



# THE IMPACT OF GENDER STEREOTYPES: HOW FAMILY UPBRINGING AFFECTS THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF GIRLS AND BOYS

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## ABSTRACT

A gender stereotype is a broad opinion or preconception about the traits or qualities that men and women should or should not have, or about the roles that men and women should or should not play. Such a focus on discrimination and stereotyping might make it harder for people to feel accepted if they don't fit into the "typical roles" of society. This paper looks at whether parents typically mirror traditional gender roles as well as more unintentional influences. Additionally, it discusses the role of parents as well as other factors that influence a child's social behaviour.

**Keywords-** gender, stereotype, society, roles.

## INTRODUCTION

When it comes to early childhood parenting techniques in general, such as being kind, compassionate, and exerting parental control, there aren't many distinctions between how boys and girls are handled. Though, there are differences in "implied" parenting methods. As soon as parents know whether their child is a boy or a girl, they set expectations for what kinds of things, skills, and behaviours they want them to have. Parenting methods emphasise gender roles as a result of these expectations.

Gender stereotypes affect cultural assumptions about how men and women should behave. These roles are essential to social development and are understood by children as young as four years old. Gender roles are influenced by the media, families, environment, and society. A child's perception of gender roles has an impact on how they interact with their peers and form bonds. Children experience a process of gender-specific social and behavioural development in addition to their biological maturation. This process is impacted by a child's home structure, natural play patterns, strong friendships, and the vibrant social environment of school. One's perception of themselves and how they form connections later in life are significantly influenced by the gender roles they experienced as children.

Gender specialisation is highly sensitive to family factors. Parents' assumptions of gender roles have a clear impact on how their children participate in domestic chores. As a result, the question arises: do parents tend to model traditional gender roles for their children, or is this a more incidental influence? This paper tries to

search for the answer to this question and also explore the role of parents in a child's upbringing, and whether it stimulates their social behaviour.

## DISCUSSION

Beginning in childhood, gender stereotypes have an impact on culture and establish expectations about how men and women should behave. Children as young as four show signs of understanding these responsibilities. Gender-specific social and behavioural norms are imprinted through family dynamics, typical play routines, social connections, and the hectic social environment of school life as children develop. In addition to their physiological maturity, these requirements exist.

### ❖ Parental Influences

Children learn societal preconceptions from their parents first. They learn everything from what to be doing and whatnot to do to. Depending on their hopes for the children's future adult lives, such as financial success or prospective caring, parents may foster certain habits in their offspring. However, the majority of parental tasks including talking to, engaging in play with, teaching, and providing for the child are still unaffected by the child's gender. Family dynamics can have a particularly big impact on gender specialisation.

Parental sexism, such as boys practising sports and girls playing with dolls, has a substantial impact on children's toy selections. While both mothers and fathers support traditional gender roles in their offspring, men tend to do so more frequently. Parents select activities they think their kids will value and enjoy. Parents directly shape expectations for their children by selecting the activities for them, which has an impact on their ideas on gender roles and preferences. Depending on the gender of the child, parents will speak with them in a different way.

Children usually learn about gender roles for the first time in a meaningful way from their parents. Gender-specific toys and clothing are commonly given to children starting at birth. Parents often encourage their children to play in ways that are more appropriate for their gender, such as boys playing with car and train models and girls playing with soft toys. Parental role models may unintentionally or deliberately display gender-normative conduct. Parental criticism for transgressing gender norms and support for successfully upholding them might help children comprehend gender roles.

It's possible that a child's gender influence depends on how they are raised and how much instruction they get. Parents of girls were more likely to have tougher discipline and a more optimistic outlook, according to research by Claire Hughes from 2001. Hughes also discovered that parental warmth was not related to the formation of boys' theories of mind, but it was for girls Hughes hypothesised that this may be due to girls' stronger propensity to employ understanding of mind to collaborate, sympathise, and seek emotional support. Children can pick up on other people's feelings and emotions by seeing them, having their emotional outbursts acknowledged, and finally by being taught about their own feelings and emotions.

