



## THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' AND PARENTAL GENDER PERCEPTIONS ON THE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND SELF-ESTEEM

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### Abstract

**Background:** Students' careers and personal life are significantly shaped by their education. However, unless the three-way relationship between parents, instructors, and students is strong, it will be impossible to improve children's skills and capacities. Parents and teachers are found to be the initial point of contact for the students. Hence, their gendered perceptions and stereotypes play a vital role in shaping students' self-esteem and motivation levels.

**Purpose:** Against this backdrop, the current study aims to analyse the impact of gendered perceptions of parents and teachers on students' motivation and self-esteem levels. The study is significant because such an impact may further affect academic achievement and a child's personality development.

**Methods:** A secondary data collection method using existing literature was adopted to accomplish the study's aim. The Google Scholar database was used to search studies published for 11 years, from 2011 to 2022.

**Findings:** The study's findings affirmed that teachers and parents unconsciously reflect their gendered perceptions and stereotypes, negatively affecting students' motivation and self-esteem. These perceptions are embedded due to traditional thinking. Constant exposure of children towards such gendered stereotypes may further root such ideas in them.

**Research Gap:** Previous studies have primarily outlined the negative impact of gender stereotypes on personality development and behaviour. Nonetheless, the current study strategically focuses on unveiling the impact of gendered perceptions held by parents and teachers on students' self-esteem and motivation.

**Keywords:** Gendered Perceptions, Stereotypes, Motivation, Self-esteem, Academic Achievement

### 1.0 Introduction

In this globally competitive era, the acquisition of quality education is a critical aim. Education plays a vital role in shaping students' professional and personal lives (Teicher et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the goal of enhancing students' skills and abilities cannot be achieved until the

triangular interaction between parents, teachers, and students is healthy. The healthy interaction between these stakeholders is essential to ensure that the students are highly motivated and their self-esteem is high to take up upcoming challenges (Sattar et al., 2022; Goren & Yemini, 2017). Studies have found that often gendered perceptions or stereotypes held by the parents and teachers, two key stakeholders in students' academic life, may influence students (Yu, 2021). Gender has been historically utilised to describe how society allocates specific pre-defined roles and responsibilities to boys and girls, respectively (Makransky et al., 2019). The manner in which people see their roles as male or female and the behaviours that have come to be associated with masculinity and femininity are both factors in gender (Yarnell et al., 2019). Gender influences how people see themselves so that most members of the same sex associate themselves with particular characteristics. These characteristics impact children's development. A child's environment unquestionably influences the child (Han, 2019; Nazir et al., 2017; Igbo et al., 2015).

Mulvey et al. (2016) accentuate that gender stereotypes often evolve during preschool and are deeply entrenched by adulthood. Several scholars have strategically focused on outlining the key factors that result in gender-related expectations (Bernhard & Bernhard, 2022; Cone et al., 2021). However, there is limited evidence on how such gendered perceptions by parents and teachers, the two closest stakeholders of children during their initial years, influence them. According to a study by Brandmiller et al. (2020), how teachers perceive their students may impact how frequently they offer positive reinforcement or what grades they assign to them. A student may become more motivated and ready to learn in class if their instructor regards them with high respect and constantly supports and praises them. Similarly, Igbo et al. (2015) affirmed that the student's academic achievement was also affected by the gender stereotypes showcased by teachers. This association was found highly significant in the case of male students, confirming the eminence of the perceptions held by teachers.

On the other hand, parents are another major stakeholder whose opinions, attitudes, and responses to their children, particularly during their early school years, influence students' motivation and self-esteem (Li et al., 2022). Understanding that parents are every child's first point of contact is crucial. Moreover, children often seek their parents' validation to decide their choices. Hence, when parents reflect gendered perceptions towards the abilities and skills that their children possess, it is likely to develop self-doubt among them. This may negatively affect the student's motivation and self-esteem, further affecting their achievements (McCoy et al., 2022; Morawska, 2020; Wairimu et al., 2016). As a result, psychologists often emphasise

parental autonomy support which refers to the parents' active encouragement and support for their children. The environment parents create for their children, emphasising structure, order, and clear rules, is known as parental autonomy support. On the other hand, dysfunctional control or excessive control is used to describe parental behaviours that are unduly controlling, dictatorial, or intrusive with their children without equally emphasising care and concern (Ma et al., 2022; Cheung et al., 2022).

