

ENGLISH BIMONTHLY

Year VI  
Volume II  
Issue XXVII

**JRR**  
Rs.150

Approved by University Grants Commission (UGC)  
Journal No. 45297

ISSN: 2320-2750  
RNI: JHAENG/2013/53159

February-March

# JAMSHEDPUR RESEARCH REVIEW

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTI DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

February-March 2018



Published From :  
**GYANJYOTI EDUCATIONAL &  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION**  
Jamshedpur, Jharkhand  
[www.jamshedpurresearchreview.com](http://www.jamshedpurresearchreview.com)

Jamshedpur Research Review  
 YEAR VI, VOLUME II ISSUE XXVII  
 UGC JOURNAL NO: 45297

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# E PERCEPTION IN ADOLSCENTS- DIFFERENCES INMALES AND FEMALES

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## Abstract

Gender is the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. The present study was aimed at determining if there is any difference in the way gender roles are viewed by adolescent males and females. The result indicated that adolescent males do hold more traditional and stern gender role perception and expectations than adolescent females.

*Keywords: Gender, adolescent, perception, difference*

## 1.1 Review of Literature:

World Health Organization has defined 'gender' as 'the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men'. It varies from society to society and can be changed. The terms 'Gender' and 'Sex' are often used interchangeably. However, these two terms have much different connotations. Sex typically refers to sexual anatomy and sexual behaviour, whereas gender refers to the perception of maleness or femaleness related to membership in a given society. (Feldman, 2016). A newborn's sex is assigned as either male or female, based on their genitals. Once a sex is assigned, the child's gender is presumed. Differences in the ways males and females are treated begin at birth, continue during the preschool years, and extend into adolescence and beyond.

### Dimensions of Gender-

While one's gender may begin with the assignment of his/her sex, it doesn't end there. A person's gender is the complex interrelationship between three dimensions:

– **Body:** Our body, our experience of our own body, and how others interact with us based on our body. Bodies themselves are also gendered in the context of cultural expectations. Masculinity and

femininity are equated with certain physical attributes, labelling us as more or less a man/woman based on the degree to which those attributes are present. This gendering of our bodies affects how we feel about ourselves and how others perceive and interact with us.

– **Identity:** Our deeply held, internal sense of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither; who we internally know ourselves to be. Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of our gender. A Cisgender person has a gender identity consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a child whose sex was assigned male on their birth certificate and who identifies as a boy is cisgender. A transgender person has a gender identity that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. So, a child who was assigned male on their birth certificate and who identifies as a girl is transgender. But gender is a spectrum, and not limited to just two possibilities. A child may have a Non-binary gender identity, meaning they do not identify strictly as a boy or a girl – they could identify as both, or neither, or as another gender entirely. Agender people do not identify with any gender.

- Expression: How we present our gender in the world and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Gender expression is also related to gender roles and how society uses those roles to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms. The third dimension of gender is Gender expression, which is the way we show our gender to the world around us (through such things as clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms, to name a few). Practically everything is assigned a gender—toys, colours, clothes, and activities are some of the more obvious examples.

Each of these dimensions can vary greatly across a range of possibilities. A person's comfort in their gender is related to the degree to which these three dimensions fall in harmony. By the age of two, children consistently label themselves and those around them as male or female.

Preschool-age children often have very stern ideas about how boys and girls are supposed to act. Their expectations about gender-appropriate behaviour are even more gender-stereotyped than those of adults and may be less flexible during the preschool years than at any other point in the life span. Beliefs in gender stereotypes become increasingly pronounced up to age five, and although they become somewhat less rigid by age seven, they do not disappear. In fact, the gender stereotypes held by preschoolers resemble those held by traditional adults in society (Feldman, 2016). Like adults, preschoolers expect that males are more suitable to have traits involving aptitude, independence, vigour, and competitiveness. In contrast, females are viewed as more likely to have traits such as tenderness, expressiveness, nurturance, and submissiveness. Although these are expectations, such expectations provide the lens through which preschool-age children view the world and thus affect their behaviour as well as the way they interact with peers and adults. (Feldman, 2016). Various perspectives have tried to explain the source of gender-matching perceptions and behaviours. Some of them are-

