

630. Relationship between Gender Role Identity, Attitudes toward Women, and Sexism amongst Teacher-Educators

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Abstract

The present study aimed to assess the relationship between gender role identity, attitudes toward women, and sexism in male and female teacher-educators. The Indian Gender Role Identity Scale (Basu, 2010), Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) were administered to 64 teacher-educators (25 male and 39 female) from West Bengal. Mean, standard deviation, and difference between groups (using Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney U test) were computed. The results revealed that gender role identity (sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated) of the teacher-educators was related to a significant difference in their attitudes toward women. There was also found to be a significant difference in level of sexism present between masculine and feminine teacher-educators irrespective of biological sex. The sexism present in male and female teacher-educators was more of benevolent sexism than hostile sexism. Biological sex did not account for any significant difference in attitudes toward women or sexism present in teacher-educators.

Keywords: Gender, Sexism, Teacher-education

Introduction

Gender issues have risen to the forefront over the years. Many acts of subtle gender discrimination and casual sexism, which were once considered normal, are now being spoken out against. Unlike blatant discrimination like not allowing women to vote or denying them access to education, these subtle acts are difficult to identify because they are so ingrained in the fabric of society. This sexism and gender discrimination not only affects women, but also men. Men are also disadvantaged in many ways because of stereotypes leading to prejudice. For example, in cases of child custody, paternity leave, or sexual harassment cases men are usually at a disadvantage (Benatar, 2021). For society to be truly gender equal, gender sensitization must begin at the grassroots level. Stereotypes, cultural biases, and societal attitudes become ingrained in children much before they reach higher education. They become internalized by the age of seven (Martin & Ruble, 2004) and the long-term effects can be seen by adolescence (Carlson et al., 2004).

Gender and Sex

Sex is a biological feature determined by the presence of male or female genitalia. Gender, on the other hand, is a psychosocial construct of masculinity or femininity which has strong cultural roots (Oakley, 2015). The terms gender and sex are often used interchangeably, but they do hold different meanings. While sex is mostly biological, gender has behavioural, cultural, and psychological implications.

According to the Canadian Institutes of Research, unlike sex, “Gender identity is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man) nor is it static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time. There is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience and express gender through the roles they take on, the expectations placed on them, relations with others and the complex ways that gender is institutionalized in society”.

Gender Roles

From gender extend gender roles. While there are some authors who do use the term sex roles, it is however, more logical to use the term gender roles for the purpose of discussion since 'sex' is being defined as a biological concept and it is gender which is being said to have the psychological and socio-cultural expectations tied to it (Helgeson, 2012). Society expects biological males to be masculine and biological females to be feminine. Hence there are roles assigned to men and women that are deemed masculine and feminine respectively.

Role of Teachers in Gender Socialization

Schools play a major role in reinforcing these gender roles and stereotypes (Duke & McCarthy, 2009; Blumberg, 2008; Blumberg, 2007). In co-educational schools, it is common to see boys being favoured and encouraged for athletics and sports over girls (Braddock et al., 2005; Messner et al. 2003). Studies have shown that while teachers have the intention to be fair and egalitarian in the classroom with their praises and criticisms, they are not immune to the gendered nature of socialization (Chick et. Al., 2002; Delamont, 1996; Golombok&Fivush, 1994). Several studies have pointed out the lack of egalitarian attitudes toward women amongst teachers and teacher-educators (Chakraborty, 2019; Risberg et al., 2008; Christensen & Massey, 1989). Tatar & Emmanuel (2001) in their study investigated Attitudes and perceptions of teacher behaviour regarding students' gender roles. They found that only 15% of teachers had attended courses on gender equality As Aina and Cameron (2011), put it, "While unintentional, a teacher's inherent biases can perpetuate unfair stereotypes and may be manifested in discriminatory classroom practices." Teachers often have a tendency to praise boys more than girls for correct knowledge, but reinforce "good" behaviour more in girls than in boys (Golombok&Fivush, 1994), indicating that it is more important for boys to have more knowledge and for girls to have better behaviour. Chick et al. (2002) emphasised the importance of language used by teachers in reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes.

Thus, while teachers may be carrying their own attitudes and prejudices regarding gender since their childhood, they must become aware and sensitized towards gender issues during their training as teachers, since their verbal and non-verbal cues have a lasting impact on children.

