



DEVELOPMENT OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS GENDER ISSUES SCALE

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Abstract

Attitude towards gender issues is a product of socialization processes an individual is a part of since birth. Every society has a set of accepted norms for male and female behavior. This paper is based on the research study of the investigator on the attitude of in-service teachers towards three gender issues, gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender discrimination. The aim of the paper is to develop an attitude scale to determine the attitude of in-service teachers towards these gender issues. In order to find out the ways to change traditional attitude of teachers, it is important to first determine the attitude. The research sample was selected through multi-stage sampling and comprised of 312 teachers, consisting of equal number of male and female teachers. The Attitude Towards Gender Issues Scale (ATGIS), thus developed contained 32 items. The attitude scale was found to be highly reliable.

Key terms: Attitude, Gender, Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes, Gender Discrimination



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Introduction

How do people feel about a woman playing football or a man who cries? How do people react on seeing a female driver or a male nurse? The answers to these questions are a reflection of a person's attitude towards gender issues. In every society, there are certain roles, behaviours, professions which are more typical for one sex than the other sex. Each sex has a set of specific roles, traits and responsibilities attached to it.

The question that arises here is why gender issues are important to discuss. How does it matters if there are different expectations from females and males, different roles are assigned to them and distinct traits and characteristics are to be possessed by them. The answer is that it is unfair because it tend to 'generalize'. They are unfair to people who do not possess those traits or characteristics. They distort the image of one sex by considering the other as superior to it in capabilities and status. The opportunities available to each sex become restricted. For instance, in our society, subjects like language and arts and careers

like teaching and nursing are readily available to females and subjects like mathematics and science and careers like engineering and architecture are readily available to males. This narrows down the scope of choices students will consider making because in order to be accepted by the society, women and men may start behaving in the ways expected from them and hence suppress their real abilities and capacities.

Before moving further, the terms 'Sex' and 'Gender' may be differentiated. 'Sex' is a biologically determined term while 'Gender' is a socially determined term. 'Sex' refers to the biological difference between male and female. 'Gender' is used to describe the socially influenced aspects of our lives, the roles one plays, the responsibilities one takes on, the activities and behaviours one engages in and the expectations for future. While the sex of a child is determined by the chromosomes, the gender is determined by the cultural norms and values related to what is expected of females and males in the society.

A male or female child becomes a boy or girl through the process of socialization. Socialization is step-by-step learning of behavior appropriate to one's role in society. Gender roles are learned largely through the process of socialization wherein individuals internalize norms, values, attitudes and expectations of the society. Socialization is an interactive process and the socialization of the child begins at birth. When an infant is born, one of the first things we do is to know its sex. The interest in sex of the infant reflects the fact that gender is one of the main ways to determine where an individual belongs in the culture. Gender distinctions are made even with the first step to naming the baby. Infant's clothes, toys and play objects are all sex-stereotyped and serve to communicate to children subtle, and often not so subtle, messages of culturally approved qualities of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Children learn about sex roles in the home, where the girls are told right from their beginning, that they should behave in a particular manner because they have to grow into nice, calm and sophisticated ladies, whereas the boys are asked to grow into tough, daring and strong men. This lays the foundation of female and male roles. The division of labor within the family also forcefully brings home to children gender differences in roles and status of their significant others.

Children bring to school already formed gender stereotypes learnt in the family, society etc. and the educational system, by and large, reinforces these distinctions and projects sex-stereotypic images. The school, textbooks, picture books and co-curricular activities, teacher behaviour further contribute to the perpetuation of sex-roles and biases. Studies have shown that illustrations and content in textbooks are gender-stereotyped (Khan, Sultana, Bughio and Naz, 2014; Mustapha, 2014; Amini and Birjandi, 2012; Hamdan, 2010;

Lee and Collins, 2010; Kobia, 2009; Dube, 2006; Mattu and Hussain, 2004; Vidya, 2002); boys get more attention in sports while girls get more attention in other cultural activities (Jaireth, 2006); teachers have different behaviours towards male and female in class (Gul, Khan, Mughal, Rehman and Saif, 2012; Sultana, 2012; Pardhan, 2011; Allana, Asad and Sherali; 2010; Smith, Hardman & Higgins 2007; Tsouroufli, 2002; Sadker and Sadker, 1999; Eccles & Blumenfeld, 1985).

