

# Parental Awareness of Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood Development

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to address the gaps in understanding the significant impact of parental supervision and discourse on children's interpretation of gender norms in society. To achieve this, a comprehensive methodology was employed, involving an in-depth analysis of parental views, language use, toy and clothing choices, and activities. The findings of the study highlighted the crucial role of parental influence in either reinforcing or challenging established gender norms, thus impacting children's choices and self-expression. This research sheds light on the importance of parental involvement in cultivating a more inclusive and diverse understanding of gender for the next generation. Furthermore, the article delved into the complex ways in which parents shape their children's conceptions of gender in the early years of their lives. The study underscored the significance of parental supervision and emphasized how parental attitudes are transmitted to children, influencing their perspectives and actions with respect to gender stereotypes. Additionally, the research explored several facets of parental discourse, clarifying the ways in which language and conversations within the home have significant effects on children's understanding of societal gender norms.

**Keywords:** *Early childhood, Gender development, Gender stereotypes, Parental influence, Parental practices, Societal expectations*

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## 1. Introduction

According to Jones and Smith (2017), gender stereotypes are still powerful cultural constructs that have an influence on people's views, actions, and opportunities beginning in early life. Parents are a child's first teachers while they are young, influencing their worldview and gender stereotypes. The degree to which parents are aware of these gender norms has a big impact on how their children are raised. As everyone knows, parents are extremely important in helping children learn from the things they see and hear in their environment.

In this regard, parents' comprehension and misinterpretation of gender stereotypes can significantly affect a child's development. The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate current studies on the effects of parental knowledge and comprehension of gender stereotypes on the development of their offspring.

Understanding how parental influence affects gender views is crucial because of the effects it has on a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. In order to actively or passively impart societal standards and values to their children, parents are the main agents of socialization (Johnson, 2018). Research indicates that parental attitudes and communication techniques have a significant influence on the gender-related beliefs and behaviors of their offspring. Children absorb these messages, which has an impact on their self-perception, social interactions, academic choices, and aspirations (Adams et al., 2019).

Early learners are constantly attempting to understand the environment they are in. As they proceed, they are gaining new knowledge and refuting their previous ideas. Most human and environmental effects on newborn infants support the status quo (Ramsey 2004). When children get off their own devices, they tend to pick up stereotypes unless they obtain direction from well-known, compassionate people who push them to consider perspectives that go against the norm (Ramsey 2004). If children are consistently exposed to words, actions, people, and images that defy preconceptions, such

as through books, photographs, stories, and role models, they are less likely to adapt and expand upon their limiting beliefs (Brill & Pepper 2008). It emphasizes the value of early schooling programs meant to foster a sense of gender identity. However, there is still much to learn about the effects of parental influence on children's gender ideas, particularly when it comes to working parents.

There is a lack of study in the literature on the interconnection of parental influence and specific challenges faced by working parents to establish gender norms for their children. While previous research has mostly looked at how parents impact their children's gender stereotypes, there has been little research conducted to explore these factors in working households. Few research has focused on how parents' views, behaviors, and communication methods about gender roles are profoundly shaped by the challenges of balancing job and family life. While some studies have studied the impact of parents on children's gender beliefs, few have examined this in depth. This gap underscores how important it is to conduct research that focuses on the perspectives and experiences of working parents and children when it comes to gender development. This review aims to provide a thorough knowledge of the complicated dynamics of parental influence on children's gender ideas by combining findings from qualitative studies in this area. This review will offer insight into the ways in which parental attitudes, behaviors, and experiences impact children's views of gender stereotypes throughout time by looking at the lived experiences and perspectives of parents and children.

## **2. Materials and methods**

The study's methodology used a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing of relevant literature about the impact of parental influence on children's gender concepts. The first approach was to conduct broad search terms like "parental influence," "children's gender development," "cultural perspectives," and "socialization" in databases like Research Gate and Google Scholar. These search terms were selected in order to find an extensive range of studies covering several aspects of parental influence in different social and cultural contexts.