Importance of Teacher-educators in Gender Sensitization

Teachers are trained by teacher-educators. According to O'Reilly and Borman (2010), "Teacher education in most institutions of higher learning reinforces the already existing sexist attitudes of many undergraduates. Most graduates go forth from their teacher education programs with a sex-role ideology firmly in place that will perpetuate the status quo." Hence, the role of teacher-educators in breaking this vicious cycle of sexism and gender-stereotyping becomes paramount. Teacher-education focuses on training teachers to teach better. However, a teacher's job is not only to impart knowledge of facts, rather to aid the holistic development of a well-adjusted individual. Thus, the curriculum of teacher-education must inculcate gender sensitization in some form so as to help teacher-educators overcome their own sexism, gender biases and stereotypes, if present (Sharma, 2017).

The objective of the present study is to determine whether there exists any relationship between gender role identity of teacher educators and their attitude toward women and sexism in them. The study also aims to see if biological sex has any relation with these variables.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There exists no significant difference in attitude toward women between teacher-educators who have a sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity

Ho 2. There exists no significant difference in sexism between teacher-educators who have a sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity

Ho 3. There exists no significant difference in attitude toward women between Masculine and Feminine teacher-educators

Ho 4. There exists no significant difference in sexism between Masculine and Feminine teacher-educators

Ho 5. There exists no significant difference in attitude towards women between male and female teacher-educators

Ho 6. There exists no significant difference in sexism between male and female teacher-educators

Method

Variables

Gender role identity: Gender role identity refers to the individual's perception of the self as psychologically masculine or feminine (Helgeson, 2001). Gender role identity can be divided into four categories namely, masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated (Bem, 1981, Basu, 2010). Males who adhere to their masculine gender roles and females who adhere to their feminine gender roles are said to be sexed-typed. Individuals who have equal amounts of masculinity and femininity are said to be androgynous, while those who adhere to neither, are undifferentiated. Feminine males and masculine females are labelled cross-sex-typed (Bem, 1981; Basu, 2010; Helgeson, 2001).

Attitudes toward women: These include the ideas, beliefs, and feelings that individuals have about women. Attitudes toward women are not only about being negative or positive, but also egalitarian and hierarchical. An individual may not harbour negative attitudes toward women but may still not consider them to be equal to men. In the present study, attitudes toward women are being studied on this dimension of hierarchical (traditional) vs egalitarian (liberal) which do not necessarily translate into negative vs positive attitudes.

Sexism: Sexism refers to prejudice and discrimination against an individual because of their sex. Sexism can affect anyone, but it primarily affects [women](#) and [girls](#) (New Oxford American Dictionary 3 ed., 2010; Cudd & Jones, 2005). Sexism is evident in many ways. It can manifest itself in the form of sexist jokes, stereotypical depiction in film and television shows, objectification, prejudice, and outright discrimination. Various studies have shown that a significant amount of sexism against women exists in India (Jain et al., 2020; Goel, 2018; Hill & Marshall, 2018). In the present study both benevolent and hostile sexism have been measured. Glick and Fiske (1996), proposed the concept of benevolent and hostile sexism. Hostile sexism involves negativity toward women who violate gender norms while benevolent sexism is the encouragement or preferential treatment of women who fulfil traditional gender roles. Benevolent sexism can be more insidious but equally harmful, if not more so. This is because, while hostile sexism is outright negativity for which the perpetrator can be called out, benevolent sexism is often hidden under the guise of caring, for example, not choosing female students for out-of-town events and competitions out of concern for their safety. Thus, individuals with benevolent sexism rarely subjectively report negative attitudes toward women. This sexism and gender discrimination not only affects women, but also men. The portrayal of women as weak and men as strong, is unfair to men and women both. Men are also disadvantaged in many ways because of stereotypes leading to prejudice. For example, in cases of child custody, paternity leave, or sexual harassment cases men are usually at a disadvantage (Benatar, 2021).

Sampling technique

Convenience sampling was used to collect data for the present study. Data for the present study was collected between April to May 2021. During this period educational institutions were closed due to the ongoing SARS-Covid-2 pandemic. Hence, teacher-educators from various colleges

and Universities in West Bengal whose contact information was easily available were reached out to for data.