It has been observed that parents speak to their boys and girls about emotions in different ways. With their daughters than with their sons, both parents use more sentimental language and make more allusions to sadness and disliking of events. Girls use more emotional words as a result of this than do boys. As a result, girls' emotional socialisation has in some ways advanced. In addition to understanding emotions better than boys, girls are also better at integrating cultural norms of emotion expression into daily life. Girls and boys might behave differently when it comes to how they use their mental awareness in interpersonal interactions. Girls may have a higher predisposition than boys, for instance, to use their developing mental awareness to elicit emotional support or to develop their empathy and cooperative skills.

### ❖ Stigmatization in the Media

It has been discovered that young children between the ages of four and five have very strong gender stereotypes. Children learn through mass media, which they are exposed to every day and includes television, books, radio, magazines, and newspapers, in addition to the intentional efforts of parents and teachers. The picture books created especially for their age group, which are frequently read to them and repeated to them in their impressionable years, are a significant source of such information for preschool-aged children. According to research by Oskamp, Kaufman, and Wolterbeek, male characters in picture books for preschoolers tend to be more exploratory and energetic than female characters, who tend to be more social and quieter. Of course, these studies entirely disregard the significant genetic influences that force gender-specific behaviour.

Children can soon grasp the fact that gender plays a significant role in many aspects of their lives, even from infancy. Nothing in biology categorises actions as right or wrong, normal or abnormal, despite the fact that many external influences affect how gender is constructed. Young children also learn from television, even while parents and instructors mistakenly and actively convey these lessons. It has been established that television is a key source of culturally gendered messaging, probably particularly potent for kids who watch up to four hours a day on average. A variety of materials can influence these kids' perceptions of male and female roles in society because they have sensitive young minds. When it comes to Disney media, for instance, some parents exercise caution because the company has come under fire for glamorising its characters, developing female heroes who depend on men to save them, and including sexual subliminal messaging.

### ❖ External Influences

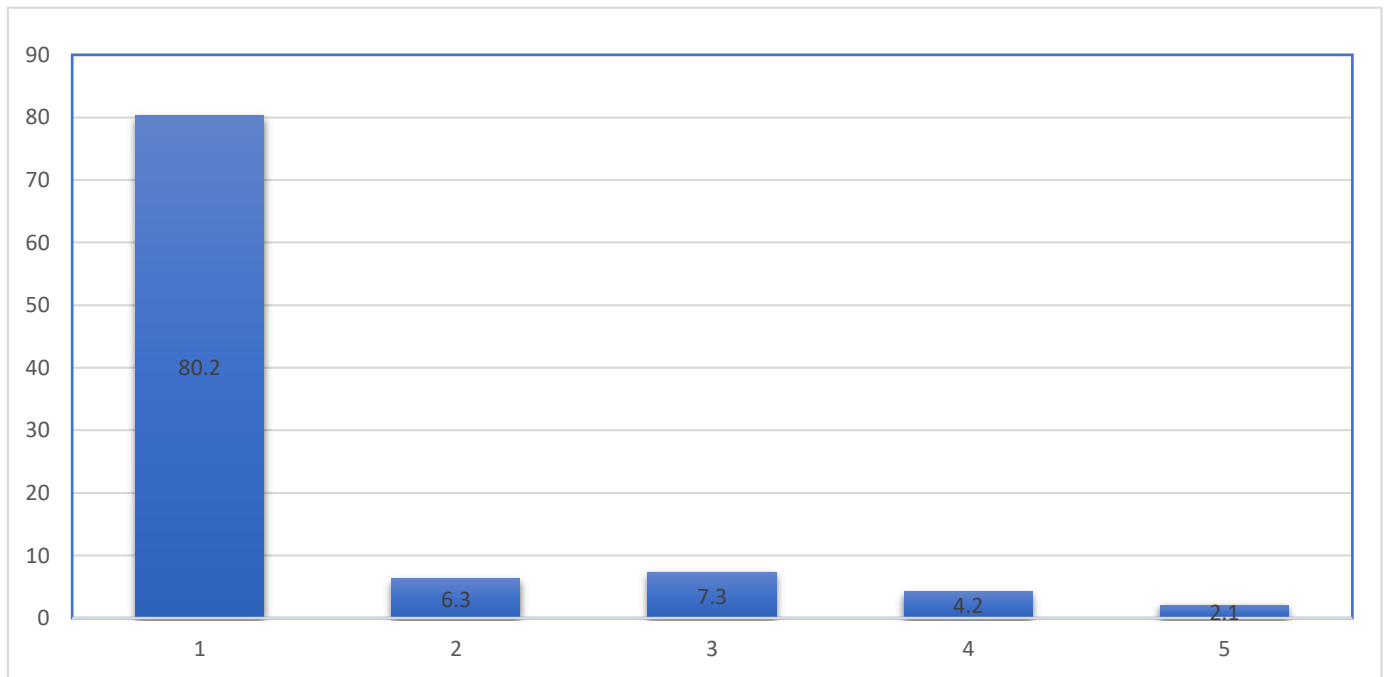
The societal repercussions of instilling gender norms in children are seen very early on and typically follow the child as they grow. When they engage with other people in their age group, it is easiest to observe. Peers act as a child's role model and sounding board for appropriate self-expression. The notion that gender roles are a direct effect of one's social interactions is supported by Alice Eagly. She refers to social conduct as "gender-stereotypic" and asserts that the majority of gender-based expectations, such as the notion that women should be empathetic and gentle and men should be in charge and independent, are based on stereotypes. A child's decision to continue engaging in a particular activity depends on whether or not they receive support from their peers as they experiment with the aspects of life they might find enjoyable.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this research paper was collected by creating a questionnaire with twelve questions. This survey received 96 responses, and the researcher analysed the survey based on these 96 responses.

