

ATTITUDE OF ADOLESCENT SCHOOL CHILDREN TOWARDS GENDER ROLES

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Abstract

Gender roles are relative and subjective in nature as they differ from place to place. The roles performed by the parents at home and in the society are observed and perceived by an individual and accordingly it shapes their concepts and attitudes. The behavioural pattern, activities supposed to be performed and attributed are put forth by the society and eventually shape the attitude of men and women. The objective of the present study was to find out the attitudes of school-going adolescents towards gender roles based on the type of family they belong to and the occupations their parents are engaged in. Descriptive survey was conducted by administering 19 statements among school going adolescents and it was found that the family type does not affect the attitude of adolescents towards gender roles wherein the adolescents whose mothers are working women are more progressive about their attitudes towards gender roles.

Keywords: attitude, gender roles, adolescent school children

Introduction

Biologically every individual is bestowed with some distinguishing qualities or characteristics which enable to categorize that individual as a male or a female. Although, individuals are, to a great extent, influenced by biological factors; the roles and values attributed by the society have a major impact on our understanding of males and females. The behaviours of men and women are governed by the roles assigned to them by the society. These assigned roles, can thus be said to be, socially constructed.

Since times immemorial, women have always been treated as secondary and less important. Even if in so many households all over the world, women are assigned with the task of taking care of the household as well as the family, they have very little or no command over the family or society. This demonstrates an imbalance of power bestowed to both the sexes in the society. As a result, women experience discrimination in case of education, jobs as well as other opportunities.

The attitude of people towards gender roles depicts how developed the particular section of the society is. An evolved society is based on the mutual understanding and respect of both the sexes for each other's' roles. A progressive attitude of individuals depends on social, cultural as well as economic factors. As adolescence is the most important phase of life that shapes the attitudes of the individuals, it is this time span of their lives when they need to develop a healthy attitude towards the roles of both the genders.

Review of Related Literature and Research

Ghorpade, R. (2009) in her M.Phil. research entitled 'Gender Representation in the Upper Primary School Level Text Books of Maharashtra State – A Study' points out that there is a consensus among all upper primary teachers that there are more references of men than women in textbooks. This

highlights the fact that textbooks represent male dominance in the family as well as society. Also, there is an absence of the modern images of women in the textbooks.

Utoma Ariane and Et.al (2012). Mapped the attitudes of gender roles among young people and understanding how these attitudes are shaped are useful instruments for policy makers seeking to design effective strategies to achieve gender equity in Indonesia. The results of this study suggest that the prevailing family environment where school students are raised continues to reflect the male breadwinner ideals. Such results are supportive of the proposition that while Indonesian women are making remarkable progress in their public participation, they continue to face the traditional division of labour within the family as it is more resistant to change. Such finding, coupled with the results indicating divergent attitudes to gender roles among the boys and girls in the sample, are indicative of future conflicts in gender relations. Policies designed to promote egalitarianism among school students should continue to strive to affect changes in gender roles socialisation in the home and investigate ways to promote gender equity particularly among boys and within the religious school curriculum

Obiunu, J. (2013) in his research entitled ‘The Effect of Gender Sensitivity on Discrimination among Secondary School Students in Abraka, Nigeria claims that the attitude of parents significantly contributes to cases of gender sensitivity among secondary school students. Gender sensitivity greatly influences the behaviour of secondary school adolescents. Sensitivity of parents on their behaviours towards their children can enable them to provide guidance against gender biases in dealing with their children.

Vlasceanu Sebastian, (2013) states that knowing and highlighting a link between gender and motivational and cognitive aspects that shape attitude towards work may be useful in streamlining the process of recruitment and selection in the corporate environments. This research aimed to study gender differences on attitudes towards work among young students. The study comprised of 90 subjects aged 18 to 24 years (45 female students and 45 male students). After statistical processing of data, the results do not confirm statistically significant differences between genders in the measured values of subtests of the AHA battery.

