

# How Family Environment Influence the Social Role of Female Adolescents

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**Abstract.** This research discusses the influence of family environment on the social role of female adolescents. Family expectations, educational expectations and occupational expectations have been considered crucial elements for shaping the perspective and social role of adolescents. In this study, it has been found that female adolescents are often expected to focus on roles such as caring and house holdings while males are expected to be the primary breadwinners. These expectations are based on societal gender roles and stereotypes, as well as cultural, social, and economic factors. Differentiated parental expectations can have both positive and negative effects on adolescent development, such as providing clarity and structure but also reducing self-esteem and reinforcing harmful gender biases. This research also discusses the impact of stereotypical educational expectations on adolescent development, with female adolescents often being expected to take subjects such as psychology and biology while males are more likely to take subjects including mathematics and physics. Lastly, this study highlights that a lack of employment opportunities in certain fields and discrimination can limit the career opportunities available to female adolescents. Some suggestions about parental workshops, community promotion for the welfare of adolescents and rule and policy developments have also been portrayed in this research. These suggestions are considered to be effective strategies for enhancing the positive aspects of societal roles of female adolescents and also help to reduce negative aspects of gender-based discrimination.

**Keywords:** gender stereotypes; female adolescents; family expectation.

## 1. Introduction

According to Freud, personality is considered to be shaped and developed during childhood, which basically means the family environment is essential in the stage of forming and influencing one's nature. Gender prejudice resulting in gender inequality and discrimination usually begins in childhood. Girls and boys are facing different gender norms from the moment they were born. As they grow older, girls have limited access to resources and fewer opportunities regarding the lower expectation compared to boys, with lifelong consequences in their family, education, and occupation roles. Nowadays, the inequality of different gender roles still exists everywhere in society; especially female adolescents are facing lots of challenges in being themselves from their expected social role. The purpose of the paper is to explore whether and how the family environment influences the social role of female adolescents. Understanding how the family environment affects the social role of female adolescents is crucial in promoting gender equality, which is a fundamental human right, as well as the foundation of future peace and prosperity.

A world without gender issues means every gender will receive equal rights, education, opportunities, and protections. Proving the relationship between family environment and gender oppression is also meaningful for ensuring child and woman protection, and raising awareness of the issues such as abusing, neglecting children, exploitation, and violence towards women. The generality of recently published research on this issue lacks possible solutions to reduce the negative influence and sustain the positive factor. The paper will be divided into four parts. The first part deals with the negative and the positive aspects of which stereotyped family roles of males and females have influenced female adolescents. The second part will compare the different expectations of boys and girls for their education roles and determine how and why these expectations are going to influence adolescents' development. The third part will explore the formation of different expected career path for men and women based on the stereotypes and how it has rigidified people's perception of gender

roles. The last part is going to make advice and suggestion with which people can avoid the adverse effect and facilitate the positive influence. This paper demonstrates the effects of inequality on female gender roles in society. It differs from the previous paper in that it focuses on wider ranges including family, educational institutions, occupation, etc. to examine the link between family environments and the oppressed social roles of female adolescents.

## **2. Family Role: Female vs. Male**

### **2.1. Parents' Expectations**

In many cultures, it is expected in families that female adolescents have to focus on caring for the family and home, while males will be the primary breadwinners and providers. From research, it has been found that parenting contribution is a major factor in building the perspective of life and social role of adolescents [1]. This study of Pinquart has discussed that patterns of parenting such as proactive parenting, psychological control, and reactive behavioural control play a crucial role in the social aspects of adolescents. These patterns are led by the desires of parents to achieve the expectation of adolescents.

Traditional gender-based roles in society have been kept unchanged for years. It has been considered that women are the ladies of the house who take care of others whereas men are considered to be the head of the house [2]. Thus, it has been found the parent or family always tries to involve their female member in household work as a housewife, or a lady of the house, where men are considered and expected to be head of the house. These studies show that the expectation of family roles is associated with social norms of power distribution among men and women. This gender bias towards women in household work and men as the head of the house is a prevalent issue in many societies, and it is rooted in patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles. However, as society becomes more progressive, there is a growing realisation of the importance of gender equality and breaking traditional gender roles.

