

## Gender Stereotyping In School And Its Impacts On Primary And Middle Level Schooling

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### Abstract

Gender stereotypes play an important role in socialization and gender role formation in educational spheres. School environment, class room, teachers, class room environment, text books and curriculum present and portray the masculine ideology. School curriculum and text books are perpetuating a masculine and dominant trait which decreases female portrayal that effect their potentialities and capabilities at school level and even their empowerment in the larger social structure. Similarly, teacher's attitudes and behavior in formation of student's personality is also playing a pivotal role during the class and curriculum development. The current study thus investigates that how gender stereotypes developed during classroom, teaching of subjects, curriculum and text books. The data has been collected from 100 students of two primary and two middle schools selected through purposive sampling technique and the data was collected through structured interview schedule. The data has been analyzed through SPSS while both descriptive and inferential statistics has been utilized for discussion over the results. The study thus conclude that school text, curriculum, attitude of the teacher towards male students in the class are the major reasons promoting gender stereotypes which may affect women status and empowerment.

**Key Words:** Gender-Impacts, Education-School-Gender Study-Pakistan

### تلخیص

جنس کی بنیاد پر مخصوص تصور معاشرتی زندگی کے ساتھ ساتھ مرد و عورت کی تعلیمی ماحول میں رویوں کی تشکیل کے لحاظ سے اہم اور بنیادی کردار ادا کرتا ہے۔ اسکول کا ماحول، اساتذہ، کمرہ جماعت کا ماحول، تدریسی کتب اور نصاب سب کچھ مردانہ برتری جیسے

رجحانات کی عکاسی کر رہے ہیں۔ اسکول کا نصاب اور تدریسی کتب، نمایاں مردانہ برتری کو پھیلا کر زنانہ تصور کو ابھارنے کی جگہ کم کر کر ان کے امکانات اور صلاحیتوں کو اسکول کے درجے کے ساتھ ساتھ معاشرتی سطح پر بھی ان کی اثر اندازی کو ترقی پانے کے موقع سے محرومی کا باعث بنتے ہیں۔ اس طرح، استاد کارویہ اور سلوک طلباء کی شخصیت کی تعمیر میں کلاس کے اندر اور نصاب ترتیب دینے میں بہت اہمیت کا حامل ہوتا ہے۔ پیش نظر مطالعہ یہ معلوم کرتا ہے کہ جنس کے بنیاد پر مخصوص تصور یا تفریق، کمرہ جماعت، مضمون پڑھانے، نصاب اور تدریسی کتب کے تناظر میں کیسے تشکیل پاتا ہے۔ تحقیق کے دوران دو پرائمری اور دو مڈل اسکول کو بنیاد بنا کر سو (100) طلباء سے متعلق اعداد و شمار کو جمع کر کے مقصدی شماریات (Purposive Sampling) کے طریقہ کار کو اپنا کر اس کے لئے باقاعدہ مصاحبات کے عمل کو اپنایا گیا۔ اعداد و شمار کا تجزیاتی مطالعہ (SPSS) کے ذریعے کر کر بیانہ اور استخراجی شماریات کو دوران مکالمہ استعمال کر کے نتائج اخذ کئے گئے ہیں۔ یہ مطالعہ اس نتیجے پر پہنچاتا ہے کہ اسکول، کتب، نصاب اور استاد کارویہ کے ساتھ کلاس میں مخصوص رویہ وہ بڑے اسباب ہیں جو جنس کے بنیاد پر مخصوص تفاوت کے تصور کو پروان چڑھا کر عورت کی حیثیت پر براہ راست اثر انداز ہوتے ہیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: جنس- اثرات، تعلیم- اسکول- جنسی تفاوت- پاکستان

## Background of the Study

Gender stereotypes are standardized and often pejorative idea or image held about an individual on the basis of their gender (Connel, 1995; Moi, 2005; Esplen & Jolly, 2006). Mackie (1973) in this regard asserts that a stereotype refers to those folk beliefs about the attributes characterizing a social category on which there is substantial agreement. Similarly, Brien (2009) argues that gender is essentially a composite of stereotypes beliefs, positive or negative, that people hold about a group and their members. Gender stereotypes can be found in every aspect of life i.e. in attitudes, perceptions, appearance, and communication as well (Haq, 2000; WHO, 2001). Besides, such beliefs do exist even in roles which can become stereotypes with the passage of time. Furthermore, Hall *et al* (1988) is of the view that stereotypes are widely accepted and shared among members of a given society and are handed down from generation to generation. In addition, Fung and Ma (2000) have noted that stereotype is a slanted perception, which may be a perception, a prejudice, an imagination, or past impression of what a person has been. The debate thus concludes that gender stereotypes are idea which a particular society holds about a person or group or even sometimes about a category.