Considering the eminence of parents and teachers and the implications of their gendered perceptions, the study aims to analyse the impact of this association on students' motivation and self-esteem levels. For this purpose, addressing the following objectives shall be the essential purpose of the current study:

- To understand how gendered stereotypes persist in academics.
- To evaluate the significance of motivation and self-esteem on educational outcomes.
- To analyse the implications of gendered perception of parents and teachers on students' motivation and self-esteem.
- To suggest the way forward for improving the prevailing situation.

## **2.0 Methods**

In order to accomplish the aims and objectives of the study, a qualitative method with the help of the existing course of literature was used, wherein the selection of the pertinent studies served as the foundation for developing this entire paper. Searching for papers and articles covering the concepts relevant to this study was part of identifying relevant studies. Thus, the selected publications were cited concerning the current topic to acquire a thorough grasp of the vital factors related to the implications of gendered perspectives of parents and instructors for students. Thus, to evaluate pertinent studies and data from early 2011 to 2022, a thorough search of the literature using Google Scholar and databases was conducted through articles, books, journals, case studies, and conference papers. The data and study materials were restricted to English based on the relevant keywords associated with the subject under research. The appropriate prior research papers were found and chosen based on the literature search using the following terms: stereotypes, gendered perspectives, motivation, self-esteem, teacher, parents, and feedback.

## **3.0 Literature Review**

### **3.1 Gender Stereotypes in Academics**

Deaux & Kite (1993) defined that gender stereotypes result from categorising people according to their gender into groups like women, men, transgender people, and two-spirit people, among

others. It is usual for individuals' specific characteristics to be overlooked when people are categorised into gender groups since they are presumed to share certain features. Stereotyping leads to classification that enables differentiation among diverse gender groupings, which frequently results in varying group values. Wu (2017) highlighted that women are still underrepresented in many occupations that require extensive education despite the notable improvements in educational achievement in recent decades. Girls and women are likely to get excessive attention and experience distortions to conform to presumptive assumptions in a primarily male group. Confirmation biases, which cause people to focus on signals that support their pre-existing opinions and avoid those that contradict them, can also perpetuate gender stereotypes. Despite the statutory designation of academia as a gender-neutral environment, it is pretty simple to identify an imbalance among students and teachers globally. Women have progressed academically over the past few decades, but there are still impediments to higher-level entry. Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in academia (Määttä & Dahlborg-Lyckhage, 2011). Most recent studies demonstrate that more women than men are registered and graduated from higher education. Nonetheless, there are discernible differences between men's and women's college major preferences. As women are less likely to choose these courses, there exists a gender gap within the disciplines of science, technology, and engineering in most developed countries (Taher, 2022). It is noted that there are several reasons for this important phenomenon, one of which states that women are less receptive to regular profits than males are when making educational decisions based on predicted profits. As a result, individuals are less likely to participate in study programmes like STEM programmes with higher investment returns (Declercq et al., 2018). It is accepted that gender stereotypes influence academic and career decisions, and numerous research studies have demonstrated this. Nevertheless, there are signs that gender-role models actively contribute to lowering girls' gender-stereotypical behaviour while making academic or career decisions. At any age, it can be active (Olsson & Martiny, 2018). Contrarily, reversed gender stereotyping is visible in nations like Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Sweden, and Iran, where women outnumber men in the education and the STEM fields, even though women are the minority in STEM fields and degree programmes in the majority of countries around the world. In actuality, there are no gender-related academic impediments for Kuwaiti women, according to the 2020 report of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (Malallah et al., 2021). In addition, Academies (2020) conducted surveys of male and female students in STEM colleges to learn more about their motivations for enrolling while observing the attitudes and

perceptions of students. Results indicated that practical elements like interest were to be held accountable for the motivation.