Iyengar, G. (2016) in her research article entitled ‘Gender Sensitization in Education: A Pathway to Women Empowerment’ reflects that gender sensitization can be very effectively be brought about through education. School being a miniature society, can create a very favourable environment for breaking stereotypes and altering the prevalent gender-related mindset of individuals. Various strategies can be used to promote gender sensitization in schools.

Operational Definitions

Attitude towards Gender Role refers to the child’s observation and perception of the role in the society leading to the formation of attitude by the adolescent school going children.

Adolescent School Children refers to the students studying in Standard Ninth within the age group of 13 to 19 years.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To find out the attitudes of adolescent school children towards gender roles.
- 2) To make suggestions based on the findings of the study.

Research Design

The method used for the present study was descriptive survey method. A questionnaire consisting of 19 statements regarding the attitude of adolescent school children towards gender role was adopted from Utoma Ariane and Et.al (2012) and were administered to 52 students studying in Std. IX from an English medium school.

Statistical Data Analysis

The data analysis was done using percentage.

Table No. 1 Attitudes of Adolescent School Children towards Gender Roles with reference to Family Type

Statements	Agree (in percent)		Undecided (in percent)		Disagree (in percent)	
	I	N	I	N	I	N
1. In family, fathers earn and mothers look after the family.	45	28.13	0	12.5	55	59.38
2. Men dominate the technology sector.	25	56.25	60	31.25	15	12.5
3. Women dominate the arts sector.	50	59.38	30	34.38	20	6.25
4. Household chores should be equally taken up by men.	90	100	0	0	10	0
5. Gender of the Principal makes no difference.	95	84.38	5	15.63	0	0
6. In difficult financial situations in a family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.	25	34.38	25	18.75	50	46.88
7. Attractive women have better employment opportunities.	25	25	10	18.75	65	56.25
8. Higher preference to male bosses.	25	37.5	35	31.25	40	31.25
9. Women leadership will make the world better.	60	68.75	30	21.88	10	9.375
10. If husband is working, wife need not work.	5	6.25	10	21.88	85	71.88
11. Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys.	25	25	35	50	40	25
12. Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls.	40	18.75	35	43.75	25	37.5
13. Men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.	100	96.88	0	0	0	3.125
14. Religious leaders must be males.	20	25	20	15.63	60	59.38
15. Community leadership should be inclusive.	95	84.38	5	12.5	0	3.125
16. A boy will be a better head of the Student Council.	10	12.5	5	15.63	85	71.88
17. A housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out.	70	59.38	5	15.63	25	25
18. A housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.	70	71.88	10	9.375	20	18.75
19. A housewife does not require permission to buy household goods.	45	28.13	15	31.25	40	40.63

Here, 'I' stands for Integrated or Joint Families and 'N' stands for Nuclear Families.

Observation and Interpretation

From table no. 1, it is observed and interpreted that

- 1) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are more inclined towards the opinion that it is not necessary that fathers should earn and mothers should look after the family.
- 2) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are of the opinion that men dominate the technology sector whereas almost the same numbers of children are unable to decide about the same.
- 3) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are of the opinion that women dominate the arts sector.
- 4) Majority of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are of the opinion that household chores should be equally taken up by men.
- 5) Majority of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are of the opinion that the gender of the Principal does not make difference.
- 6) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that in financial crisis of the family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.
- 7) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that attractive women have better employment opportunities.
- 8) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the higher preference given to the male bosses.
- 9) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are of the opinion that women leadership will make the world better.
- 10) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that if husband is working, wife need not work.
- 11) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys or not whereas almost the same numbers of children disagree with the same.
- 12) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls or not.
- 13) Majority of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families agree with the opinion that men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.
- 14) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that religious leaders must be males.
- 15) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families agree with the opinion that community leadership should include both men and women.
- 16) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that a boy will be a better head of the Student Council.

- 17) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out.
- 18) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.
- 19) Most of the children from integrated as well as nuclear families disagree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission to buy household goods.