### **2.2. Reasons for Expectations**

Gender biases of parents are often perpetuated through cultural institutions such as family, education, religion, and media. They can limit opportunities and lead to the continuation of unequal treatment, creating significant challenges for individuals who do not confront gender-based stereotypes. There are mainly two types of reasons associated with parenting expectations for their adolescents [3]. The first is gender roles and stereotypes are a societal belief that men should be providers and protectors, while women should be caregivers and nurturers. This has been also supported by Grau and Zotos that culture, entertainment and advertisement, social communities, and traditional context have created traditional gender roles which have differentiated males and females [4]. This stereotype and gender role has been considered to be problematic as it creates expectations among others for an individual limiting their opportunities to explore other social aspects over one. Additionally, cultural, social, and economic factors can also impact these expectations.

In the studies of Baker and Milligan, in countries such as Canada, the USA and UK parents spend more time teaching their girls than investing time with their sons, whereas developing countries have different perspectives [5]. From this, it has been found that developing countries and developed countries have different perspectives on parenting expectations for their male and female children. Due to the differentiation of production functions among male and female parents of adolescents from developing countries are investing more money and time in their sons expecting future financial security of family by their sons, whether in developed countries the investment of time and money seems to be similar for daughter and sons as in developed societal and cultural parent sex does not create barriers for future growth and opportunities for any adolescents.

### **2.3. Effect: Negative vs. Positive**

The effects of differentiated parental expectations and stereotypes for male and female adolescents can have both positive and negative impacts on their development.

A negative impact can reduce the self-esteem of adolescents, mostly seen in females [6]. When female adolescents have felt that they are not meeting the expectations of their parents, adolescents may develop feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, for example anxiety about the subject of mathematics. It also limits the pursuit of their true interests and passions. The differentiation of parental expectations also contributes to the development of perceptions of adolescents; it has reinforced gender biases and harmful gender stereotypes [7]. This perception of gender bias at an early age fuel the cycle of traditional norms of unwanted stereotypes.

Apart from these negative effects, some positive things have been also observed within these parental stereotypes. In some cases, family environments provide clarity of expectations to adolescents, which can provide a view of societal structure and provide guidance in rational thinking [6]. This aspect can help adolescents understand what is expected of them and what they can achieve.

## **3. Education Role**

### **3.1. Expectations for Education**

Education expectations for male and female adolescents may vary based on family-related and societal factors. Gender bias in education refers to the unequal treatment and expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. This can manifest in various ways, such as teachers having lower expectations for girls in subjects such as science and mathematics, or steering boys away from subjects including arts and humanities [8]. This type of gender bias can limit opportunities for students and affect their self-esteem and confidence. It is important to recognize and challenge these biases to promote equality in education and ensure all students have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

In a worldwide assessment by Cambridge Assessment, it has been shown that 27.7% of females take Psychology, 24.1% in Biology and 21.2% in History, here only 5.3% of females have enrolled in ICT and 6.1% in Physics [9]. In this same research, the highest number has been found in males for taking Mathematics with 36%, which is followed by Business Studies at 22.6% and Physics at 20.6% [9]. Apart from these, men are keener to take subjects in fields of mining, accommodation, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and transportation, whereas education of women is still focused on social sectors such as education and health, as well as manufacturing and unidentified service-producing activities.

### **3.2. Reasons for Expectations**

The main reason for stereotypical educational expectations for female adolescents is the lack of employment opportunities in some specific fields. In a business report of 2016 by Harvard, it is mentioned that only 13% of women can get into the engineering workforce and women get less exposure to technical training and internships [10]. It is also supported by a report of 2020, by the World Economic Forum that found that only 28% of the researchers of the world are women, despite making up half of the global workforce. The report also found that women are underrepresented in STEM fields, with only 11% of engineers and 25% of IT specialists being women [11]. From these reports, some reasons have been highlighted that unconscious bias, lack of female role models, and gender stereotypes are some of the main reasons for the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. The report also showed that women face additional barriers such as a lack of flexible work arrangements, which can make it difficult for them to balance work and family responsibilities. For these kinds of reasons, women are expected to take stereotypical subjects rather than the subjects of their interest.

