

## GENDER STEREOTYPES: THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND WORKING WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

It is often believed that gender stereotypes are a significant obstacle standing in the way of the professional success of women. The numerous forms of gender stereotyping that women experience depending on their socioeconomic status serve as the primary focus of this investigation. The significance of economic background in gender stereotyping of working women will be evaluated in this study, as will the question of whether or not stereotyping of working women has evolved over the years. This study used a descriptive survey method with a sample size of 300 working women. Results suggested that along with the shift in mentality, there has also been a change in how women are treated according to their level of financial success. When it came to working, women who came from families earning more than 20 lakhs per year were subjected to the least amount of stereotyping, whereas women who came from families earning in the middle-income range or lower income range were subjected to greater stereotyping in terms of working women.

*Keywords: Gender, Stereotypes, Economic background, Working women*

### INTRODUCTION

People frequently use the words “sex” and “gender” interchangeably, but they have different meanings. According to Torgrimson and Minson (2005), “gender” refers to a person’s feelings, attitudes, and behaviours that are influenced by culture, while “sex” refers to structural, functional, and behavioural traits determined by sex chromosomes. It is a common misconception that gender stereotypes are a big barrier that prevents women from achieving their full potential in their professional lives. The major emphasis of this inquiry is on the many types of gender stereotyping, which may vary greatly based on a woman’s financial standing. In the course of this research, both the subject of whether or not the stereotyping of working women has changed over the course of time and the role of economic background in the gender stereotyping of working women will be investigated and analysed.

Thus, sex is clearly defined in every culture, but gender is not, as social expectations for men and women vary from one culture to the next. In social situations, people reveal their gender through appearance, body language, conversational style, and voice tone. As a result, when speaking with others, people react differently depending on the gender of their conversation partner. Similarly to

this, people can tell someone's gender based on their appearance, tone of voice, and body language. Compared to gender, which is more fluid, sex is relatively stable (Eckert & Ginnet, 2013). Although there are many factors that affect gender and gender development, society and culture will always have an impact.

Society and culture assign gender roles, which dictate how men, women, and transgender people should act and interact in society. The concepts of masculinity and femininity that are prevalent in society are typically used to construct gender roles (Alters & Schiff, 2009). The cognitive and emotional concept of oneself as either male, female, both, or neither is known as gender identity (Fagot & Leinbach, 1985). Society and culture teach us about gender identity and gender roles. Gender stereotypes are thought to be a serious problem impeding the career advancement of women. The foundation of this study is the various gender stereotypes faced by women based on their economic background (Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, & Webster, 2009; World Economic Forum, 2017). Even though sex-role stereotyping has been the subject of numerous research, it became obvious from a detailed review of the literature that its causes remain poorly understood. In the absence of causes being found, the phenomenon will continue (Desvaux, et al., 2007).

Women are no longer confined to being homemakers in today's fast-paced digital world; they now work outside the house and are able to strike a balance between the two. Women's traditions are also becoming marginalised. Aside from these adjustments, attitudes about women have not altered much. This may be a result of social stereotypes and gender standards based on religion. The current research was carried out to support this.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Endendijk et al. (2013) studied how parents and siblings influence gender stereotypes in families. The study included certain families. Parents with a 12-month-old and a 2.5-year-old were chosen. Single parents and those with physical or mental disabilities were excluded. 390 of 1249 western Dutch families were taken. Compared to mothers, fathers displayed more overt gender preconceptions. Daughters' gender was influenced by their mothers' gender expectations. Synonyms Same-gender fathers were more stereotypical. Fathers with male and female children were more egalitarian. Same- or opposite-gender siblings had similar implicit gender stereotypes. Elder siblings influence younger siblings' gender stereotypes.

Hussain et al. (2015) studied economy and gender stereotypes. 24 women participated. This study found that culture, economy and society create gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes have many causes. Family is crucial. Family influences children's gender roles. Economic disparities also reinforce appropriate gender roles. Family members discourage women's modern gender roles. Parental gender concepts strongly influence children's gender stereotypes. Toys, room decor, dress, and other factors may influence children's gender stereotyping. Male and female children's tasks influence their gender role concepts.

Penny et al. (2015) studied how personality affects gender differences in religiosity. 1682 Welsh students (20-29) participated in the study. Christian and post-Christian women were more religious than men. Psychoticism personality type influences individual differences in religiosity.

Psychological femininity correlates positively with religiosity. Thus, personality mediates religiosity's influence.

Balgiu (2013) observes in an investigation on how people felt about women managers, both workers and non-employees. Participants in the research included 131 students studying the technical domain (74 boys, 67 girls), 116 students pursuing business management (46 men, 80 women), and 46 workers from a multinational organisation (25 women and 21 men). The findings indicated that male workers and non-workers had fewer positive attitudes about women supervisors. Men were seen to have high levels of responsibility and management competence, whereas men viewed women to be less capable and responsible. Business management students had a favourable opinion of women's managing abilities. Surprisingly, the majority of male participants believed that having management abilities was a quality unique to males, but women did not share this opinion. Men believe that women lack ambition, self-confidence, and technical competence.