Sample

The sample comprised 25 male and 39 female teacher-educators from different teacher-education institutions in West Bengal. Teachers teaching B.Ed. and or M.Ed. courses in Colleges or Universities. 'Teacher' includes Guest lecturers, State Aided College Teachers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Professors, and Principals. Since data was collected using Google forms, signing in via a Google account was made mandatory to ensure authenticity of the respondent. Hence, only those individuals having a Google account could be included in the sample.

Procedure

The present study used quantitative techniques to measure the relationship between gender role identity, sex, attitude toward women, and sexism. The Indian Gender Role Identity Scale, Attitudes toward women scale, and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, along with an Information Schedule prepared for this study, were used for data collection. The scales were converted to Google forms and the link was shared via email and WhatsApp application with teacher-educators. The respondents had to sign in via their Google Accounts in order to access the forms. This ensured authenticity of the respondent and avoided double-filling for forms by any single respondent.

Tools

Information schedule: An information schedule seeking personal, familial, and smartphone usage information was used for data collection.

Indian gender role identity scale: Basu, J., (2010). Reliability: Chronbach's Alpha for Femininity scale is 0.89 and for masculinity is 0.85 The inter-correlation between the masculinity and femininity scales is 0.03. A high score in Masculinity indicates Masculine gender role identity, a high score in Femininity indicates Feminine gender role identity, an Androgenous identity is indicated by equally high M and F scores. Low M and F scores indicate Undifferentiated gender role identity.

Attitudes toward women scale: Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R. (1978). The pretest alpha, pretest split-half, and test-retest reliabilities for the 15-item scale were .81, .83, and .86, respectively (Colleen et al., 1986). Higher scores indicate more egalitarian attitudes.

The ambivalent sexism inventory: Glick, P., and Fiske, S. T. (1996) The scale had high internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = 0.83). The ASI correlated .60 -with the sex-role stereotyping of Burt (1980). Higher the score, the greater is the degree sexism present.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Percentage of male and female teacher-educators with sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity

	Male	Female	Male and Female Combined
Sex-typed	40%	35.9%	37.5%
Cross-sex-typed	36%	35.9%	35.9%
Androgenous	8%	17.9%	14.06%
Undifferentiated	16%	10.3%	12.5%

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of scores obtained by male and female teacher-educators on Attitudes toward women scale and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

	Male		Female	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Attitude Toward Women	35.52	11.11	33.61	8.8
Hostile Sexism	26.44	9.34	21.87	8.48
Benevolent Sexism	30.64	9.39	28.20	8.96
Sexism (aggregate)	57.08	15.38	50.07	14.08

- Higher the score on the Attitudes toward women scale, more egalitarian the attitude toward women.
- Higher the score on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, greater the presence of sexism

Table 3. Results of the Kruskal Wallis Test to determine difference in Attitude toward women and sexism between teacher-educators with Sex-typed, Cross-sex-typed gender role identity, Androgenous, and Undifferentiated (*Based on IGRIS results) respondents N=64

	Test Statistics	Gender Role Identity	N	Mean Rank
AWS		Sex-typed	24	25.06
		Cross-sex-typed	23	32.48
		Androgenous	9	50.06
		Undifferentiated	8	35.13
Chi square	12.216			
Df	3			
Asymp. Sig.	.007*			
SEXISM		Sex-typed	24	39.13
		Cross-sex-typed	23	27.22
		Androgenous	9	30.11
		Undifferentiated	8	30.50
Chi square	5.137			
Df	3			
Asymp. Sig.	.162			

*Significant at 0.01 level

- There exists a significant difference in attitude toward women between teacher-educators who have a sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity

- There exists no significant difference in sexism between teacher-educators who have a sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity

Table 4. Results of the Kruskal Wallis Test to determine difference in Attitude toward women and sexism between Masculine* and Feminine* (*Based on IGRIS results) respondents N=47

	Test Statistic	Binary Gender	N	Mean Rank
AWS		Masculine	24	23.52
		Feminine	23	24.50
Chi square	.061			
Df	1			
Asymp. Sig.	.804			
SEXISM		Masculine	24	20.00
		Feminine	23	28.17
		Total	47	
Chi square	4.179			
Df	1			
Asymp. Sig.	.041**			