## RESULTS

- **Graph.1. Percentage of responses on whether a mother’s responsibility in the family is same as a father’s**



Source: Survey

In graph 1, 80.2% of respondents believe that the role of both parents is equally important. It is seen as important that fathers should help not only with household chores but also play an important role in a child’s upbringing, and that mothers should not restrict themselves to household chores but get involved in the decision-making process.

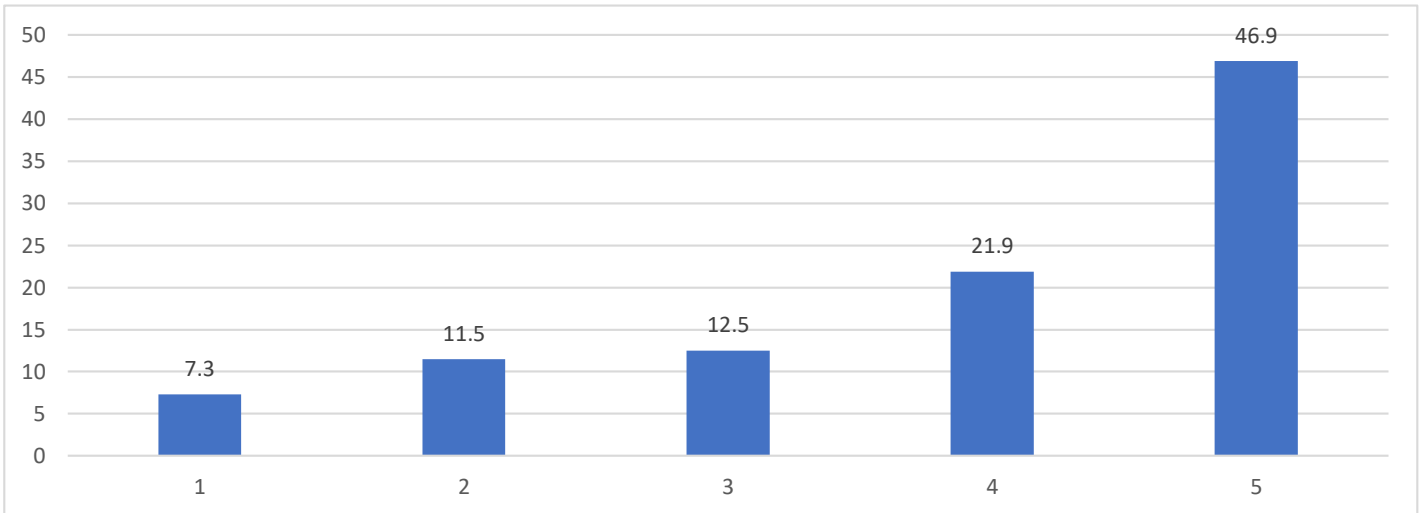
- **Table.1. Number of responses received on whether the respondent has been required to carry out or prohibited to out any task due to their gender**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
YES	67
NO	29