### **3.2 Concept, Need and Importance of Motivation**

Theories governing the concept of motivation are concerned with queries pertaining to why “why” humans are interested in some behaviours and not others. These motivation theories focus on unveiling what influences people to act a certain way (Weiner, 1992). Wigfield et al. (2019) highlight that most motivation theories bi-furcate it into two major yet distinct categories as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. When an individual performs a task for their vested interest or due to personal passion owing to the experience of pleasure and satisfaction, it is referred to as intrinsic motivation (Fishbach& Woolley, 2022). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is channelised as the desire to perform an activity to attain positive consequences. These positive incentives may be in the form of any incentive or even avoiding any negative consequence like punishment (Kuvaas et al., 2017).

With regard to education, academic or achievement motivation can be considered a strong desire of the students to engage in a given learning task to attain their optimum academic outcomes (Stavroulaki et al., 2021). The eminence of motivation for students lies in the fact that higher achievement is found to result in the following beneficial outcomes directly, according to McClelland et al. (2019):

- Eager to achieve new objectives
- Engage in active competition
- Makes an effort to excel in their field
- Set attainable objectives
- Aims to collect feedback on accomplishments and setbacks.

Kickert et al. (2022), in their study, directed that there is a strong need to ensure that the student’s curriculum is developed in a manner that motivates them to develop a passion for a particular discipline. Lack of such passion often results in students learning a particular discipline to attain specific grades instead of practical knowledge. Thus, it can be comprehended that motivation can play a pivotal role in inducing a learner to critically analyse their performance and enhance their efforts to attain success and the resulting happiness with such success (Partovi&Razavi, 2019). In alignment with this, Lavrijsen et al. (2021) accentuated that academic achievement motivation is essential for predicting the extent to which students achieve academic excellence. Many factors affect the motivation level of students.

Regarding education and motivation, many scholars have focused on distinct elements of engagement (Pasion et al., 2020), self-efficacy (Zheng et al., 2020), cultural as well as religious beliefs (Amin et al., 2022) and parents' perceptions (Hornstra et al., 2022; Bureau et al., 2022), learning strategies (Akhmad et al., 2022) and so on are found to be the varied factors that affect students' motivation. Mainly parenting behaviour is reflected as one of the major factors influencing students' academic motivation across different generations and genders (Waterman & Lefkowitz, 2017). Stavroulaki et al. (2021) further suggested that teachers play a similar role to parents' field. Hence, the perceptions and beliefs held by these two stakeholders regarding the student's ability to perform academically strategically predict their actual performance.

### **3.3 Eminence and Role of Self-Esteem**

Motivation is often confused with the aspect of "self-esteem". Motivation can be comprehended as the process of attaining a specific goal. At the same time, self-esteem can be accentuated as the perception held by an individual for their ability to achieve the proposed goals (Moyano et al., 2020). In 1890, William James - the "father" of American psychology in his book "Principles of Psychology" made one of the earliest attempts to define self-esteem. He states self-esteem can be defined as "success divided by pretensions". This means one's ability to predict the extent to which one will succeed in a given task (Rentzsch & Schröder-Abé, 2022). According to Rosenberg (1965, p. 30), self-esteem is either a positive or negative attitude towards self. From the viewpoint of Hewitt (2020), contemporary psychology categorises self-esteem into four distinct dimensions: "acceptance, evaluation, comparison, and efficacy". The eminence of self-esteem can be gauged through the notion that self-esteem plays a pivotal role in one's life because its absence among individuals can result in many negative consequences for them. For instance, a study conducted by Dale et al. (2019) suggested that a lack of self-esteem is associated with the absence of physical activity and deteriorating mental health among children of distinct age groups, gender and abilities.

Furthermore, academically, self-esteem is one of the major attributes that enhance students' achievement (Sharma & Sharma, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Batool, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). A study by Yang et al. (2019) showed that self-esteem was pivotal in predicting students' academic achievement. Moreover, the research also affirmed that demographic variables like age, gender, socio-economic status and family relations were controlled. Thus, their effect on the association between academic achievement and self-esteem was left unmeasured.