**Significant at the 0.05 level

- There exists no significant difference in attitude toward women between Masculine and Feminine teacher-educators
- There exists a significant difference in sexism between Masculine and Feminine teacher-educators

5. Test results of Mann-Whitney U test to determinedifference in Attitude toward women and sexism between male and female teacher-educators

	Test Statistics	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
AWS		Male	25	34.50	862.50
		Female	39	31.22	1217.50
Mann-Whitney U	437.500				
Wilcoxon W	1217.500				
Z	-.694				
Asymp. Sig. (two-tailed)	.487				

	Male	25	37.94	948.50
SEXISM	Female	39	29.01	1131.50
Mann-Whitney U		351.500		
Wilcoxon W		1131.500		
Z		-1.873		
Asymp. Sig. (two-tailed)		.061		

- There exists no significant difference in attitude towards women between male and female teacher-educators
- There exists no significant difference in sexism between male and female teacher-educators

The present study sought to determine the gender role identity of male and female teacher-educators in West Bengal. It was found that 40% male teacher-educators had a sex-typed gender role identity as compared to 36% female teacher-educators. A higher percentage (18%) of female teacher-educators on the other hand, were found to have androgenous gender role identity as compared to only 8% male teacher-educators. More male teacher-educators were found to be undifferentiated in their gender role identity (16%) compared to female teacher-educators (10%). Percentage of male and female teacher-educators having cross-sex-typed gender role identity was found to be equal (36%). Sex-typed individuals are those whose gender role identity conforms to the socio-cultural expectations from their biological sex. Thus, a male with a masculine gender role identity and a female with a feminine gender role identity are sex-typed. Cross-sex-typed on the other hand refers to feminine males and masculine females. Androgenous individuals possess both masculine and feminine traits equally, while undifferentiated gender role identity refers to having low masculine and feminine traits (Helgeson, 2012, Basu, 2010). According to Bem (1974, 1975), androgyny is the ideal since androgenous individuals possess the socially desirable traits of both masculinity and femininity. Bem (1975), also stated that androgenous individuals have the highest level of psychological adjustment and demonstrate behavioural flexibility. She theorized that androgenous individuals do not perceive the world in terms of gender. Gender is not the guiding principle for such individuals when they think about the world. Since they possess masculine and feminine traits equally, they can perform in any situation. In a study conducted on college students in 1984, Bem found that sex-typed individuals are more likely to organise groups of others in terms of gender as compared to androgenous individuals. sex-typed individuals prefer to engage in behaviour consistent with their gender role and feel more uncomfortable performing gender role- inconsistent behaviour (Bem, 1984, as cited in Helgeson, 2012). Hence, according to the findings of the present study, 37.5% teacher-educators view the world (which includes students) in terms of gender and are uncomfortable with gender inconsistency. Frable (1989) conducted three studies to assess the relationship between sex-typing and gender ideology and found that sex-typed individuals were particularly likely to pay attention spontaneously to the sex of job applicants and then to devalue the interview performances of women. Only 14% teacher-educators are androgenous in their gender role identity and show flexibility in their own performance of gender roles and are also more accepting of flexible gender roles in others. 36% teacher-educators are cross-sex-typed in their gender role identity. Cross-sex-typed people also view the world in terms of gender, only, in their own case,

adhere to norms of the other sex (Bem, 1981). Cross-sex-typed individuals are however, more likely than sex-typed individuals to endorse information inconsistent with their gender-role schema (Bem, 1981). 12.5% teacher-educators have undifferentiated gender role identity. According to Bem (1981) and Helgeson (2012), undifferentiated individuals have the least level of adjustment out of all four gender role identity categories.