Source: Survey

In table 4, 67 respondents have agreed that they have been required to carry out or prohibited from carrying out any task due to their gender. It represents how gender roles are deeply rooted in the fabric of our societies and how most of them have experienced them at least once in their lives.

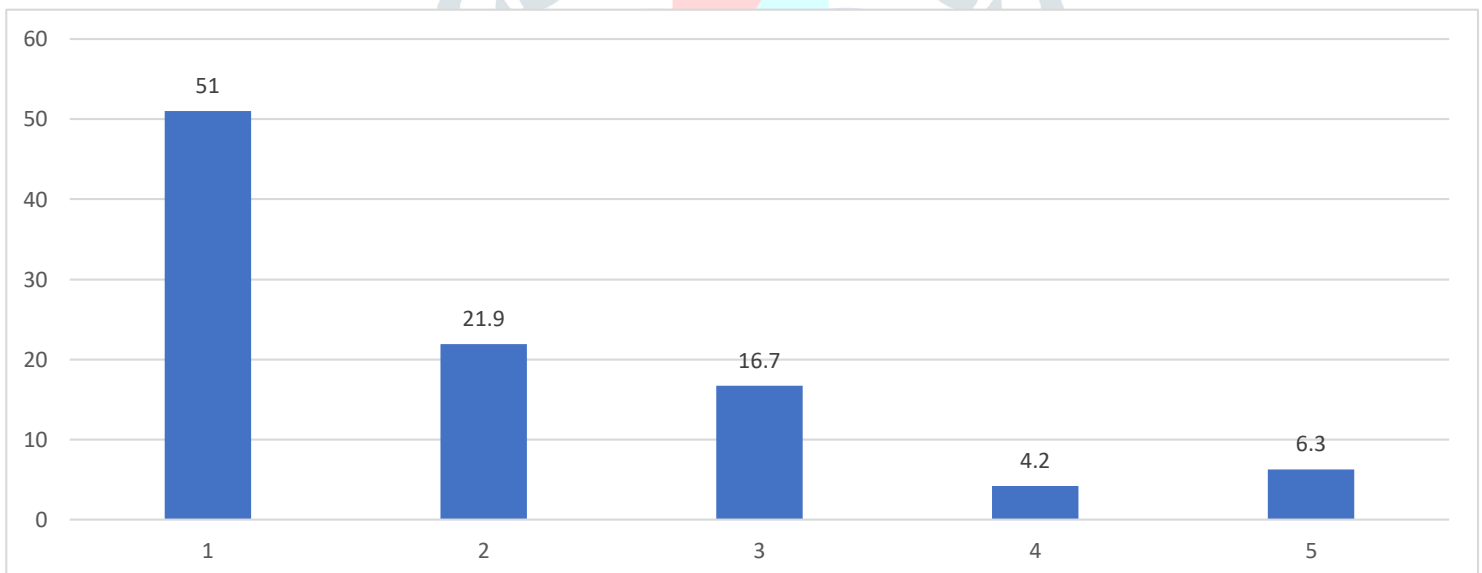
- **Graph.2. Percentage of responses received on whether the respondents have encountered gender stereotype at their home**



Source: Survey

In graph 2, 46.9% strongly disagreed and 7.3% strongly agreed on encountering gender stereotypes at home; 11.5% agreed, that they had encountered stereotypical gender roles at home. This signifies that most of them have experienced gender stereotypes outside of their homes.