Table No. 2

**Attitudes of Adolescent School Children towards Gender Roles with reference to
Mother's Occupation**

Statements	Agree (in percent)		Undecided (in percent)		Disagree (in percent)	
	W M	HM	W M	HM	W M	HM
1. In family, fathers earn and mothers look after the family.	14.29	44.74	14.29	5.263	71.43	50
2. Men dominate the technology sector.	42.86	42.11	42.86	44.74	14.29	13.16
3. Women dominate the arts sector.	35.71	63.16	57.14	23.68	7.143	13.16
4. Household chores should be equally taken up by men.	100	94.74	0	0	0	5.263
5. Gender of the Principal makes no difference.	85.71	89.47	14.29	10.53	0	0
6. In difficult financial situations in a family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.	28.57	31.58	14.29	23.68	57.14	44.74
7. Attractive women have better employment opportunities.	21.43	26.32	21.43	13.16	57.14	60.53
8. Higher preference to male bosses.	35.71	31.58	42.86	28.95	21.43	39.47
9. Women leadership will make the world better.	57.14	68.42	35.71	21.05	7.143	10.53
10. If husband is working, wife need not work.	7.143	5.263	7.143	21.05	85.71	73.68
11. Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys.	14.29	28.95	42.86	44.74	42.86	26.32
12. Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls.	28.57	23.68	35.71	42.11	35.71	34.21
13. Men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.	92.86	100	0	0	7.143	0
14. Religious leaders must be males.	35.71	18.42	14.29	18.42	50	63.16
15. Community leadership should be inclusive.	78.57	92.11	21.43	5.263	0	2.632
16. A boy will be a better head of the Student Council.	7.143	10.53	14.29	7.895	78.57	81.58
17. A housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out.	71.43	60.53	0	15.79	28.57	23.68
18. A housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.	78.57	68.42	0	13.16	21.43	18.42
19. A housewife does not require permission to buy household goods.	35.71	34.21	28.57	23.68	35.71	42.11

Here, ‘WM’ stands for Working Mothers and ‘HM’ stands for Homemaker Mothers.

Observation and Interpretation

From table no. 2, it is observed and interpreted that

- 1) Most of the children of working mothers are more inclined towards the opinion that it is not necessary that fathers should earn and mothers should look after the family than the children of home-maker mothers.
- 2) Most of the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are of the opinion that men dominate the technology sector whereas almost the same numbers of children are unable to decide about the same.
- 3) Most of the children of home-maker mothers are of the opinion that women dominate the arts sector whereas almost the same numbers of children of working mothers are unable to decide about the same.
- 4) Most of the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are of the opinion that household chores should be equally taken up by men.
- 5) Most of the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are of the opinion that the gender of the Principal does not make difference.
- 6) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers disagree with the opinion that in financial crisis of the family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.
- 7) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers disagree with the opinion that attractive women have better employment opportunities.
- 8) Among the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers some agree with the high preference given to the male bosses while some disagree with the same. There is almost the same extent of response to all the three alternatives.
- 9) Most of the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are of the opinion that women leadership will make the world better.
- 10) Most of the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers disagree with the opinion that if husband is working, wife need not work.
- 11) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys or not whereas almost the same numbers of children disagree with the same.
- 12) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls or not whereas almost the same numbers of children disagree with the same.
- 13) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers agree with the opinion that men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.
- 14) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers disagree with the opinion that religious leaders must be males.
- 15) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers agree with the opinion that community leadership should include both men and women.

- 16) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers disagree with the opinion that a boy will be a better head of the Student Council.
- 17) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out.
- 18) Most of the children of working mothers as well as home-maker mothers agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.
- 19) Among the children of both working mothers as well as home-maker mothers some agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission to buy household goods while some disagree with the same. There is almost the same extent of response to both the alternatives.