Another reason for the diversion of educational expectations is discrimination. Often it has been found that in professional fields women are discriminated against. Women are mostly found to be involved in societal and desk jobs rather than actual engineering field jobs. In the construction industry, the pay gap between female civil engineers and male engineers is 24%, whereas other industries comparatively have a pay gap of 8.6% [12]. The reason for discrimination is patriarchy and power imbalance. For centuries, women have been excluded from political, economic, and educational opportunities, which has contributed to their current lack of representation in many fields. This has also created a power imbalance and a notion is developed that women are not capable of leadership or decision-making positions. In addition, patriarchy is deeply ingrained in many cultures and reinforces gender inequalities through laws, policies, and social norms.

### **3.3. Impact of Stereotypes on the Development of Adolescents**

Expectations and stereotypes of educational subjects can have a significant impact on adolescent development. Female adolescents may believe that certain subjects are not relevant to their goals or are not accessible to them, and they may lose motivation and be cut off from learning. As an example, nursing departments in Canada have more female employees than males because of social prejudices and a lack of opportunities for females in other domains [8]. Education is the foundation for many career paths, and gender-based stereotypes in education can limit the career opportunities available to female adolescents.

The second impact of educational stereotype expectation has developed the problem of discrimination. As presented in the UNICEF report, it has been seen that there is worldwide discrimination done for female adolescents within education. Only 49% of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, where the gap has widened for secondary and higher secondary education [13]. Apart from that, when girls face discrimination in education, they are more likely to drop out of school and receive an incomplete education, which can further limit their future opportunities.

## **4. Occupation Role**

### **4.1. Occupational Expectation**

In many pieces of research, it has been seen that men and women are treated differently due to traditional perspectives of occupational roles. As in studies of Sekścińska and others, traditionally leadership roles are mostly occupied by males such as managers, engineers, soldiers and entrepreneurs. These are considered to be associated with agentic characteristics such as independence, and competition, whereas nursing, teaching, caring giving and secretarial work are considered to be an occupation for females [2]. In most countries, attributes such as affection, care and responsibility are considered to be feminine whereas aggression, problem-solving and decision-making these attributes are considered to be masculine. Based on this stereotyped occupation expectation has been developed within society.

### **4.2. Reasons for Expectation**

The gender-based stereotypes and occupational expectations are formed due to a combination of social, cultural, and historical factors. From a young age, boys and girls are often exposed to gender-specific toys, activities, and media that reinforce traditional gender roles [4, 14]. This socialisation process can lead to the development of gendered interests and career aspirations.

In the earlier stages of social revolutions, women have been excluded from certain industries and occupations, and have faced discrimination and bias in the workplace [11]. This has contributed to the persistence of gendered occupational stereotypes. Ultimately most societies hold traditional beliefs about gender roles and the types of work that are suitable for each gender. These beliefs are the main reasons for gender-based opportunities for individuals within the workforce.

### **4.3. Impact of Occupational Expectations**

Every occupation has a certain level of criteria to be joined, such in the military and police physical strength is essential, whereas to become a nurse or teacher one individual is required to have proper training and education. As an example, apart from psychology, other fields of science have a male domain and the number of female scientists is very low [15, 16]. When female adolescents are expected to pursue certain occupations or careers, occupational expectations can limit their opportunities and potential for growth. This can prevent them from pursuing their passions and lead to a lack of fulfilment in their work.

Apart from this, one of the negative impacts due to stereotype perception within the workplace is sexism. Adolescents and young women often face pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards in their respective fields. For instance, a female employee of a Canadian fashion company had been excluded from a vendor meeting. According to a BBC report, she has been excluded due to her body weight, as her manager considers that employee to be fat [17]. Often in the workplace, it has been seen that female employees are targeted by higher management for their body image and appearance. This kind of occupational sexism has led to frustration and stress. The mental well-being of an individual employee has been disrupted by these kinds of stereotypes.

