

## **Factors Affecting Attitude of University Students towards Gender Roles- A Study of Punjab, India**

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### **Abstract**

*In order to promote gender equality, it is necessary to understand people's attitude and reasoning regarding gender roles. The present study attempted to examine the factors that contribute in shaping the attitude of University students towards gender roles. For this purpose, a survey was conducted by taking a sample of 200 Punjabi students (100 females and 100 males) aged between 20 and 28 years from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Purposive and random sampling methods were used. The study revealed that factors such as birth order, mother's education, social interaction and involvement in extra-curricular activities were found to have a positive and significant correlation with the gender role attitude of the respondents. Contrastingly, factors such as age, gender socialization by parents and gender discriminatory experiences faced by the students had a negative impact on their attitude. Furthermore, parenting type of the parents and caste of the respondents had a significant association with the gender role attitude of the respondents. The study suggested that mother's education of students may be considered as a critical step towards nurturing gender sensitized society along with encouraging students about social interaction and active involvement in extra-curricular activities.*

**Keywords:** Education, Gender, Modernization, Training

**JEL Classification:** H75, J16, Z 13, M 53

### **Introduction**

Humans socially construct the idea of gender through their interactions with one another and with their surroundings. Gender roles are the outcome of interactions between people and their environment and provide cues about the kind of behaviour that is believed to be appropriate for each sex. The term "gender-role attitudes" refers to perceptions and beliefs about the distinctive roles that men and women play. These attitudes fall along a continuum, with traditional perceptions of gender roles at one extreme and liberal perception at the other (Korabiket *et al* 2008). Researchers have put forward three types of attitudes on gender roles based on the sociological literature: a traditionalistic i.e. segregated, non-egalitarian type; a non-traditionalistic i.e. shared, egalitarian and transitional type (Helgeson 2012).

Traditionally, many western societies were of the opinion that women are of more caring nature than men. "Traditionalists" hold the view that males should support the family financially as "breadearners" and "household

heads," while women should take care of children at home and do majority of the domestic tasks. However, a liberalizing trend towards gender egalitarianism has been found in some countries since the 1960s (Cotter *et al* 2011). Since women entered the workforce and now outnumber men in higher education, gender roles have changed for both the sexes, with men becoming more and more involved in childcare and domestic duties (Hook 2010). Liberal gender attitudes can be viewed as a more advanced stage of egalitarian gender role attitudes, which support and encourage men and women to play equal and shared roles in raising families and making a living (Lorber 1994). However, another type of attitude also exists in society i.e. transitional attitude. Traditional and egalitarian gender role attitude together combine to form transitional gender-role attitude (Helgeson 2012; Hochschild and Machung 1989). It is that attitude which makes it acceptable for women to dedicate time for both work and family responsibilities. But at the same time, it approves that men should put proportionately more effort into their careers and women should proportionately be more responsible for the household work. Interestingly, a study conducted in India

by Pareek and Jain (2019) reported transitional gender role attitude among majority of the respondents.

With an average yearly GDP growth rate of 8.3 per cent in 2021, India's economic position has undergone a significant change. However, India stands at 135<sup>th</sup> out of 146 in Global Gender Gap Index (Global Gender Gap Report 2022) and 132<sup>nd</sup> out of 191 countries and territories in Human development. (Human Development Report, 2022). Looking into the Indian scenario it becomes necessary to explore this issue currently so as to know attitude of youth who are the torchbearers for the growth and development of the nation.

By investigating the personal, familial and social factors, this paper explores the factors that lead to molding the attitude of University students towards gender roles. In the literature, various factors could be found which include age of individuals, parents' childrearing style, their education and employment and also sometimes their own attitude towards gender roles. To awaken the society, the youth are to be awakened at the first place. Also, in order to pioneer the policies that should be redesigned to prevent gender inequality and discrimination, social gender roles must be re-evaluated in educational institutions and determination of attitudes towards gender roles and reasoning regarding gender roles.

### Data Sources and Methodology

The present study was conducted in PAU, Ludhiana. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for the current study. The students of Punjab Agricultural University who belonged to Punjab state were purposively selected for the study in order to control the effect of culture on the attitude of University students. For this purpose, a list of Punjabi students studying in BSc final year, MSc and PhD programmes was prepared. From the list, 100 male and 100 female students were randomly selected for the study which made up a total sample of 200 students.