## Gender Stereotypes about Male and Female

Gender stereotype prevails in every society; however their social acceptability varies from culture to culture (Raday, 2003). Though, some stereotypes are widely accepted and

people are easily internalizing them as facts and reality, however later on people accept them as social fact and justify them with some unscientific examples and proofs (Aladejana, 2002). In many societies of the world, the prevalence of negative stereotypes regarding women is widespread due to segregated nature of the society (Daraz et al, 2012), whereas with reference to rural or traditional social structure, such segregation and gender biasness is more sever. Therefore, women in particular are considered to be inexperienced, unintelligent and even inferior and these ideas are supported by traditionalism and quotations of some orthodox and reactionary elements of the society i.e. the clergy class (Raday, 2003).

Formal schooling and school books are playing an important role in providing a multifaceted direction to students both male and female. Studies and research asserts that schools continue the process of placing males and females within the distinctive social worlds that is accomplished through reading books (Azikwe, 2002). In a study about such relationship, a group of researchers examined a number of books and found that male were the focus of attention as there were more than ten pictures of male child for every picture of female children (Calvanese, 2007). Similarly, research studies indicate that books titles were also gender biased and showed that boys are more important than girls (Dambrun *et al*, 2004). Girls were shown as busy in helping their mothers' in house chores while males were shown as shaping their lives. Furthermore, reading materials and textbooks used are also gender stereotyped showing male as active member of society while female busy only in domestic activities (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Such relations also do continue in multiple ways shaping the lives of both male and female with respect to gender role formation and socialization.

Similarly, at the level of academic achievements, there has also been a change found with respect to male and female. The choice of a subject and selection of a course also depends on the nature and availability of stereotyping attitudes present in society. However, with respect to the academic achievements of male, it has been observed that male is considered as intelligent while girl's achievement is attributed to hard work associated with their nature (Scantlebury, 2006). Besides, the study of Martin and Halverson (1981) reported that most of these stereotypes describe men as competent, strong and brave while women as weak, incompetent and passive in comparison. Furthermore, behavioral psychologists are of the opinion that girls are less confident in their abilities as compared to boys (Leder, 2002) while such attitudes are more attractive towards males' achievements as compared to female.

Sociologists assert that socialization play dominant role in molding the behavior of a person and personality formation and such process continue till the end of life.

Socialization is a life long process through which society's values and norms pertaining to gender are learned (Renzetti & Curran, 1995) that also associated with division of labor. Gender is a socially constructed phenomenon and has been learned through socialization process (Daraz et al, 2012). Thorne (1993) in this regard is of the opinion that mostly children participate in their own socialization, however school play a pivotal role as an agency in the socialization of children differently for their future role as men and women. In school, conscious socialization takes place where in text books gender stereotypes are reinforced in the very beginning. Women are shown in domestic chores e.g. caring their babies, preparing food, nursing and teaching while men are shown as soldiers, leaders and doing heavy jobs (Marinova, 2003). Though, boys and girls learn differently from books and school environment to play their stereotypical role in the society (Turgeon, 2008). The discussion thus concludes that schools, text books, teachers association with student's, gender re-enforcement through formal socialization in the form of schools play a dominant role in gender role formation and stereotyping.

### **The Argument of the Study**

Gender stereotypes in school depend on so many factors like socio-economic status, geographical location race, ethnicity, disability. Further, it also depends on the interaction between teachers and students during their class participation, teachings, and even conversation. Gender stereotypes are significant in role development and gender formation in many societies. Particularly, in educational sector, stereotypes are predominantly practiced which inversely affect student's creativity and their academics. Keeping in view the discussion, the current study investigates into various stereotypical images presented by teachers, books and even class environment, concerning teachers and students relationship, conversation and even questioning. In addition, class environment is male oriented with masculine ideology which creates different stereotypes regarding gender role formation.