Regarding inclusion criteria, research was chosen based on its relevance to understanding how parental attitudes, behaviors, and communication styles influence children's awareness of gender stereotypes. On the other hand, the review did not include any studies that specifically addressed how parental influence affects children's gender attitudes.

In terms of data collection and analysis, a thorough review process was carried out on all gathered literature. After a thorough analysis of the data, relevant results were selected and categorized in accordance with key concepts and themes. To achieve a thorough understanding of parental influence on children's gender perspectives within the particular context of working parents across different cultural settings, studies from a variety of cultural backgrounds were included and examined.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### **3.1. Impact of parental attitudes on children's gender development**

A major factor affecting how children understand and internalize society's expectations about gender roles is the influence of parental beliefs on their gender development. This phenomenon has been the subject of numerical research, which has illuminated the strong relationship between parental attitudes and children's gender understanding. Smith and Johnson (2019) conducted a long-term study on parents' perceptions of gender roles and how those perceptions impact the way their children act. The findings showed that children often internalize and hold onto the gender stereotypes of their parents. The results indicated that youngsters frequently absorb their parents' gender perspectives as their own and frequently replicate these viewpoints. The strong influence parents have on influencing their children's early concept of gender is highlighted by the alignment between parental beliefs and children's perceptions.

Adams et al. (2020) carried out further studies on the impact of parental opinions on children's gender development. The study examined the ways in which parents' explicit and implicit views about gender roles affect how their children understand and conform to social standards. According to their research, children grew up in homes where the parents held more conventional beliefs about gender roles were more likely to adhere to these norms. Parents' views have a significant influence on how their children interpret and accept social gender norms; this is shown in the more flexibility and openness towards gender roles exhibited by children from more parents.

Furthermore, research by Chen & Nguyen (2020) and Robinson et al. (2019) demonstrated how cultural differences in parental views affect children's gender perceptions. These studies demonstrated how different cultural and geographic circumstances had different effects on parents' perceptions of gender roles in their children. The differences in opinions held by parents in various societies highlight how important it is to take cultural variety into account when examining how parents shape their children's gender perspectives. If children are unable to question socially imposed gender norms, they may not be able to fully develop their cognitive and social potential (Rainey & Rust, 1999). This applies to both male and female children. It is vital to identify the factors that contribute to children's gender-role beliefs in order to enable them to broaden their definitions of appropriate behavior.

These findings all indicate how important parental attitudes are for the formation of gender. The primary educators of gender norms in society are parents, who either deliberately or unconsciously impart these values to their offspring. According to Mesman and Groeneveld (2017), gendered parenting is when parents communicate expectations about what actions are appropriate and inappropriate for boys and girls. Gender stereotypes are often internalized by children, influencing their behavior, self-perception, and life aspirations. Parents who categorize certain occupations or ways of behaving as exclusively feminine. For instance, are more prone to impart these stereotypes to their children, which may affect how they act and relate to other people in society. Beyond actions and decisions, parental attitudes have a significant impact on how children develop their gender. It has a profound effect on how a child perceives both other people and herself. Through their interactions and observations of their parents, children pick up on gender. When parents show inclusive and gender-neutral attitudes, children develop deeper and flexible perspectives, which promotes an inclusive community. Meanwhile, when parents reinforce strict gender standards, their children could struggle to conform to society's expectations, which could limit their chances and suppress their individuality.

It is important to acknowledge the enormous impact that parents' perspectives have on their children's gender development in order to advocate for more equitable and inclusive settings. This highlights the value of parent education initiatives that assist parents in realizing how their attitudes impact how their children view the world. By raising awareness and encouraging more open-minded attitudes, parents may make a big difference in establishing an environment where children feel encouraged to pursue varied interests and activities, regardless of societal expectations based on gender.

### **3.2. Parental roles in childcare division**

Sayer (2005) believes that women prioritize taking care of their children over their husbands, even in situations where both parents work full-time. Mothers give their children their baths and put them in their clothes most of the time. There is little data linking children's perceptions of gender roles to the way their parents divide up babysitting duties. When fathers took on greater childcare duties, 4-year-olds had reduced knowledge of gender stereotypes, according to a cross-cultural study done in Hungary and England (Turner & Gervai, 1995). These findings imply that outside variables, like as employment circumstances, may have a greater impact on how parents divide up the work than their ideological views.