1. Biological perspective- Biological characteristics associated with sex might themselves lead to gender differences. Hormones are one sex-related biological characteristic that have been found to influence gender-based behaviours. Girls exposed to unusually high levels of androgens (male hormones) prenatally are more likely to display behaviours associated with male stereotypes than are their sisters who were not exposed to androgens. Similarly, boys exposed prenatally to atypically high levels of female hormones are apt to display more behaviours that are stereotypically female than is usual.
2. Psychoanalytic Perspective- According to Freud, during phallic stage of psychosexual development, boys start to identify more with their fathers and girls start identifying more with their mothers. Identification is the process in which children attempt to be similar to their same-sex parent, incorporating the parent's attitudes and values.
3. Social Learning Perspective- Social learning approaches see children as learning gender-related behaviour and expectations by observing others. Children watch the behaviour of their parents, teachers, siblings, and even peers. Books and the media, and in particular television and video games, also play a role in instilling traditional views of gender-related behaviour from which pre-schoolers may learn. Television also presents men and women in traditional gender roles.
4. Cognitive Perspective- In order to establish gender identity, children develop a gender schema, a cognitive framework that organizes information relevant to gender. For instance, preschoolers use their increasing cognitive abilities to develop "rules" about what is right and what is inappropriate for males and females. According to cognitive-developmental theory, proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg, rigid gender schemas are influenced by the preschoolers' erroneous beliefs about sex differences. Specifically, young preschoolers believe

that sex differences are based not on biological factors but on differences in appearance or behaviour. A boy may think he could turn into a girl if he put on a dress and tied his hair in a ponytail. However, by the time they reach the age of four or five, children develop an understanding of gender constancy, the awareness that people are permanently males or females, depending on fixed, unchangeable biological factors.

### Gender Identity during Adolescence-

Gender identities which start establishing themselves during preschool years, reconcile by the time children reach adolescence. Going beyond obvious physical differences, gender perception colours psychological differences as well like those in self-esteem, ideas of friendships, romantic relationships, risk-taking behaviour etc. For e.g. one of the reasons why girls have been found to be affected by depression more than boys is because, it is seen more acceptable and in line with 'how a girl should be' than for a boy. Also, risk taking is more seen in boys as it's seen as one of the 'manly' characteristics compared to girls.

Gender perception sets expectations not just for one's own behaviour but for others' behaviours as well. For e.g. in some cultures cooking is seen as an essential qualification for a female who is ready to get married. Also, it's often expected that a husband must earn more than his wife.

**Role of Culture-** In Asian cultures, which rests more in patriarchy, the ideal male is perhaps seen as competent, stable, tough, confident, strong, accomplished, non-conforming, aggressive and is the leader. The ideal female is perhaps seen as warm, emotional, kind, polite, sensitive, friendly, fashionable, gentle, soft and is the follower. In urban contexts, these gender expectations and stereotypes could be more subtle and indirect.

**1.5 Tools-** A self-constructed questionnaire by the researcher named 'Gender Perception' was used in order to collect responses from the subjects. The questionnaire contained 15 test items and had a 5 point Likert-rating scale. The lowest possible score was 15 and highest possible score was 75. The test items were based on everyday instances of gender expectations from self, parents and peers and they were framed in such a way that higher the

Research also shows that these stereotypes create dangerous consequences that limit a person's full potential and well being. Men and women, because of these stereotypes, are forced to ignore their personality traits, temperament and unique characteristics that make them who they are. Instead there is always a tendency to conform to the cultural notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.

There may be several men who are soft & gentle in their temperament, who love to cook and are often bombarded by our society for not being charismatic and extroverted. On the other hand, there may be several women who are naturally extroverted, brave and tough and they are bombarded by our society for not being gentle & submissive. Exaggerated differences between men & women, most of which are researched to be individual differences, are glorified and generalized as gender differences.

### 1.2 Objectives of the study-

The objective of the following study was to find out if there is any significant difference in perception of gender roles and gender appropriate behaviours between male and female adolescents.

**1.3 Hypotheses-Null Hypothesis:** There is no difference in the perception of gender roles and gender appropriate behaviours between male and female adolescents, i.e. male and female adolescents will score equal in the questionnaire of 'Gender Perception'.