Studies and research have found that in traditional societies, the bond of interaction is based upon traditional social values which in many societies demarcate male and female contributing towards gender stereotypes and even stereotypical images for female. Such images restrict them towards home with domestic activities while male become the breadwinner of the family controlling all the economic activities. However, such attitudes are mostly associated with schools and text books and even educational institutions where the teacher's student's relations are formed. In addition Shah (1985) concludes that from the very first reading traditional stereotypes with regard to male/female role models are established, and they are reinforced and elaborated in subsequent readings. Among them, one of the first illustrations is that of a girl helping

her mother with household chores and a boy is helping father in outside activities and even if she is educated, she is supposed to fulfill her responsibilities inside the four walls of the house. In addition Streitmatter (2002) stated that in mix schools girls feels the dominance of boys while in single sex school they don't bother about and can easily ask questions from teachers as well. Regarding communication in class, Diekman & Eagly (2000) found that there are gender differences in communication in the class. Usually men respond to questions confidently and quickly and also take part in discussions while girls use to hesitate in discussion because their contribution is not considered as valuable (Erinosho, 1994). The findings of the study revealed that teachers treat differently both boys and girls in co-education settings and encourage more boys than girls (Erinosho, 2005).

Research also confirms that boys are more aggressive than girls, as a consequence teachers devotes more attention to boys than girls as a strategy to maintain order in the class (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Regarding stereotypes in teaching the subjects to students Calvanese (2007) believe that male teachers are more appropriate for teaching the science subject while female teachers are most suitable for teaching arts subjects. Male teachers predominate in technical subjects areas, while female teachers predominate in the traditional academic areas. This encourages the image of particular subjects as masculine or feminine domains. Similarly, Gray & Leith (2004) shows, that gender stereotypes exists in the curriculum and book and such curricula is relative to all the provinces of the country as well as public and private sectors schools in Pakistan. Men have been represented with strong masculine attributes e.g. strong, aggressive, and honest while women are shown e.g. fragile, delicate, helping others in homes, obedient, tolerant, pious and beautiful as well.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the major objectives of the current study;

- To identify the stereotypical attitude of teachers towards students at primary and middle level education
- To explore gender stereotyping in curriculum and books taught at school
- To know about the classroom environment and the role of teachers in minimizing the stereotyping in classroom

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- Stereotypical attitudes of teachers towards students encourage gender stereotypes.
- Gender biased books; curriculum and class room environment establishes stereotypes.

### **Methodological Procedures and Theoretical Framework**

The current research study investigates into gender stereotypes in class room environment which is reinforced by text presented in the books and teachers attitudes. The study primarily aims to identify gender stereotypes in primary and middles schools in Tehsil Adenzai Dir Lower Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan and a sample of 100 students has been selected through purposive sampling technique from four selected schools of the area. Keeping in view the nature of the study, a pure quantitative approach was used and the discussion has been made over all the statistical information. The primary data was also collected with the help of structured interview schedule on a pre-designed scale i.e. a two point category that is To Some Extent and To Greater Extent, and the analysis was performed in the form of percentages and frequency distribution. Similarly, the relationship of the hypothesis and primary information has been judged through chi-square test with a .05 confidence interval, gama and lambda along-with correlation techniques.

The current study work under social learning theory as a domain umbrella, however numerous theories are dealing with the gendered stereotypes, masculine and feminine roles development i.e. social learning theory, schema theory and psychoanalytical theory (Jones & Dindia, 2004; Vu, 2008; Ahmad, 2012) are important. However, gender role theory has been chosen as dominant umbrella for the current study. Gender roles theory explains the expected attitudes and behaviors a society associates with each sex (Khattak, 2009). Boys and girls identify themselves to their respective gendered roles which further extend gender stereotypes in children (Lcke, 1993). The gender role concept was adopted by John Money, the prominent researcher on gender issues as he explained that gender roles are not by birth but built up through experiences later on through informal and unplanned learning (quoted in Zosuls et al, 2011). Similarly, gender roles are learned through socialization agencies and school is one of them which play an important role. Gender roles are taught by the environment of the school e.g. books, classroom environments, and teachers (Lopez-Saez et al, 2004). Children are taught how to perform their respective roles in society (Marshall & Reihartz, 1997). Such pattern of learning has been adopted in the current study and with particular focus upon the nature of text books, class room and teachers association with students.