The present study and was based on primary data. The data for the was collected personally from the respondents with the help of a pre-tested structured questionnaire. The collected data was compiled and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to yield information relevant and consistent with the objectives of the study. The data was analyzed using statistical tools like frequency distribution, percentage, category interval method to classify the respondents into different categories, Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation to study the degree of relationship between respondents' personal profile, family profile, social profile, gender socialization and gender discriminatory experiences with their gender role attitude, chi square test to find out the association between personal, family and social profile with gender role attitude of the respondents and multiple regression analysis was applied to describe the contribution of impact of the independent

variables on the attitude of the respondents towards gender roles.

The dependent variable used in the study was attitude of the respondents towards gender roles. The independent variables used in the study were classified into personal, familial, social and gender specific variables which includes age, residential area, birth order, residential type, degree enrolled, latest OCPA, type of school attended, gender studies in school curriculum, type and size of family, number of males and females in the family, education and occupation of mother and father, parenting type, caste and income of the family, interaction with family, friends, relatives and advisors, involvement in sports/ cultural activities, NGO/ Youth Clubs, gender socialization and gender discriminatory experience of the respondents.

Attitude of the respondents was studied with reference to traditional versus egalitarian attitude. An attitude scale with the statements on different gender roles was developed to study the attitude of youth towards gender roles. The responses were sought on a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with scores 1 to 5. Based on the scores of the respondents, the attitude of the respondents was studied as traditional, transitional and egalitarian attitude as follows:

Attitude category	Pro-ductive roles	Repro-ductive roles	House-hold and commu-nity roles	Political roles	Overall roles
Traditional	10-23.3	8-18.7	18-42	9-21	45-105
Transitional	23.4-36.6	18.8-29.4	43-66	22-33	106-165
Egalitarian	36.7-50	29.5-40	67-90	34-45	166-225

### Results and Discussion

#### Personal factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles

The finding of the study showed that majority of the respondents (74.20%) in the age group of 20-22 years had egalitarian gender role attitude. Also, age and gender role attitude of the respondents had a significant but a negative correlation ( $r = -0.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This is in line with various study findings which revealed that with respect to age, younger respondents have a less traditional perception of the division of labour between men and women than the older ones (Knudsen and Wareness, 2001). Thus, it can be concluded that respondents with younger age tend to have more egalitarian attitude in comparison to the respondents in the elder age group category.

Further, majority of the third born respondents (66.67%) had egalitarian attitude towards gender roles. Also data revealed that birth order had a significant and positive correlation ( $r = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with the attitude of the

**Table1. Relationship of personal factors with attitude of the respondents**

Sl No	Parameters	Traditional		Transitional		Egalitarian		$\chi^2$ value	“r” value
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
I	<b>Age (years)</b>								
	20-22	2	3.22	14	22.58	46	74.20	-	-0.39**
	23-25	11	11.96	40	43.48	41	58.70		
	26-28	5	10.87	27	44.56	14	30.43		
II	<b>Residential status</b>								
	Rural	9	10	32	35.56	49	54.44	1.67	-
	Urban	9	8.18	49	44.54	52	47.28		
III	<b>Birth order</b>								
	First	11	10	54	49.09	45	40.09	-	0.21**
	Second	6	7.90	24	31.58	46	60.53		
	Third	1	8.33	3	25	8	66.67		
	Fourth	1	50.00	0	0	1	50.00		
IV	<b>Residential type</b>								
	Hosteller	3	9.09	16	48.49	14	42.42	2.06	-
	Day scholar	15	8.98	65	38.92	87	52.10		
V	<b>Degree enrolled</b>								
	Bachelors	2	3.27	14	22.95	45	73.77	-	-0.27**
	Masters	8	10.81	35	47.30	31	41.89		
	PhD	8	12.30	32	49.23	25	38.46		
VI	<b>Latest Overall Cresent Point Average (OCPA)</b>								
	5.59-6.72	1	16.67	4	66.66	1	16.67	-	-0.04
	6.73-7.85	7	9.09	32	41.56	38	49.35		
	7.86-8.98	10	8.54	45	38.46	62	53.00		
VII	<b>Type of school attended</b>								
	Co-educational	5	2.59	71	36.78	117	60.62	5.47	-
	Single sex	3	42.85	3	42.85	1	14.29		
VIII	<b>Gender studies in school curriculum</b>								
	Studied	4	7.84	23	45.10	24	47.06	0.61	-
	Not studied	14	9.40	58	38.92	77	51.67		

Note: \*\*, \* 1% and 5 % level of significance

respondents indicating that with increasing birth order of the respondents, attitude inclines towards egalitarianism. The second, third and fourth born respondents had comparatively more egalitarian attitude compared to the first born respondents.