One of the most common attributes found in these studies is the parents' underlying role in influencing self-esteem and its impact on academic achievement among children. In alignment

with this, Branden (2021) highlights that dysfunctional families often affect children's self-esteem. This is because often dysfunctional families wherein one of the two or both parents are aggressive ridicule the child resulting in a lack of self-esteem. In contrast, a study by Harris et al. (2015) suggested that the quality of association with the parents does not significantly influence adolescent children's self-esteem. Moreover, Pinquart & Gerke (2019) directed that parenting styles adopted significantly correlate with the children's self-esteem. Nonetheless, it also suggested that the negative self-esteem of the children is not entirely the outcome of the parenting style as a whole but is primarily influenced by distinct stakeholders within the society.

### **3.4 Implications of Gendered Perceptions held by Teachers and Parents on Students**

Gender bias occurs when educational "difference" is based only on biological differences between male and female students (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). Since students, particularly girls, are expected to conform to stereotyped gender norms, gender discrimination continues to lead to disparity in the classroom (Bianco et al., 2011). This gendered perception among teachers has many implications. Due to historical gender roles and still-presented gender stereotypes can lead to unfairness in the classroom, exclusion, and prevention of students from achieving their full potential (Killen et al., 2013). Teachers also give boys more chances than girls to generalise and implement their ideas. While boys receive additional attention when practising math, girls receive more excellent training in reading exercises (Perander et al., 2020). For confirming the gendered perception held by teachers, Berekashvili (2012) stated that inequality persists despite girls more recently displaying success and superior academic performance because teachers continue to have low expectations for girls and undervalue their abilities. Robinson-Cimpian et al. (2014) found "robust evidence suggesting that underrating girls' mathematical proficiency accounts for a substantial portion of the development of the mathematics achievement gap between similarly performing and behaving boys and girls in the early grades," which is consistent with this work. Robinson (2022) further highlighted that these stereotyped beliefs and the ensuing patterns of teacher-student interaction often shape the characteristics and aspirations of students. It is not unexpected that gender-biased expectations lead to low self-esteem and modest aspirations in girls, and confirmed to the earlier outcomes of prior research that inequalities within classroom interactions can cause disparities in learning outcomes. Regarding parents' gendered perceptions, it is important to underline that stereotypical notions about the prevailing gender roles in their culture continue to be held. Strict adherence to gender stereotypes among parents as perceptions have detrimental effects on

children and later life (Adom & Anambane, 2020). As a result, stereotypes may restrict children's aspirations for education and employment and their perceptions of their academic abilities, emotional expression, and social growth. Gendered beliefs are transmitted down the generations following the parent and child's gender (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). The notion that women are best suited for domestic activities, such as childcare and housekeeping, while men ought to be the breadwinners of the family is a result of traditional conceptions of gender roles that emphasise women's aptitude for nurturing and men's leadership skills (Perrone-McGovern et al., 2014). Families are essential to the professional growth of their children. Hence, it is acknowledged that, due to gender stereotypes, the careers of the girls' parents and elder siblings significantly impact the eventual job choices of girl students (Mutekwe et al., 2011). Fernández-Cornejo et al. (2016) added that the impact of gender attitudes varies depending on whether the student is a female or a male, with conventional gender beliefs tending to make female students more likely to forego professional chances while making male students less likely to do so.

**3.5 Findings and Research Gap:** This study has identified differences in teachers' perceptions of students based on their gender and how these differences affect teacher-student interactions, affecting motivation and self-esteem. Similarities are evident in the case of parents' gendered opinions and how they affect students. Based on the review of identified studies, it can be stated that the characteristics and aspirations of students are shaped by these stereotyped expectations and the ensuing patterns of teacher-student interaction, which often function as self-fulfilling prophecies. It is acknowledged that parents with gendered perceptions limit the options and areas of growth for students of both genders. This also causes differences in the traits of boys and girls as well as in how they are perceived by their peers, how they perform and succeed, eventually affecting their motivation and self-esteem. However, the findings from prior studies review have also paved the way for those research areas that are not thoroughly investigated and lead to several research gaps. It is observed that increased discussion about and a greater understanding of gender inequities at school may result from new scientific findings linking gender-biased assumptions and expectations with teacher-student relationships in the classroom. Nonetheless, very few studies have initiated investigations on this aspect in the current context. Hence, it becomes crucial to examine the "gender order" that teachers' views reflect within the educational system and how much and to what extent traditional gender stereotypes are incorporated into teachers' perceptions and regular teacher-student interactions. Further, an essential physiological need in a student's growing environment is warmth and