### **Results and Discussions**

#### **Gender Stereotyping during primary School Life**

The primary data has been analyzed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. In descriptive statistics, the data has been analyzed in the form of frequency distribution and percentage in order to validate univariate analysis. However, in inferential statistics the

hypotheses of the study have been verified with the help of chi-square test and Correlation in order to establish relationship between independent and dependent variables.

The data analysis with regard to field information illustrates that gender stereotypes are the outcome our educational institutions i.e. primary and middle schools. In this regard the field information also supports the hypothetical statement as proposed during the study. The response of the respondent as obtained against each of the statement on two point scale categories i.e. to some extent and to greater extent describe that gender stereotypes is prevalent at school level to a greater extent. The table portrays that curriculum taught in such schools are mainly male biased in the primary school where such statement was strongly supported by 45 (90%) of the students respondents. Similarly, 40 (80%) of the respondents strongly agreed that text books are male oriented presenting the dominant images of masculinity throughout the course and teachings in such schools. Besides, teacher attitudes towards male is more inclined presenting a positive and attractive picture which negatively influence female achievements and personality relations while such response was almost supported by a majority of the respondents to a greater extent i.e. 38 (76%). Moreover, 39 (78%) and 42 (84%) of the respondents respectively asserted that teachers during their class participation encourages male students, providing a masculine environment during their school life which is gender biased such stereotypical attitudes promotes biasness among students. The statistical information has been given in the following table-1:

**Table: 1**  
**Gender stereotypes in primary school level**

Gender Stereotypes	Extent of Agreement		Total
	To Some Extent	To Greater Extent	
Curriculum is male oriented	05 (10%)	45 (90%)	50 (100%)
Text book are male oriented	10 (20%)	40 (80%)	50 (100%)
Teachers are more attractive towards male Students	12 (24%)	38 (76%)	50 (100%)
Teachers encourage male students only	11 (22%)	39 (78%)	50 (100%)
Classroom environment is male biased	08 (16%)	42 (84%)	50 (100%)
Chi-square = 2.456    Significance = 0.000**			Lambda = 0.12
Gamma = 0.025			

Note; (P=.000\*\* < .05 there is highly significance relationship between gender stereotypes and school education, ( $\chi^2 = 2.456$ , D.f=6)

In relation to the above tabular discussion i.e. frequency and percentage, a chi-square test, gamma and lambda to test the assumption has also been applied to the data through SPSS. The recorded responses i.e. to some extent and greater extent were analyzed and the value of chi-square test illustrate that the amount of value for  $P=.000^{**} < .05$  which is the indication of showing significant relationship between gender stereotypes and school life. Besides, the value of  $\chi^2 = 2.456$ , D.f=6 in the current case also authenticate the existed association and the results further express that dependent variable has strong association and relationship with independent variable. In this case the hypothesis presented i.e. hypothesis one remain valid as most of the association and values falls in the acceptance region. The following correlations table also assert about such associations.

### Correlation

		Gender Stereotypes	Primary School relation and environment
Gender Stereotypes	Pearson Correlation	1	0.985 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Primary School relation and environment	Pearson Correlation	.985 <sup>**</sup>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

(<sup>\*\*</sup> Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(100) = 0.985^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  
 $r^2 = 0.97$ )

(Since 87% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The given correlation along-with their given tabular results i.e. <sup>\*\*</sup> Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(100) = 0.985^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.97$ , since 87% of the variance is shared thus we can conclude that the association is obviously a strong one with the given information, analysis and proposed hypothesis.