Furthermore, data showed that majority of the people who participated in the study were enrolled in Masters programme followed by PhD students and Bachelors students. A majority of the students (73.77%) pursuing bachelor's degree were inclined towards egalitarian attitude. Interestingly, a significant and negative correlation ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was

observed between degree of enrollment and gender role attitude of the respondents. This might indicate that school and University education does not necessarily contribute to the egalitarian attitude of an individual which highlights the need of working on the sensitization of educated people as well and also including gender sensitization courses in school curriculum. While a study by Blau and Kahn (2006) established that 'traditionalism' is inversely related to level of qualifications: those with the highest levels of qualifications are the least 'traditionalistic' which contradict the present study findings.

Table 2. Family factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles

Sl No	Parameters	Traditional		Transitional		Egalitarian		$\chi^2$ value	“r” value
		F	%	f	%	F	%		
I	<b>Type of family</b>								
	Joint	2	10.52	1	5.27	16	84.21	11.22	-
	Nuclear	16	8.83	80	44.20	85	46.96		
II	<b>Size of family (No.)</b>								
	Small	10	9.90	49	48.51	42	41.59	-	-0.04
	Medium	8	8.51	32	34.04	54	57.45		
	Large	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	100.00		
III	<b>Number of males and females in the family</b>								
	Male majority	6	8.82	24	35.30	38	55.88	2.06	-
	Female majority	7	7.95	40	45.45	41	46.60		
IV	<b>Mother's education</b>								
	Primary	0	0.00	1	25.00	3	75.00	-	0.241**
	Middle	1	16.66	4	66.67	1	16.66		
	Matriculation	2	5.72	12	34.28	21	60.00		
	Senior secondary	4	9.77	23	56.09	14	34.14		
	Diploma holder	3	37.5	2	25.00	3	37.50		
	Graduate	7	9.73	31	43.05	34	47.22		
	Post graduate	1	2.94	8	23.52	25	73.52		
V	<b>Father's education</b>								
	Primary	0	0.00	2	100.00	0	0.00	-	0.185
	Middle	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	100.00		
	Matriculation	6	17.64	14	41.18	14	41.18		
	Senior secondary	7	9.33	32	42.67	36	48.00		
	Diploma holder	0	0.00	2	33.33	4	66.67		
	Graduate	4	9.09	21	47.73	19	43.18		
	Post graduate	1	2.78	10	27.78	25	69.44		
	PhD	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100.00		
VI	<b>Type of parenting</b>								
	Authoritarian	8	13.11	34	55.73	19	31.14	14.44*	-
	Permissive	8	6.25	47	36.72	73	57.03		
	Uninvolved	19	31.14	73	57.03	7	63.63		
VII	<b>Occupation of mother</b>								
	Agriculture	4	22.22	2	11.11	12	66.67	-	12.09
	Business	2	5.12	13	33.33	24	61.53		
	Homemaker	7	8.98	41	52.56	30	38.46		
	Labour	1	20.00	2	40.00	2	40.00		
	Service	4	6.66	23	38.33	33	55.00		
VIII	<b>Occupation of father</b>								
	Agriculture	2	7.69	5	19.23	19	73.08	11.22	-
	Business	9	12.00	34	45.34	32	42.66		
	Service	2	16.67	3	25.00	7	58.33		
	Labour	5	5.74	39	44.83	43	49.43		
IX	<b>Caste</b>								
	General	5	3.84	46	35.39	79	60.77	22.18 *	-
	OBC	12	19.67	31	50.83	18	29.50		
	SC	1	11.10	4	44.45	4	44.45		

Note: \*\*, \* 1% and 5% level of significance

While the factors which included residential area, residential type, latest OCPA, type of school attended and gender studies in school curriculum when analyzed showed to have a non-significant relationship or association with the gender role attitude of the respondents.

#### **Family factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles**

Analysis of the respondents in relation to their mother's education shows that a large proportion of the respondents' mothers who were post graduates (73.52%) had an egalitarian attitude. The correlation analysis shows that a significant positive correlation ( $r=0.241$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) exists between education of the mothers and gender role attitude of the respondents which implies that more the years or levels of mother's education, more likely are the children to endorse egalitarian gender roles. The majority of studies found that higher the mother's educational attainment, the more egalitarian her children's attitudes will be (Cunningham, 2001).