**Alternate Hypothesis:** There is a difference in the perception of gender roles and gender appropriate behaviours between male and female adolescents, i.e. male adolescents will score higher than female adolescents in the questionnaire of 'Gender Perceptions'.

score, more traditional and stereotypical gender-perception a respondent is presumed to have.

**Methodology:** The questionnaire 'Gender Perception' was given to 35 male and 35 female adolescents. All the adolescents were from the age group of 18-20; were students of the same educational institute, were from the same vicinity and belonged to the similar socio-economic background.

**1.7 Statistical Techniques:** The statistical measures employed were - Mean, range, standard deviation & t-test (Independent design).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the scores

	Males	Females
Mean	37.71	31.85
SD	10.47	11.23

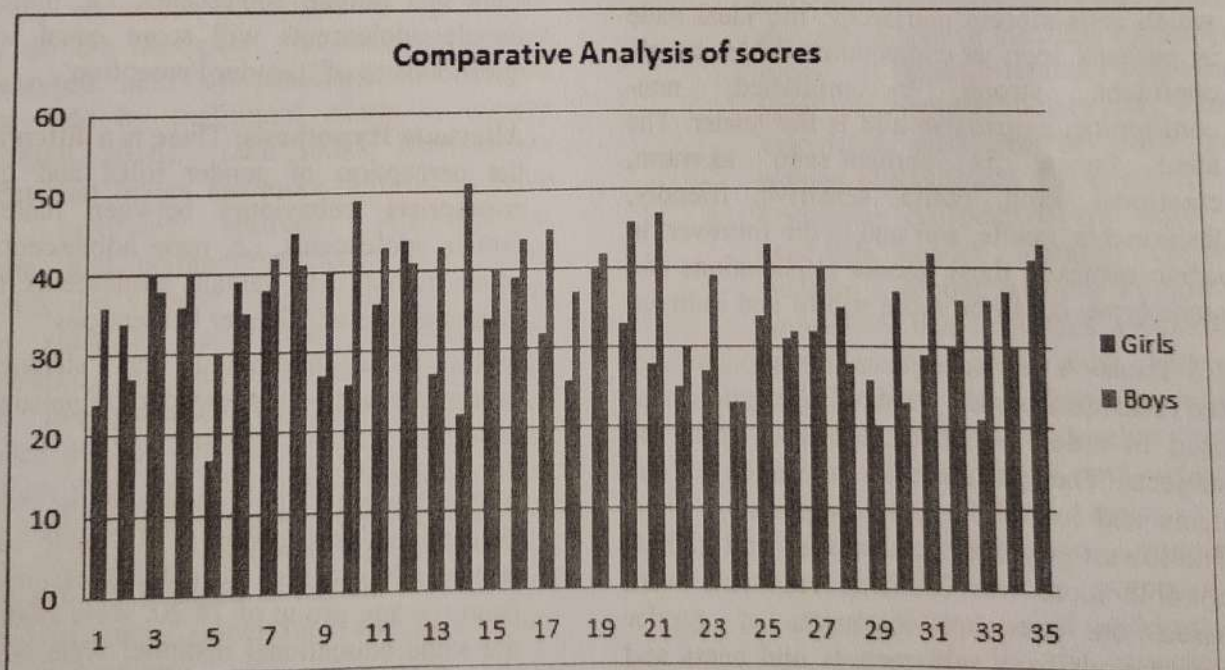
**1.8 Results and Discussion:**

70 adolescents (35 Males and 35 Females) were given instructions for attempting the 'Gender Perception' questionnaire. All of them cooperated throughout the administration. The responses were scored, evaluated and explained to them. In case of Male adolescents, the highest score was 51 and lowest score was 20; hence the range was 31. Standard deviation was calculated to be 10.47. In case of females, the highest score was 45 and lowest score was 17; hence the range was 28. Standard deviation was calculated to be 11.23. In case of males, the mean score was 37.77 which was higher than that for females which was 31.85. Since there were two different groups, t-test (independent design) was calculated in order to know if the difference between means of the two groups was statistically significant. The t value was

3.71, which was found to be significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis, 'There is a difference in the perception of gender roles and gender appropriate behaviours between male and female adolescents' was retained and null hypothesis was rejected.