Follow-up research on attitudes toward women's employment was done by Kuruvilla and Seema (2014) at Calicut University in Kerala. They looked for changes in public opinion towards women's employment after the first study's initial 15 years. The survey had 360 respondents from Calicut University (100 PG students & 260 employees). The findings showed a considerable movement in attitudes in favour of women working. Women had a very favourable attitude toward women working in the first and second studies. The attitudes of male workers towards women working in the workplace have improved. The survey also found substantial general gender inequalities in students' attitudes toward women's employment. Even though male and female students have the same opportunities

Rodgers (2014) looked at how early life circumstances affected how people felt about working with women. 35 businesswomen and men who are now employed by a corporation in entry-level to higher leadership roles took part in the survey. To learn more about the participants' early lives and how they felt about working women, a qualitative survey was conducted. Over the following ten years, 43% of women who grew up in a dual-parent family held leadership positions, compared to 28.5% of women who grew up in families of a similar type. Just 19% of women who were reared in single-parent households stated a desire to occupy a leadership position over the next 10 years in comparison. In contrast, 9.5% of women who were raised in single-parent households had no interest in holding leadership positions. Women were content with their pay even when males claimed to be paid more than they were. This shows that the women were aware of the gender gap and believed that they were less competent than males.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To assess the role of economic background in gender stereotyping working women.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

1. There is a relationship between economic background in gender stereotyping of working women.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Design of the Study:*

This research mainly focused on the construction of gender stereotypes and understanding the attitude towards women based on their economic background.

The type of study done by the researcher is exploratory in character. It is a descriptive survey approach of study. The researcher conducted the descriptive investigation using the survey method. It entails meticulous data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as rational documentation on the study. It is crucial to select the method and the right tool to use while conducting this kind of study in order to collect data, test the hypothesis, and draw specific findings. Each data collection tool has advantages and disadvantages. With its closed-ended questions on the Linkert scale, the questionnaire was thought to be an appropriate data collection tool for this inquiry.

The influence of economic conditions and gender stereotypes on attitudes towards working women was studied in this research. Their economic category was divided into three based on their annual income. The first was above 20 lakhs per annum, the second was 5-10 lakhs, and the third was below five lakhs.

The participants were required to answer the following inquiries on a questionnaire:

1. Do you think there is a gender stereotype for working women?
2. Have you faced any change in attitude based on your economic income?
3. Do you think economic background can influence the gender stereotype of working women?
4. Is there a difference in attitude towards working women based on their income?

### *Simple Random Sampling:*

Before delivering the tool to the sample, a brief orientation is conducted, and working women are given the essential instructions. Although there is no set time restriction for responding to the questionnaire, practically all working women did so within a week. 300 working women were selected randomly from various institutions with a 1:1:1 ratio for each category of economic income.

## VARIABLES

The independent variables of this study are gender stereotypes and economic background. The dependent variable is the attitude towards working women.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of samples**

Working women(n=300)	Sample size
Above 20 lakhs	100
Between 5-20 lakhs	100
Below 5 lakhs	100

**Tools**

1. A short version of Attitude towards Women by Spence et al. (1972)

**Description of the tool**

The Attitude towards Women Scale developed by Spence et al. (2011) was used to know the attitude towards women. This scale consisted of 25 items (12 negative items & 13 positive items). The positive and negative items are given in Table 1. This scale has no dimensions.

**Table 2**

*Positive and Negative Items*

	Item number	Total Items
Positive	1, 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23	13
Negative	2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 18, 21, 24, 25	12

**Table 3: Gender Stereotypes of working women based on their economic income.**

Gender stereotype Based on the economic income	Working women (300)		T	$\eta^2$
	M	SD		
Above 20 lakhs	9.90	3.28	4.22*	.24

Between 5-20 lakhs	15.07	4.55	16.94*	.98
Below 5 lakhs	10.21	3.20	10.10*	.59
Total	35.18	23.92	14.42*	.80

\* $p < .05$

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 represents the difference in gender stereotypes based on economic background. The attitude towards working women and the role of gender stereotypes is different for every economic category. The result indicates that there is a significant difference in the attitude towards women based on their economic background. It is observed that stereotyping is least in the above 20 lakhs category, followed by the below five lakhs category and was found to be the highest in the middle-income group. While analysing the eta value, it is observed that the gender difference in overall gender stereotyping is large but in dimensions below 5lakhs is less. A study done by Hussain et al. (2015) found that gender stereotypes differed based on economic income. There is a significant relationship between economic background in gender stereotyping of working women. There is also a noticeable change towards working women over the years based on their income.

## CONCLUSION

In India, a patriarchal nation, women are seen as inferior, and this gender stereotype mainly causes problems for working women. Working women are more conscious of this since they are the ones that experience gender stereotypes based on their yearly income. Women become aware of their rights and potential when they learn about how unfair and unjust the gender stereotypes in society are. With the difference in attitude, there is also a change towards women based on their income. Women who came from families who earned above 20 lakhs per annum faced the most stereotyping in terms of working, and those in the middle and low-income group faced less stereotyping and were encouraged to work.

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