- **Graph.3. Percentage of responses received on whether a child's upbringing is heavily influenced by his or her gender**



Source: Survey

In graph 3, 51% strongly agreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed on whether a child's upbringing is heavily influenced by his or her gender. It signifies how the majority of them believe a child's gender has an impact on his or her upbringing.

- **Table.2. Number of responses received from the female respondents on the stereotypical encounters they have faced**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
restricted to being loud	54
expected to walk or sit in a specific manner	53
asked to learn household chores	57
as a child, was only allowed to play with dolls	10
your favourite colour was expected to be pink	13

Source: Survey

In table 2, Female responses were limited to being asked to learn household chores received the most responses (57), followed by being told to be loud and being expected to walk or sit in a certain manner, which received 54 and 53 responses, being allowed to play with dolls as a child (10 responses), and having a favourite colour that was expected to be pink (13 responses), respectively. It shows how all the female respondents have faced at least one gender stereotype, which makes it prevalent that such a stereotype exists.

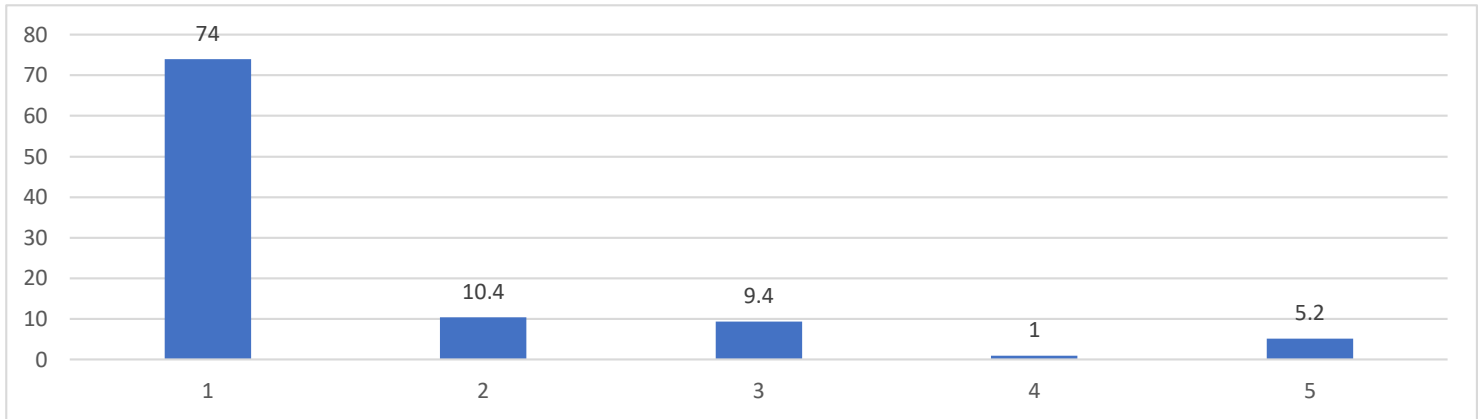
- **Table.3. Number of responses received from the male respondents on the stereotypical encounters they have faced**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
restricted to express your emotions, like crying, vulnerability, and so on	18
restricted to doing household chores, although you are interested in things like cooking, cleaning, and so on	16

Source: Survey

In table 3, Male responses were limited to expressing your emotions, such as crying, vulnerability, and so on (18 responses), and doing household chores, despite your interest in cooking, cleaning, etc., got 16 responses, while expressing your emotions got 18 responses. This signifies how all the male respondents have faced at least one gender stereotype, which makes it prevalent that such a stereotype exists.