Further, more than half of the respondents (55.73%) whose parents were authoritarian had transitional gender role. Meanwhile majority of the respondents who have experienced permissive type of parenting (57.03%) and uninvolved parenting (63.63%) believed in egalitarianism. However, a significant association ( $\chi^2=14.44$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) was found between parenting and gender role attitude of the respondents. The findings are in line with the study of Carine and Janssens (1998) who reported that mother's child-rearing style do influence the gender role attitudes a daughter develops.

Majority of the general caste respondents (60.77%) had reported to endorse egalitarian gender roles. On chi-square analysis, it was found that both the variables had a significant association between family caste and attitude of the respondents ( $\chi^2=22.18$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Better education and employment opportunities of the general caste category might be one of the causes of more respondents having egalitarian attitude.

On the other hand, the factors which included type and size of family, number of males and females in the family, education and occupation of father, occupation of father, family annual income, when analyzed showed to have a non-significant relationship or association with the gender role attitude of the respondents.

#### **Social factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles**

More than half of the respondents who had interaction daily (57.50%) with their families had positive attitude towards egalitarian gender roles while majority of them having interaction occasionally (66.67%) had transitional attitude. The correlation analysis also revealed that frequency of interaction of respondents with families had a positive and significant relationship ( $r=0.58$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with their gender

role attitude (Table 3).

Again, a large majority of the respondents (79.31%) who interacted with their friends on a daily basis had egalitarian attitude towards gender roles. Furthermore, majority of the respondents who interacted occasionally (83.34%) had transitional attitude towards gender roles. A significant positive relationship ( $r=0.43$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) was observed between frequency of interaction of respondents with their friends and their attitudes towards gender roles.

A large proportion of respondents had interaction with their advisors on an occasional basis. However, majority of the respondents who had frequent (69.57%) interaction with their advisors supported egalitarian gender roles. A significant positive correlation ( $r=0.17$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) was found between the frequency of interaction of respondents with their advisors and their attitudes for gender roles. The findings implied that more the interaction of respondents with their advisors, more the respondents had egalitarian attitude. This suggests that advisors have an influence on the attitude of the University students towards gender roles.

More than half of the respondents rarely had involvement in sports/ cultural activities. Two third of the respondents (66.15%) who reported frequent involvement endorsed egalitarian gender roles. However, analysis indicated that respondents' involvement in sports/ cultural activities was positively and significantly correlated ( $r=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) with the gender role attitude of the respondents. This suggests that students should be encouraged to participate in sports/ cultural activities in order to mould egalitarian gender attitude towards gender roles.

#### **Gender specific factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles**

The data given in the Table 4 depict that more than half of the respondents were less gender socialized. A large majority of the respondents (82.36%) who were not gender socialized had egalitarian attitude towards gender roles while majority of the moderately socialized respondents (65.91%) had transitional attitude towards gender roles. Correlation between gender socialization with attitude of the respondents was found to be negatively significant ( $r=-0.38$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This indicates that least a person internalizes gender social norms, which teaches traditional gender roles, more likely the person is inclined towards egalitarian gender roles. Gibbonset al. (1997) revealed that egalitarianism in gender-role attitudes is constructed through socialization processes that begin in early childhood and continue throughout the individual's entire lifecycle. Thus it is suggested to introduce egalitarian gender roles to children through socialization process.

A majority of those not experiencing gender discriminatory experiences (83.33%) were inclined towards egalitarian gender roles. Among those respondents having less gender discriminatory experiences, majority of them