Hence, it is important to determine the attitude of teachers towards gender issues in order to find out the ways to change traditional attitude of teachers. This concern motivated the investigator to undertake this research.

Operational Definition of the key terms

Attitude: Attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities or ideas. It is an expression of favour or disfavor towards people, objects, events, activities or ideas. As defined by the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010), attitude is:

“A settled way of thinking or feeling about something.”

It is different from perception as perception is the way of interpreting what one sees and hears. As defined by the Oxford Dictionary, perception is: “The way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted.”

Gender Issues: ‘Gender’ is the socially-constructed identity of an individual, of being men and women. ‘Gender issues’ are the issues related to gender and their problems. The present study focused on the following gender issues:

- a. **Gender Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs about characteristics which are deemed appropriate for males and females in a society. Stereotypes are generalized beliefs about certain groups of people based on their belonging to a certain gender, ethnic group, religion and so on. Gender stereotypes are over simplified beliefs about appropriate behavior, roles and careers for women and men. Berk in one of the works reports that females in many cultures are stereotyped as passive, home oriented, emotional, kind, gentle and devoted to others and males as active, leader, aggressive, adventurous, dominant, independent and rough. (Berk, 2007)
- b. **Gender Roles:** Gender roles are the roles attached to males and females respectively. Gender roles differ according to cultural-historical context. Eg. Males are bread-winners and females are home-makers.
- c. **Gender Discrimination:** Gender discrimination refers to the practice whereby one sex is given preferential treatment over the other. The practice of giving social

importance to the biological differences between men and women is gender discrimination.

Research Design

The study was a descriptive survey. A sample of 312 in-service teachers (156 female and 156 male) teaching at secondary level in government and private schools in Delhi was selected through multi stage sampling technique in following stages:

Stage 1: Listing of schools under Directorate of Education, Govt. of NCT of Delhi

All districts were selected for the study.

Stage 2: Selection of schools

4 schools (2 private and 2 government) from each district of Delhi were selected through stratified random sampling. The schools were divided into two stratas, namely government and private schools and then from each stratum, two schools were selected in each district.

Stage 3: Selection of teachers

The teachers from each school teaching at the secondary level were then divided into 2 stratas, namely female and male teachers. 3 teachers from each stratum were selected randomly through lottery method.

Attitude Towards Gender Issues Scale

Attitude scale helps to measure the attitude or belief of an individual towards a social issue, situation etc. The researcher developed an attitude scale based on the studies by Sharma (2012), Zeyneloglu and Terzioglu (2011), Christensen and Massey (1989) and Attitude towards women scale by Spence, Helmreich & Stapp (1978). The attitude scale developed consisted of 32 statements in all comprising of 14 statements for gender roles, 7 statements for gender stereotypes and 11 statements for gender discrimination.

The attitude scale developed was based on a five-point likert scale wherein the respondents had to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement towards a series of statements. The categories for responses ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The intermediate categories were 'agree', 'disagree' and 'can't say'.

Construction of attitude scale

A draft of attitude scale consisting of 36 statements was prepared consisting of 151718 statements related to gender roles, 9 statements related to gender stereotypes and 12 statements related to gender discrimination. The draft attitude scale was then given to experts working in the field of gender studies for review. As per the recommendations of the experts in the field, 4 statements were discarded, one related to each gender role and discrimination

and two related to gender stereotypes. Thus, the final attitude scale consisted of 32 statements. In this manner, the content validity of the attitude scale was established.

The attitude scale was then given to the sample. The responses collected were analyzed to find out non-discriminative items, i.e. the items to which all the respondents responded in the same manner. No such item was found.

The responses were, then, scored on a scale from 1 to 5 as per the scoring for each item (the method of scoring is described in the next section). The reliability of the tool was measured through split-half method. For each respondent, scoring was done separately for odd numbered items and even numbered items. The two halves were then correlated with each other. The correlation was found through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula,

$$r = \frac{\sum x^1 y^1}{\sqrt{(\sum x^1)^2 (\sum y^1)^2}}$$

(where, r = correlation,
x = score on odd items,
y = score on even items,
 $x^1 = x - \text{mean of } x$,
 $y^1 = y - \text{mean of } y$)

Correlation was found to be 0.79. As this is reliability of only half of the test, this was corrected by using Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula,

$$r^1 = \frac{2r}{1+r}$$

(where, r = correlation,
 $r^1 = \text{corrected correlation}$)

Thus, correlation was found to be 0.88. The attitude scale was highly reliable and could be used for data collection for the present study.