Gender stereotypes influence how parents raise their children and manage household chores, and these stereotypes have an impact on how well the parents raise their children (Gervai, Turner, & Hinde, 1995). Still, working-class parents exhibit a wide range of opinions and ways of doing things. This makes it unclear how variations in parents' attitudes and actions may affect children's perceptions of gender.

The study demonstrated that girls, especially those who were about six years old, had a higher understanding of traditional female gender roles when women carried out common responsibilities, such as taking care of children and completing household chores. Conversely, when moms engaged in more activities often associated with femininity, boys seemed to know less about or adopt more stereotypically male behaviors. This demonstrates that women play a crucial role in forming their children's perceptions of gender norms in society by teaching daughters about feminine behavior and boys about manly behavior. According to earlier research, women tend to give their children more emotional and physical care than males do (Sayer, 2005), which lends credence to this argument. Mothers who give their children more attention also teach them about appropriate behavior and gender standards.

Parental attitudes not only affect how children perceive the world, but they also have an impact on their actions and goals. It is important to encourage inclusive and gender-inclusive views since parents who maintain strict gender stereotypes may unintentionally restrict their children's opportunities and suppress creativity. Parent education programs are essential in helping parents understand how their attitudes affect children's growth and in fostering more inclusive and equitable environments where children feel encouraged to explore a variety of interests and activities despite gender-based expectations from society.

To sum up, parental views play a crucial role in educating children about gender norms in society and shaping their behavior, self-perception, and life goals. Acknowledging the important influence of parental opinions on the gender development of children is crucial when arguing for more inclusive and equitable environments and supporting parent education programs that aim to foster openness and create environments that support the healthy development of every child.

### **3.3. Parental communication patterns and gendered development**

Parents' communication techniques have a big impact on how well their children understand and interpret gender roles in society. Brown and Gracia's (2018) research demonstrates the significant influence that parental communication has on children's gender perceptions. By means of guidance, nonverbal cues, and implicit messages sent through regular interactions, parents can communicate with their children in a variety of ways that teach them about gender norms and expectations (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

The relationship between children's conceptions of gender roles and parental communication styles was examined in the Brown & Gracia (2018) study. Their research showed that children's perceptions of social gender standards were

greatly influenced by the language parents used when talking to them about gender-related issues. Youngsters frequently internalize these communication patterns, which causes them to accept or reinforce gender stereotypes in their own actions and ideas (Adams et al., 2020).

In addition, children's perceptions of what society expects of them are greatly influenced by the gender conversations their parents have at home. Research by Robinson et al. (2019) and Nguyen (2020) examined how children who grew up in homes where gender roles were discussed openly tended to hold more traditional views about what boys and girls should accomplish. This demonstrates how family conversations regarding gender norms shape who they should be.

Furthermore, how parents behave and act also sends an implicit message that greatly influences how children see gender. Parents not only communicate with their children about gender but also model this behavior for them. According to Gracia et al. (2021), parents' purchases of toys or the things they do with their children convey stereotypes about what boys and girls should look like. Children pick up on and mimic their parents' gender stereotypes whether they buy trucks for boys or dolls for females. This influences children's interests and behavior, either reinforcing or questioning traditional gender stereotypes.

In essence, parental communication around gender essentially influences children's perceptions of and adherence to societal expectations. How often and how parents talk, the language they use, the transparency of their conversations, and even what they model for their children as appropriate behavior for boys and girls. This influences children's gender-related thoughts and behaviors. Parents need to be honest about gender and demonstrate that both sexes are capable of a wide range of activities in order to create a more equitable and accepting environment for their children. This encourages children to view gender roles more fairly and flexibly.