**Table 3. Social factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles**

Sl No	Parameters	Traditional		Transitional		Egalitarian		“r” value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
I	<b>Interaction with family</b>							
	Discuss issues daily	3	3.75	31	38.75	46	57.50	0.58**
	Frequently	8	10.38	26	33.77	43	55.85	
	Occasionally	0	0.00	12	66.67	6	33.33	
	Rarely	3	18.75	9	56.25	4	25.00	
Not at all	4	44.44	3	33.33	2	22.23		
II	<b>Interaction with friends</b>							
	Discuss issues daily	1	1.72	11	18.97	46	79.31	0.43**
	Frequently	11	10.28	44	41.12	52	48.60	
	Occasionally	3	12.50	20	83.34	1	4.16	
	Rarely	2	22.22	6	66.67	1	11.11	
Not at all	1	50.00	0	0.00	1	50.00		
III	<b>Interaction with relatives</b>							
	Discuss issues daily	0	0	1	100.00	0	0.00	-0.12
	Frequently	3	12.50	10	41.67	11	45.83	
	Occasionally	8	12.50	21	32.82	35	54.68	
	Rarely	4	6.45	30	48.39	28	45.16	
Not at all	3	6.12	19	38.78	27	55.10		
IV	<b>Interaction with advisors</b>							
	Discuss issues daily	2	22.22	4	44.45	3	33.33	0.17*
	Frequently	0	0.00	14	30.43	32	69.57	
	Occasionally	9	10.34	32	36.78	46	52.88	
	Rarely	4	12.12	17	51.51	12	36.37	
Not at all	3	12.00	14	56.00	8	32.00		
V	<b>Involvement in NGO/ Youth Club</b>							
	Frequently	1	4.16	5	20.83	18	75.00	0.16
	Rarely	6	6.12	37	37.75	55	55.13	
Not at all	11	14.10	39	50.00	28	35.90		
VI	<b>Involvement in sports/ cultural activities</b>							
	Frequently	2	3.07	20	30.77	43	66.15	0.21*
	Rarely	13	11.92	49	44.96	47	43.12	
Not at all	3	11.54	12	46.15	11	42.30		

\*\*1% level of significance \*5% level of significance

(66.15%) had egalitarian attitude. The correlation analysis shows a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the attitude of the respondents and their gender discriminatory experiences. This implies that lesser the gender discriminatory experiences faced by the respondents in their early age, the more they had egalitarian attitude towards gender roles.

#### **Factors contributing to the building of gender role attitude of University students**

The above findings give an idea about the factors which have a relation with molding of the attitude of the students. Those are age, birth order, mother's education, interaction with family, friends and advisors, involvement with cultural/ sports activities, gender socialization and

**Table 4. Gender specific factors affecting attitude of the respondents towards gender roles**

Sl. No	Parameters	Traditional		Transitional		Egalitarian		“r” value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
I	<b>Gender socialization</b>							
	Not gender socialized	1	2.94	5	14.70	28	82.36	-0.38*
	Less gender socialized	10	9.26	40	37.03	58	53.70	
	Moderately gender socialized	5	11.37	29	65.91	10	22.72	
Highly gender socialized	2	14.28	7	50	5	35.72		
II	<b>Gender discriminatory experience</b>							
	Not experienced	0	0	1	16.67	5	83.33	-0.45*
	Less experienced	5	3.87	39	30	86	66.15	
	Moderately experienced	13	20.32	41	64.06	10	15.62	

Note: \*\*, \* 1% and 5 % level of significance

gender discriminating experiences of the respondents. Table 5 highlights the variables that significantly contributed to the formation of gender role attitudes of University students. Variation in attitude towards gender roles by the selected independent variables was explained to the extent of 45.70 per cent.

The variable that most describes the dependent variable is the frequency of interaction with family of the respondents ( $t=9.96$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The variables- age, gender socialization and gender discriminating experiences contributed negatively which means that with increase in the unit of variables by one per cent, the resultant overall attitude of the respondents becomes traditional. On the other hand, some other variables like mother's education, interaction with family and friends and involvement with cultural/ sports activities contributed positively to the gender role attitude of the respondents meaning that with the increase in these variables by one per

cent, the resultant overall attitude of the respondents becomes egalitarian.

### Conclusions and Policy Implications

Social factors such as interaction with family, friends and advisors as well as involvement in sports/ cultural activities were significantly and positively correlated with the attitude of the respondents. Thus, students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities as well for frequent social interactions. Findings also show that gender socialization and gender discriminatory experiences of an individual does play a role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles. Thus, it can be suggested that the parents who are the major agents of socialization process should be sensitized to promote gender egalitarianism since childhood. Additionally, more emphasis should be given on girls' education who are future mothers and can inculcate egalitarian attitude in their

**Table 5. Multiple regression analysis for factors affecting gender role attitude of University students**

Independent variable	Regression coefficient	Standard error	't' value
Age	-5.54**	0.93	5.91
Birth order	2.092	3.627	0.577
Mother's education	5.234**	1.485	3.525
Interaction with family	17.31**	1.74	9.96
Interaction with friends	12.61**	1.90	6.61
Interaction with advisors/ teachers	3.34	2.27	1.47
Involvement with cultural/ sports activities	11.20**	3.55	3.15
Gender socialization	-4.09**	0.58	6.93
Gender discriminating experience	-4.34**	0.5	8.34
R <sup>2</sup>	0.4570		

Note: \*\*, \* 1% and 5 % level of significance

children since mother's education was significantly and positively correlated with the attitude of the respondents.

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