Table No. 3

**Attitudes of Adolescent School Children towards Gender Roles with reference to
Father's Occupation**

Statements	Agree (in percent)		Undecided (in percent)		Disagree (in percent)	
	W F	B F	W F	B F	W F	B F
1. In family, fathers earn and mothers look after the family.	31.03	39.13	13.79	0	55.17	60.9
2. Men dominate the technology sector.	51.72	34.78	37.93	47.83	10.34	17.4
3. Women dominate the arts sector.	55.17	56.52	41.38	21.74	3.448	21.7
4. Household chores should be equally taken up by men.	96.55	95.65	0	0	3.448	4.35
5. Gender of the Principal makes no difference.	93.1	82.61	6.897	17.39	0	0
6. In difficult financial situations in a family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.	27.59	34.78	20.69	21.74	51.72	43.5
7. Attractive women have better employment opportunities.	20.69	30.43	20.69	8.696	58.62	60.9
8. Higher preference to male bosses.	31.03	34.78	27.59	39.13	41.38	26.1
9. Women leadership will make the world better.	65.52	65.22	24.14	26.09	10.34	8.7
10. If husband is working, wife need not work.	6.897	4.348	13.79	21.74	79.31	73.9
11. Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys.	20.69	30.43	51.72	34.78	27.59	34.8
12. Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls.	34.48	17.39	34.48	47.83	31.03	34.8
13. Men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.	96.55	100	0	0	3.448	0
14. Religious leaders must be males.	20.69	26.09	24.14	8.696	55.17	65.2
15. Community leadership should be inclusive.	68.97	86.96	10.34	13.04	20.69	0
16. A boy will be a better head of the Student Council.	13.79	13.04	6.897	17.39	79.31	69.6
17. A housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out	68.97	56.52	10.34	13.04	20.69	30.4

18. A housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.	75.86	65.22	6.897	13.04	17.24	21.7
19. A housewife does not require permission to buy household goods.	41.38	26.09	27.59	26.09	31.03	47.8

Here, 'WF' stands for Working Fathers and 'BF' stands for Businessmen Fathers.

Observation and Interpretation

From table no. 3, it is observed and interpreted that

- 1) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that fathers should earn and mothers should look after the family.
- 2) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are of the opinion that men dominate the technology sector whereas almost the same numbers of children are unable to decide about the same.
- 3) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are of the opinion that women dominate the arts sector.
- 4) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are of the opinion that household chores should be equally taken up by men.
- 5) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are of the opinion that the gender of the Principal does not make difference.
- 6) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that in financial crisis of the family, boys are prioritized to receive further education.
- 7) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that attractive women have better employment opportunities.
- 8) Among the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers some agree with the high preference given to the male bosses while some disagree with the same. There is almost the same extent of response to all the three alternatives.
- 9) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are of the opinion that women leadership will make the world better.
- 10) Most of the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that if husband is working, wife need not work.
- 11) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks give more weightage to boys or not whereas almost the same numbers of children disagree with the same.
- 12) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers are unable to decide whether Indian textbooks portray boys more than girls or not whereas almost the same numbers of children disagree with the same.
- 13) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers agree with the opinion that men should be equally responsible in caring for their children.
- 14) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that religious leaders must be males.

- 15) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers agree with the opinion that community leadership should include both men and women.
- 16) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers disagree with the opinion that a boy will be a better head of the Student Council.
- 17) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission if she wants to go out.
- 18) Most of the children of working fathers as well as businessmen fathers agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission for a health check-up.
- 19) Among the children of both working fathers as well as businessmen fathers some agree with the opinion that a housewife does not require permission to buy household goods while some disagree with the same. There is almost the same extent of response to both the alternatives.

1. Results in a nutshell

- 1) Irrespective of the family type i.e., integrated or nuclear, the attitude of adolescent school children towards gender roles is quite evolved. The responses of the adolescents to the statements highlight that they have a good understanding and respect for the roles of both the sexes. The adolescents whose mothers are working women are more progressive in their attitudes towards gender roles as compared to the adolescents whose mothers are homemakers.
- 2) The adolescents whose mothers are working women are more progressive in their attitudes towards gender roles as compared to the adolescents whose mothers are homemakers.
- 3) The occupation of fathers – i.e., service or business does not affect the attitudes of adolescents towards gender roles much.

2. Conclusion

From the results, it can be concluded that family type does not affect the attitude of adolescents towards gender roles. It is very interesting to note that at one hand where the type of occupation of the fathers does not affect the attitudes of adolescents towards gender roles; the adolescents whose mothers are working women are more progressive about their attitudes towards gender roles.

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