

GENDER BELIEFS AND STEREOTYPES IN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS

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Gender perceptions are psychological constructs that reflect an individual's ideas about typical behavior, traits, and social roles of men and women. These perceptions are formed under the influence of socialization, culture, upbringing, and personal experience. And gender stereotype are generalized and simplified beliefs about expected behaviors of people based on their sex. They are reinforced by society and transmitted across generations. These phenomena play a significant role in shaping gender identity. [3]

The term "gender" was first introduced into academic discourse by J. Money in the 1950s as an alternative to the biological concept of "sex", focusing on sociocultural differences between men and women. Modern psychology views gender as a multidimensional category that includes identity, roles, behavior models, expectations, and perceptions. Through the process of gender socialization, individuals internalize stereotypical expectations of "proper" male or female behavior, influencing their career choice, communication style, and patterns of self-presentation. [4]

Researchers have paid special attention to the mechanisms of gender stereotype formation. S. Bem's gender schema theory explains this process as the result of children acquiring rigid cognitive frameworks that shape their perception of themselves and others through the lens of gender. Other theories, such as E. Eagly's social role theory, highlight the connection between division of labor and the consolidation of roles traditionally associated with each sex. Poststructuralist approaches, like J. Butler's theory of performativity, interpret gender as a product of repeated social acts that imitate "normative" masculinity or femininity. [1]

Despite widespread claims of equality, contemporary society continues to function within the framework of powerful gender stereotypes. These stereotypes manifest in occupational segregation, educational pathways, media images, political representation, and family dynamics. Norms of the "ideal woman" or "real man" constrain individuality and contribute to psychological stress. According to Glick and Fiske's ambivalent sexism theory, even seemingly positive stereotypes such as the idea that women need to be protected and cherished help maintain gender inequality, often without being recognized as discriminatory. [2]

This research involved a survey of 60 young people aged 18–30, equally divided by gender (30 women and 30 men). The study applied the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, ambivalent sexism questionnaires, and a gender bias quiz. The sample included university students and working youth, recruited via educational institutions and social media.

Findings show that a portion of participants exhibit an androgynous identity, combining both masculine and feminine traits, which indicates a more flexible understanding of social roles. However, a significant number still adhere to traditional views women tending toward feminine traits and men toward dominant, rational characteristics. A high level of benevolent sexism was observed in both groups, expressed through beliefs about male protectiveness and female tenderness. These results reveal the latent nature of gender stereotypes, which are often perceived as "normal" and remain unchallenged.

In today's information space shaped by globalization, media, and digital culture gender perceptions are gradually transforming. Young people are more open to nontraditional gender identities, yet traditional beliefs persist, especially in conservative environments.

These conflicting value orientations call for scholarly analysis and the development of psychoeducational programs that promote critical thinking, gender reflection, and social tolerance.

In conclusion, the study confirms the presence of persistent gender stereotypes among youth, while also highlighting trends toward their gradual transformation. Fostering flexible gender perceptions ones that do not limit behavioral scenarios is a key factor in psychological well-being, social adaptation, and personal development in a pluralistic society.

References

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