## **5. Suggestions**

### **5.1. Sustain the Positive Aspect**

In order to sustain a positive family environment and promote positive social outcomes for female adolescents a few steps such as open communication, supportive environment development, and enhancement of the scope of self-expression can be considered.

According to the studies by Pinquart, fostering an open family environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings helps to encourage active listening and mutual respect [8]. In addition, Sekścińska and others have seen that being in a non-traditional profession has changed the decision-making and self-awareness aspects of women who tend to be equal to men in social standards [18]. Through this, the social role of female adolescents can be encouraged positively. Families should empower their daughters to make their own decisions and express themselves through this way as they may get encouragement to pursue their interests and passions.

### **5.2. Reduce the Negative Influence**

#### **5.2.1 Parent Workshop**

Modifying cognition refers to the process of changing or altering the way one thinks, perceives, and processes information. A parent workshop on modifying cognition can help reduce negative influences on the social role of female adolescents by teaching parents how to promote positive thinking patterns and behaviours in their daughters [19, 20]. Parents can learn ways of identifying negative thought patterns that can contribute to low self-esteem, anxiety, and other mental health issues in their daughters [21]. Parents can learn effective communication skills that will help them foster positive relationships with their daughters and teach their daughters how to communicate effectively with others.

#### **5.2.2 Community Service/Support**

In the current era of digitalization, community services can help to reduce negative influences on the social role of female adolescents through social media and promotion. Through promoting positive messages and resources on social media or through other channels, the community can help raise awareness about the challenges that female adolescents face and provide them with the support they need to overcome these challenges. As it has been found through studies that female adolescents are facing barriers in employment and education, a social connection can be established through community services for those individuals [4, 22]. By connecting individuals and creating supportive

communities, female adolescents can feel less isolated and more connected to others who are facing similar challenges. This can promote a sense of belonging and foster positive relationships.

### 5.2.3 Policy / Rule Improvement

Improvement of rules and policies by government or local authorities can help reduce negative aspects of the social role of female adolescents in three ways. First is the implementation of policies and rules that can promote gender equality in organisations and communities and provide female adolescents with the opportunities to grow. Secondly, enforcing policies and rules that address harassment and violence in organisations and communities can create safer environments for female adolescents [18]. Policy enforcement will help to prevent negative experiences that can have long-term consequences. Lastly, rules and policies are effective measures to provide access to education to female adolescents by enhancing and monitoring their learning environment.

## 6. Conclusion

This research work concentrates on exploring family and societal factors that influence the social roles of female adolescents. From this concern analysis, it has been found that the expectation of family, based on traditional gender roles and stereotypes, is a significant factor in shaping the perspective of adolescents and their social roles. In this report, three types of expectations have been considered for adolescents: parental expectations, educational expectations and occupation expectations. It has been found that these expectations have multiple impacts on the self-esteem of adolescents and personal development. In education, stereotypical expectations can limit the career opportunities and motivation for learning of female adolescents. Additionally, the educational and occupational expectations have highlighted discrimination in the workforce and work opportunities. Lastly, this report suggests some need for change in societal attitudes and family expectations to provide equal opportunities and support for female adolescents in their personal and educational development.

One limitation of this study is that it focuses on a limited cultural and societal context. The findings may not generalise with diverse cultures and societies that have different norms and values regarding gender roles and expectations. In addition, the study focuses on the three major concerns for adolescents, which are family, education and occupation. Other external factors such as media, and the education system, and organisational patterns are limitedly explored within this study of the social role of female adolescents.

This concern report has differentiated parental and educational expectations for male and female adolescents and has promising future implications. In the future, this study can be used to implement reforms in policies that promote gender equality in education and employment opportunities. It can help eliminate gender biases and stereotypes and create a level playing field for both male and female adolescents. The future scope of the study also includes conducting more in-depth research on the effects of gender-based expectations on adolescent development. This can include exploring the impact on mental health, self-esteem, and motivation, and developing strategies to mitigate the negative effects of these expectations.

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