Mean scores of the respondents on the Attitudes toward Women Scale indicated that male teacher-educators have more egalitarian attitudes toward women as compared to female teacher-educators (35.5 for males and 33.6 for females). However, further statistical analysis showed that the difference between male and female teacher-educators in their attitude toward women is not significant. Male teacher-educators also scored higher than female teacher-educators on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (57 for males and 50 for females), indicating that they have higher levels of sexism. The mean score for male teacher-educators on this scale was also higher than the median (55) indicating their sexism level to be high. Further statistical analysis on this too showed that the difference between male and female teacher-educators is not significant. Hence, biological sex, was not found to have any significant relationship with attitude toward women or sexism. This is consistent with the definition of 'sex' as biological construct which differentiates it from the sociopsychological construct of gender. Markus et al. (1982) through their studies noted that irrespective of their biological sex, persons with masculine characteristics would process the information associated with the masculine stereotype from their own schema, feminine persons would use their schema with the information associated with the feminine condition, androgynous persons would do it with both types of information, and undifferentiated persons would not process any information schematically. It is gender which has social, cultural, and psychological aspects linked to it while sex is simply the presence of male or female genitalia (Helgeson, 2012). Moore et al. (1987), in a study showed that men and women with traditional views of women's roles equally found sexist jokes disparaging women to be funnier than non-sexist jokes. There was no sex difference in this regard. However, the study showed that men and women with less traditional views of women's roles in society did not find the sexist jokes to be funnier than non-sexist ones. Hence, what made a difference was not biological sex, but the respondents' views about women and gender roles. This is consistent with the findings of this study.

The present study found a significant difference in attitude toward women amongst teacher-educators based on sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated gender role identity. While a lower score on the Attitudes toward Women Scale does not necessarily mean negative or hostile attitude, it certainly does indicate a less egalitarian one (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). The study also found a significant difference in sexism present between teacher-educators with masculine and feminine gender role identity. Glick et al. (2015), suggested that masculine identification generally promotes favouritism toward traditional male and (like benevolent sexism) traditional female subtypes, rather than (as hostile sexism does) derogation toward non-traditional subtypes. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have found gender identity to be related to sexism and attitudes toward women in general (Robinson & Schwartz, 2004; Toller et al, 2004). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory measures both benevolent and hostile sexism. While hostile sexism is indicative of outright hostility toward women, benevolent sexism actually indicates a positive prosocial attitude toward women (rooted in the patriarchal belief that women need protection/help from men). While the problems of hostile sexism are openly visible and make it more easily identifiable and may even be reported more often, benevolent sexism may not be so easily reported since it is in the guise of 'helping' women. In the present study, the hostile sexism score of teacher-educators was found to be below the median but benevolent sexism score was above median for male as well as female teacher educators. According to Helgeson (2012), "Benevolent

sexism is a harmful attitude because it is rooted in the belief that women are less competent than men and are in need of men's help." Thus, while the respondents (who are teacher-educators) may not be hostile towards their female students or women in general, their sexism may translate into transmission of traditional and conservative gender roles for them through verbal and non-verbal cues. Benevolent sexism is often not viewed as discriminatory because it has positive connotations, i.e., the discrimination is done out of care and respect; for example, not selecting girls for sports out of concern for their health, or discouraging girls from taking because the up a profession work environment is too stressful or there are safety concerns (Glick et al., 1997). Hence, instead of working toward creating a more equitable and safer environment, it is the freedom of the girls that is curbed. Such restrictions are then internalised by the girls and they begin to believe that sports, certain subjects, certain professions etc. are not suited for them or they are not suited for those.

Studies have shown time and again that teachers' attitudes toward women and gender role stereotypes in the classroom affect the academic performance and achievement of primarily girl students (Alan et. Al, 2018; Agarwal & Shukla 2017; Huguet & Régner, 2007; Neuville & Croizet, 2007). Sexism and non-egalitarian attitudes toward women amongst teachers have a direct and long-lasting impact on their students. Teachers are not just imparters of knowledge, but a major part of the socialization and development of children. Hence, the teacher-education system must prepare teachers and teacher-educators to cater to all aspects of the development of a child.

The National Policy of Education 2020 aims to make major changes to teacher-education. The policy recognises the importance of socio-emotional learning and holistic development. Teacher-education can only be said to be truly complete if this critical aspect of teacher-student interactions in addressed in the curriculum or through additional seminars and workshops. Hence, the findings of the present study are useful for policy makers, curriculum designers, and teacher-educators themselves, who may have been largely unaware of their own attitudes and stereotypical beliefs about gender and sexism.

Conclusion

The present study found that majority of male and female teacher-educators have sex-typed gender role identity. More female teacher-educators have androgenous gender-role identity than males. Level of sexism in male teacher-educators is above the median. Level of benevolent sexism is above the median for male and female teacher-educators. Sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgenous, and undifferentiated gender role identity of teacher-educators has a relationship with their attitude toward women. Masculine and feminine gender role identity of teacher-educators has a relationship with their level of sexism.

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