- **Graph.4. Percentage of responses received whether gender role affects a child or teenager from a very young age are:**

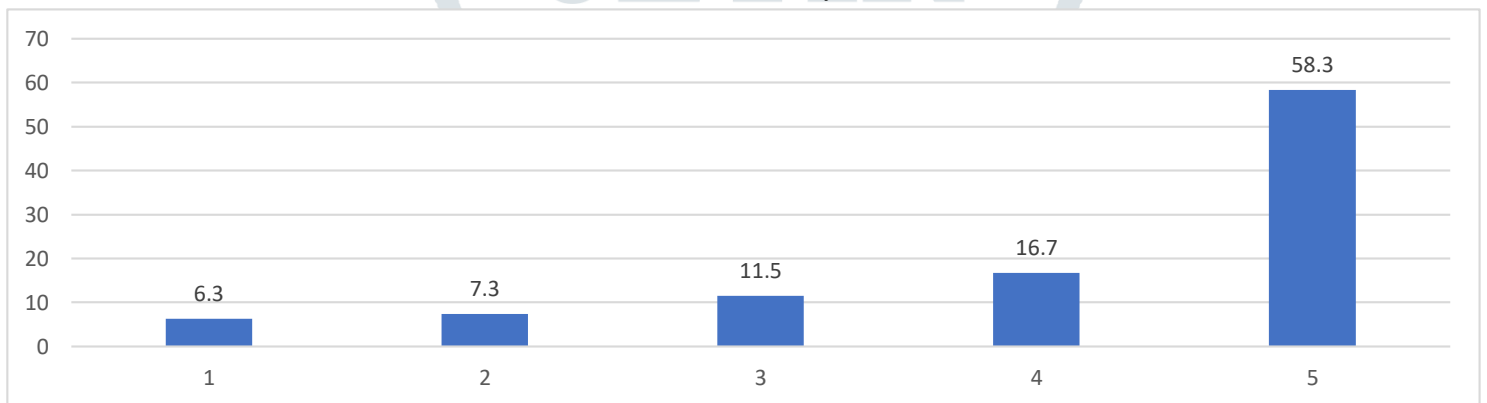


Source: Survey

In graph 4, 74% strongly agreed and 5.2% strongly disagreed on gender roles affecting a child or teenager from a very young age. The majority of respondents agreed on how gender roles can have a heavy influence on young minds.

- **Graph.5. Percentage of responses received whether gender roles are influenced at home**

Source: Survey



In graph 5, 58.3% strongly disagreed and 6.3% strongly agreed that gender roles are influenced at home only. This demonstrates how the majority of respondents believe gender roles are influenced not only at home but also in other places.

- **Table.4. Number of responses received from the respondents on from where else children and teenager can get influenced by gender roles**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
School	52
College	42
Society/Colony (where you live)	66
At social gathering like family functions	75
Public Places	39
Workplace	1
Relatives	1
All of the Above	2

Source: Survey

In table 4, most of them agreed that social gatherings play the most significant role in influencing gender roles, followed by society/colonies, schools, and colleges.



- **Table.5. Number of responses received from the respondent on which factors gender stereotype the most**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Parental influences	66
Patterns of play	15
Friendship	4
School	4
Media	7

Source: Survey

In Table 5, the majority of the respondents believe parental influence is a significant factor in spreading gender stereotypes.

- **Table.6. Number of responses received on whether the respondent suppress their emotions in the front of their parents**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
YES	47
NO	32
SOMETIMES	17

Source: Survey

The 47 responses suppress their emotions in front of their parents, 32 do not, and 17 do occasionally.

- **Table.7. Number of responses received on whether the respondent is comfortable in expressing their emotions with their parents**

	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
YES	53
NO	11
SOMETIMES	32

Source: Survey

The 53 respondents are comfortable expressing their emotions to their parents, 11 are not, and 32 respond only occasionally.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, based on the analysis of the survey, gender and general preconceptions continue to not only mould but also have an impact on everyone's conduct. Society should prioritise doing away with cliches and the behaviours that go along with them, and it should start at home. Gender stereotypes impede people from sharing equally in the responsibility of caring for children and family members, as well as in the benefits of the relationships forged through these activities. This is expensive for society as well as the individuals involved since it affects people's mental and physical health, family resilience, and the long-term availability and contributions of workers in the job market.



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