### Gender Stereotypes at Middle School Level

The field information that has been collected from field respondents with respect to the collection of responses about gender stereotyping among male and female at middle school level indicates that both primary and middle level education in the country is responsible for such issues. The two category approach as adapted in the current study, i.e. to some extent and to a greater extent also determine that 44 (88%) of the respondents assert that curriculum which is a dominant source of education in our school is presenting masculine values and it also strengthen gender biased division. Similarly, male

dominancy is regarded as the outcome of our textual education which has been strongly supported by 43 (86%) of the target samples while the part of teachers attitudes which further worsen the issue was supported by 42 (84%) respondent to a greater extent accordingly. Teachers and students relations are also commented by majority of the students and such association supports male students to a greater extent i.e. 40 (80%) while 45 (90%) respondent illustrate that classroom environment is male dominated and thus producing stereotypical images of the larger population as well (see table-2 for statistical information):

**Table: 2**  
**Gender Stereotypes at Middle School Level**

Gender Stereotypes	Extent of Agreement		Total
	To Some Extent	To Greater Extent	
Curriculum is male biased	06 (12%)	44 (88%)	50 (100%)
Text book is male biased	07 (14%)	43 (86%)	50 (100%)
Teacher attitudes towards male is inclined	08 (16%)	42 (84%)	50 (100%)
Only encourage male students	10 (20%)	40 (80%)	50 (100%)
Classroom environment is male biased	05 (10%)	45 (90%)	50 (100%)
Chi-square = 1.987      Significance = 0.000 <sup>**</sup>			Lambda = 0.08
Gamma = 0.015			

( $P=0.000^{**} < .05$  there is highly significance relationship between gender stereotypes and middle school level, ( $\chi^2 = 1.987$ , D.f=6)

The tabular information has also been passed through Bivariate analysis and with the help of chi-square test in order to test the hypothesis. In this regard, the results of chi-square test with the value of  $P=0.000^{**} < .05$  that shows a high significant relationship between the variables. Similarly, the value of  $\chi^2 = 1.987$ , D.f=6 which demonstrate that random variable have a strong interaction with non-random variable. Besides, the given correlation (see table below) shows that the correlation is strong one with the given values i.e.  $r = 0.945^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.89$ , since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one).

### Correlation

		Gender stereotypes	Middle level of education
Gender stereotypes	Pearson Correlation	1	0.945 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Middle level of education	Pearson Correlation	.945 <sup>**</sup>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

(\* Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(100) = 0.945^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  
 $r^2 = 0.89$ )

(Since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one) Thus the data obtained from the field and its analysis with a proposed scale asserts that school education in the area is producing gender images of male and female. The proposed hypothesis has been validated through various statistical tools and thus the statements are valid.

### Conclusions

The study on the issue of gender stereotypes at various levels of education demonstrate that that gender stereotypes are found in socialization agencies like family and education. The results obtained assert that most of the teachers at school level i.e. at primary and middle level of education have stereotypical attitude towards their students. Similarly, class room environment, curriculum and books taught at such level portray masculine images producing biasness towards female at the larger extent. The study also found that gender stereotypes can easily be observed in almost all class room situations. The boys use to respond to questions more confidently, quickly and aggressively while the girls on the other hand wait longer to respond to questions in class. Female contribution is never acknowledged and that's, why they hesitate to take part in discussion in future.

Similarly, the information regarding designing of courses, lack the proper representation of female strata and even there is no single lesson which could reflect the real image of female population. Female has been represented as weak, delicate, and fragile as compared to male counterparts. Such representation is perpetuated through long socialization process through education taught at primary and middle level schoolings.

### Recommendations

The teachers should concentrate in eliminating gender bias attitudes while interacting with students in class as well as outside the classroom. Moreover, gender as subject should be introduced in teachers training courses as well as for administrators of

education department to sensitize them regarding gender issues. Teachers and school management should create gender balance environment in class room. In addition, girls and boys should sit in one class room at least till middle level and they should be provided equal opportunities in class room activities in order to eliminate stereotypes in classroom environment. Teachers should also create healthy competition among both the sexes. The books and curriculum needs to be revised and more balanced courses should be introduced to combat this issue. Further, awareness should be created by organizing seminars and workshops about genders stereotypes both for the students and teachers. Refresher courses should be organized for teachers to sensitize them regarding gender issues in curriculum. In addition media both print and electronic can to play an important role in combating this issue of gender stereotypes in school and classroom.

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