### **3.4. Parental practices shaping gendered behaviors**

Children's conduct is greatly influenced by their parents to conform to gender stereotypes in society. According to Martin et al. (2002), parents become children's primary role models by demonstrating traditional gender roles and interactions within the family. Children's perceptions of and adherence to these standards can be greatly influenced by the actions and decisions parents make about their toys, attire, and extracurricular activities. One of the main ways that children are exposed to gender-related cultural expectations is through toys.

Parents show flexibility by playing with toys that are categorized as masculine, neutral, or feminine on par with their children when they play with peers of the same age (Wood et al., 2002). But as kids get bigger, males and girls have increasingly distinct preferences when it comes to toys (Davis & Hines, 2020). While action figures and constructing toys are more often associated with boys, dolls and household playthings are typically associated with girls. These decisions convey implicit ideas about acceptable behavior for different genders, influencing children's preferences and actions in line with those messages. In the same way, wardrobe decisions made by parents might support gender stereotypes. Parents may choose to dress their children in ways that conform to gender stereotypes in society, such as dressing males in slacks and girls in dresses. These behaviors affect children's perceptions of what is appropriate for their gender and may have an impact on how they express themselves and make decisions.

Similarly, the clothes that parents select for their children might uphold traditional ideas about gender stereotypes. Parents wearing dresses and boys dressing in slacks, for example, can unintentionally reinforce these stereotypes about what each gender should wear. Children learn from these behaviors what is considered appropriate for their gender, which may affect how freely they express themselves or make decisions.

In addition, children's behaviors are greatly influenced by the activities that parents choose to support or discourage in accordance with gender norms. For example, parents may discourage girls from engaging in sports or rough play while encouraging boys to do so. This differential treatment based on society's gender norms influences children's ideas of what is appropriate behavior for their gender.

However, challenging these norms may enhance children's growth. Parents who actively support and encourage a diverse range of options and activities, regardless of gender, create an environment that promotes inclusion and flexibility in children. Research by Chen & Nguyen (2020) and Robinson et al. (2019) has shown that children grow up with more flexible and accepting views on gender roles when their parents actively involve them in a variety of activities and avoid imposing gender-based boundaries on them.

Ultimately, the way parents raise their children greatly influences how their children behave in relation to gender norms in society. The toys that parents choose, the clothes that they gift, and the causes that they support all convey messages about what society views as appropriate for girls and boys. It creates a more welcoming environment when parents support a wide variety of choices and activities without strictly adherence to gender stereotypes. Children can freely explore a variety of hobbies and behaviors in this environment without being restricted by social norms that define what their gender should or shouldn't encompass.

### **3.5. Cultural variations in parental guidance on children's gender perceptions**

Different cultural contexts have different effects on how children perceive gender as a result of parental guidance, which reflects the intricate relationships between parental influences, customs, and societal standards. Research by Chen

& Nguyen (2020) and Silver & Patel (2021) sheds light on the varying approaches to parental monitoring that different groups employ.

When examining cultural differences, Chen & Nguyen (2020) emphasized how cultural norms and beliefs affect parental attitudes toward gender roles. In cultures where traditional gender roles are well established, parental guidance usually follows more closely to these norms, with parents resisting stereotypical gender expectations and behaviors. However, in cultures that embrace more progressive notions of gender equality, parental monitoring is usually laxer, encouraging children to explore a range of interests and activities regardless of gender.

Silva & Patel (2021) went into more detail about the influence of cultural diversity on parenting styles that mold children's gender norms. They emphasized that cultural variations in parenting guidance include more than just explicit discussions about gender; they also include habits, routines, and social structures that implicitly represent social norms. Parents frequently push their children to adhere to social standards in countries where certain occupations or activities are linked with a specific gender. This influences the children's sense of what comprises suitable gender-based conduct. It also comprises the shared views, attitudes, and practices of a particular group of people within a certain social, cultural, or geographic context. Therefore, while discussing how cultural backgrounds impact behaviors or perspectives, what is supposed to be understood are the cultural norms and practices that people are exposed to as a result of their societal or cultural upbringing.