Scoring of items

The items on the attitude scale were scored from 1 to 5 for all the items from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The more the agreement to a statement, less the score and more traditional is the attitude and more the disagreement to a statement, more the score and more egalitarian is the attitude. The items were scored in the following manner:

Response	Scoring for items	
Strongly Agree	1	↑ Traditional attitude ↓ Progressive attitude
Agree	2	
Can't Say	3	
Disagree	4	
Strongly Disagree	5	

Table 1: Scoring of responses to attitude scale

Thus, high score (maximum score = 160) indicates a progressive attitude while low score (minimum score = 32) indicates a traditional attitude. The maximum and minimum scores possible towards each gender issue are as below:

	Minimum	Maximum
Gender Stereotypes	7	35
Gender Roles	14	70
Gender Discrimination	11	55
Total	32	160

Table 2: Maximum and minimum scores towards gender issues

Thus, depending on the minimum and maximum scores possible, the range of scores representing traditional, progressive and neutral attitude for each gender issue as calculated on the consolidated scores of the respondents towards each gender issue are shown in the following table:

Attitude	Gender Stereotypes	Gender Roles	Gender Discrimination
Egalitarian	27-35	52-70	41-55
Neutral	16-26	33-51	26-40
Traditional	7-15	14-32	11-25

Table 3: Range of scores towards gender issues

Conclusion

The attitude scale developed is a valid and reliable instrument for determining the attitude of in-service teachers towards gender issues. The tool developed in this research may make significant contribution to the subject. However, the tool has certain delimitations. The scale's validity and reliability study was only implemented with in-service teachers at secondary level only. It is recommended that this scale is to be used in other studies and tested with individuals in different groups, with a bigger sample.

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Annexure

Attitude scale

A) Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by marking a tick (√) on the scale as the statement first impresses you. Indicate what you believe, rather than what you think you should believe:

[SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; CS-Can't say; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree]

Sl.	Statement	SA	A	CS	D	SD
1	Men are better decision makers than women.					
2	The father should have the final say in family matters.					
3	Men are not naturally suited for bringing up children.					
4	It is worse for a woman than a man to be drunk.					
5	A woman's basic task is motherhood.					
6	The head of the household is man.					
7	Men are better entrepreneurs than women.					
8	A man's main task in the house is breadwinning.					
9	Men should decide on how to use family income.					
10	Husband should decide on having children – when and how many.					
11	In a family, woman should be responsible for domestic work.					
12	Men should be attached to jobs like engineering, architecture etc.					
13	Women should be attached to jobs like teaching, nursing etc.					
14	Boys are better suited than girls to do heavy chores in the classroom such as moving desks, carrying projectors.					
15	Boys are naturally better than girls at logical thinking.					
16	Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue.					
17	Men are more ambitious than women.					
18	Women are better cooks than men.					
19	Women are more emotional as compared to men.					
20	Girls are naturally better than boys at reading.					
21	Men are more suitable for positions of responsibility than women.					
22	Women should be less concerned with equality and more about being good wives and mothers.					
23	Because 'boys will be boys', teachers should be more lenient towards boys than girls.					
24	Woman should not work if the economical position of the man is adequate.					
25	Women should select occupations where nature of work is flexible irrespective of remuneration.					
26	Women are not easily promoted from lower positions to top positions.					
27	Men should be preferred in top positions in employment because of women's fertility issues.					
28	Boys make better classroom leaders than girls.					
29	Men should get leadership roles in an organization as they are better leaders than women.					
30	Men should be paid more than women working at same level as men are more responsible workers than women.					
31	Under modern economic conditions with women being active					

	outside the home, women should not ignore household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.					
32	Women should be less concerned with their desires for professional or business careers and should be more concerned with their duties of childbearing and house tending.					