescents' growing awareness of external forces shaping gendered behavior. These outcomes underscore the transitional nature of adolescent attitudes in India, where cultural traditions and emerging egalitarian ideals coexist. To address these gaps, comprehensive interventions at the family, educational, and societal levels are essential. Promoting gender sensitization, equitable participation, and inclusive role models during adolescence can create a foundation for long-term cultural transformation and sustainable gender equity.

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