affection from parents. If the need is not met, personality development issues and differences in students' perceptions of their parents may result. Parents' opinions about gender affect how male and female children are raised and supported. Therefore, it is essential to consider how parental psychological support can help children overcome any unconscious gender bias on their parents' part. This points to yet another research gap since studies frequently ignore the psychological factors at the parental end that may influence gender bias.

#### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Students that adhere rigidly to traditional gender roles may experience adverse effects which differ in terms of experiences for male and female students in terms of their motivation and self-esteem. These preconceptions may constrain students' expectations for their schooling and careers. For the study, it can be inferred that teachers' perceptions of gender lead them to assume that pupils of opposite genders have highly diverse aptitudes for all academic topics. Due to gender bias, teachers strongly tend to correlate different school courses with different genders, where girls are viewed as talented in the humanities and arts and are denied any talents for math and sports. This has an impact on the motivation of girl students and their self-esteem. Similar to how girls are viewed as more developed in languages and the humanities, boys are considered motivated in STEM fields like math, the natural sciences, and sports.

It is also confirmed that parents' gender bias towards their children's talents and capabilities is likely to cause self-doubt in them. This might affect the students' motivation and self-esteem, influencing their accomplishments. How children use this knowledge to shape their own gendered opinions is fascinating, given that parents' gender ideologies and gendered behaviours are not always consistent. Hence, it is recommended that parents and students must together be exposed to workshops about gender sensitivity. This will allow both parents and students to be gender-sensitive. It helps clarify the difficulties and issues with the societal views on gender. It involves an awareness of gender-based prejudice and stereotypes. Gender-sensitive parenting has an impact on children's growth, decision-making, and character as they get older. Furthermore, it can be highlighted that teachers' gendered perceptions should be gauged during the recruitment process through psychometric tests. This will set a benchmark for ensuring that teachers are free from such stereotypes. Since teachers and parents are the closest stakeholders for students, their behaviours will significantly impact students' psychology. Furthermore, it can be stated that the use of gender-neutral language is highly critical. Along with this, gender stereotypes should be eradicated from home itself. Children often learn gender stereotypes from their near and dear ones. As a result, it is crucial to induce

in the mind of children that no specific roles and responsibilities are the prerogative of any one particular gender. Rather the belief should be instilled in them that performance of tasks, choice of subject and career needs to be based on an individual's interest, motivation and capacity rather than gendered perceptions of society.

### **5.0 Limitation of the Study and Future Research Direction**

The current study has some limitations that should be considered and can be addressed in future research studies. The gendered perceptions are observed even in workplaces and organisations. However, the current study mainly focuses on exploring teachers' and parental gendered perceptions. The implications of gendered perceptions of teachers and parents are reviewed in the study. Hence, the current study is limited to examining their effect on students' motivation and self-esteem. Nonetheless, the implications of gendered perceptions are also acknowledged for students' overall performance, development and attitude. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should look into the implications of gendered perceptions among teachers and parents on other aspects that are significant for students' performance and development. The way gender stereotypes affect the attitude of students should also be investigated. Both groups are likely to respond favourably when parents and teachers are aware of the sometimes unconscious, unintentional, and "taken for granted" ways in which stereotyping functions. Further research is necessary to see whether this overestimation is present in other academic areas at the school and whether it affects the boys' overall sense of entitlement. This research offers intriguing considerations for educators regarding the circumstances in which schools promote or confront gender stereotypes and the role teachers, and parents play in maintaining or modifying such preconceptions.

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