**Ancillary Observations**

In the interaction post data collection, it was found that, adolescents did hold prejudiced and stereotypical views about gender roles. For e.g. many boys admitted that they want to marry a woman who holds a job but should be less earning than them. Many girls also admitted that child-caring is essentially a woman's job. There was an overall agreement that crying in public should only be acceptable for a woman and not for a man as it's assumed to be a sign of weakness.



There was also a lack of general knowledge about hormonal and anatomical differences between males and females. For e.g. 90% of boys and 47% of girls did not know the biology behind menstrual cycles and assumed that girls are simply 'impure' during those days. When the sources of these erroneous beliefs were traced, most adolescents stated that they have learnt from their parents and peers. However, gender perception is not an irreversible tendency. Hence, it is possible to provide sex and gender education to children during middle childhood and adolescence. In the post-task discussion, it was found that participants were curious to know more about the concept of gender, sources of gender perception and related things. They also showed willingness to change their beliefs if scientific and realistic information was available.

#### **Practical Implications-**

The findings suggested that there is a need to impart basic sex and gender education to young girls and boys to inculcate unbiased gender perception. It can also be difficult to change stern gender perception during adulthood and hence, a person's behaviour is likely to get affected by his/her gender stereotypes. For e.g. a man may refuse to help his wife in household activities because he believes it to be only her job. Or a woman may give up her ambitions for career in athletics as it's not viewed suitable for women. Hence, the concept of androgyny (considering a human being regardless of his/her gender) needs to be instilled during the growing years of age.

#### **Methodological issues-**

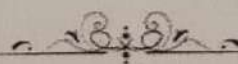
- The study was conducted on adolescents of similar socio-economic background. It could be more expanded by including adolescents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- The study could also be expanded by creating awareness about gender perception and then administering the questionnaire once again to compare pre and post changes, if any.

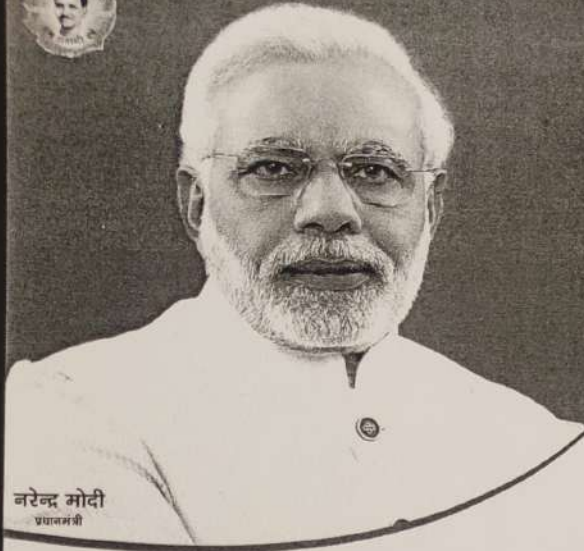
#### **1.9 Conclusion-**

Thus, it was found that there is a difference in gender role perception between male and female adolescents. Males were found to have more stern and traditional gender perception compared to females.

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नरेन्द्र मोदी  
प्रधानमंत्री

# 26 जनवरी गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं

2018-19 के बजट  
में

**हमारी विशेष प्राथमिकताएं**

- ✓ ग्रामीण परिवारों की आय को दोगुना करना
- ✓ रोजगार एवं स्वरोजगार के अधिक अवसर पैदा करना
- ✓ महिला सशक्तिकरण
- ✓ ST/SC एवं अभिवंचित वर्गों का विकास
- ✓ पिछड़े जिलों और प्रखण्डों का समेकित विकास

“ जोहार...

गणतंत्र दिवस के पावन अवसर पर आइये हम संकल्प लें कि 68 वर्ष पूर्व हमने राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता की लड़ाई जीती थी। अब हमें सामाजिक और आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता की लड़ाई जीतनी है।

गर्व से कहिए...

मैं भारतवासी हूँ, मैं झारखण्डवासी हूँ

”



**न्यू इंडिया, न्यू झारखण्ड**

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग द्वारा जनहित में जारी