In conclusion, there seems to be a close relationship between the ways in which parental guidance shapes children's gender perspectives and the differences found in different cultural settings. Parents interact differently when it comes to gender, how they voice their thoughts, and how they assist their children in understanding what is expected of them by society. Recognizing these diverse cultural variances is crucial to developing strategies that support healthier environments for children. Through the development of practices that uphold fairness and acceptance, this knowledge facilitates a deeper understanding of gender in a range of cultural situations. Ultimately, this information contributes to the development of environments where children, regardless of their cultural background, may more skillfully and acceptingly navigate.

### **3.6. Implication and future directions**

Understanding the impact of parental behaviors on children's gender views provides important implications for forthcoming interventions and the advancement of society (Smith & Johnson, 2019; Adams et al., 2020). This realization emphasizes how parents have a significant influence on their children's early formation of gender-related attitudes. The study by Smith and Johnson highlights the important role that parental attitudes have in shaping children's perceptions of gender norms in society. In a similar vein, Adams et al. draw attention to the significant impact that parental behaviors have on their gender development, highlighting the significance of addressing these factors in order to create more inclusive environments for children.

Parental educational programs are essential for increasing public understanding of how parental behavior affects how children see gender (Brown & Garcia, 2018). These kinds of programs are vital resources for providing parents with the knowledge they need to establish inclusive environments in their homes. The study by Brown and Garcia clarifies how children's conceptions of gender roles are shaped by the communication methods of their parents. Through an awareness of these factors, interventions can help eradicate gender norms and promote inclusivity and open-mindedness in families (Robinson et al., 2019).

Research exploring the relationship between parental influence and cultural differences, as well as socioeconomic aspects, should direct the creation of targeted tactics to guarantee equity (Chen & Nguyen, 2020). When addressing children's gender preconceptions, Chen and Nguyen's research highlights the significance of taking a variety of family origins and societal situations into perspective. Studies examine the ways in which various factors, such as a family's wealth and origins, might influence the way in which parents raise their children with regard to boys and girls. This can help develop unique strategies to support every family in teaching children about gender equity. Understanding this makes it easier to create plans that work for people from various backgrounds and cultures. It's significant because it implies that gender education programs may be developed that benefit all children, regardless of their backgrounds. Some studies follow children over an extended period of time frame to determine how parents' comments and actions toward boys and girls impact their development. This is extremely significant since it aids in the creation of long-term and age-appropriate plans that benefit children.

According to Brown & Garcia (2018) and Robinson et al. (2019), collaborations among educators, legislators, researchers, and community members are crucial avenues for putting evidence-based strategies into practice. These collaborative initiatives are essential for creating comprehensive protocols that advance gender parity and effect social change within a range of contexts. They represent a thorough and effective approach that promotes inclusive environments and allows children to freely experiment with a range of gender identities and expressions. Such coordinated efforts are essential to creating a more collaborative and inclusive society.

## **4. Conclusion**

The gender ideas that parents teach to their children have a big impact on the inclusive environments and social progress they can achieve. Several studies have demonstrated the significant impact of parental behaviors, highlighting the need for specific approaches that dismiss gender stereotypes and promote a variety of perspectives connected to gender. This acknowledgment emphasizes how important it is to provide parents with the knowledge and abilities to create inclusive environments and positively influence their children's gender perspectives.

These findings suggest that parents may have particular connections between gender, race, ideology, and behavior. Additionally, the complexity of these relationships might impact the messages children pick up about what gender means. It is clear that there is still a great deal to learn about how family structure influences gender development in children. Future research might build on the findings of this study by comparing the traits of early and modern parents over longer periods of time.

In conclusion, the importance of individualized approaches is highlighted by our understanding of how parents shape their children's gender conceptions, particularly in light of various circumstances and childhoods. Understanding the long-lasting effects of parental influence is crucial for the creation of strategies that support children at various developmental stages. In general, collaboration of stakeholders is crucial to the successful implementation of policies that promote inclusiveness and social progress. These programs provide the foundation for encouraging environments where children are encouraged to freely experiment with a variety of gender identities and express themselves without boundaries.

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