

## To Study the Change in Trends of Gender Schemas and Its Impact on Youth

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### ABSTRACT

In the study, the researcher has studied the changes in trends of gender schemas in youth. Gender schemas refer to the roles that are brought upon by society and people of both the genders are expected to fulfill these roles. But there are some people who do not identify with either of the genders and so that leads to exclusion of the gender non-conforming peoples. The study is focused on how gender schemas affect the course of opportunities and decision-making regarding career and how the current gender schemas affect gender non-conforming youth and non-binary youth. The data is taken from the internet; from various websites, and articles. This study concludes that gender roles do play a role in shaping the person's career options. Gender roles are being questioned among the youth and are being challenged. Inclusivity of gender non-conforming people and non-binary people has also increased, providing them with more opportunities to enhance their lifestyle. This research also states that the increasing awareness about breaking gender roles and schemas will lead a platform with equal view of both male and female counterparts and reduce the competition between both genders and enhance cooperation.

**Keywords:** *Gender schemas, Gender non-conformity, Non-binary, Youth*

To dive deep into the subject of gender schemas, we must first know what gender is. Gender refers to the sex a person identifies with. There are two sexes, male and female and gender is the social construct about the sex. Sometimes, a boy can be more feminine, and a girl can be more masculine. A more masculine girl is usually called a 'tomboy' because she behaves like a boy and has more masculine preferences than other girls.

There are certain roles assigned to men and women traditionally, and the fulfilment of these roles is what is expected of them. But there has been a change in pattern over a period and they are questioning these traditional roles and going out of their comfort zones, sketched out by society for such a long period of time and questioning masculinity and femininity.

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### ***Gender Schemas***

There are two types of gender related schemas, given by Martin and Halverson (1981) which states that the first is the 'superordinate' schema that is formed as a basic understanding and conceptualization which helps them categorize characteristics, traits, and objects into basic male and female categories. The second gender related schema is called 'own-sex' and in this the child develops a schema regarding themselves, their own gender, and what roles they are supposed to take. The second theory about Gender Schemas was proposed by Sandra Bem in 1981. She said that children learn about their male and female roles from the culture they live in. The children adjust their behavior to align with the roles of the culture. If the children are raised in a traditional culture, they might form a schema in their minds that, women are supposed to be caring and are supposed to raise children and help the family. Whereas, a man should be the protector, and do all the labour and is the sole breadwinner of the family, and that a man is stronger than a woman.

Naturally, women take up more submissive role in such culture. In contradiction to this, a child raised in a progressive household will not have such views as stated above and will believe that any job can be done by anyone regardless of their gender and that each job is equally important. Gender schemas play a huge role in shaping the worldview of the child. Gender schemas are picked up by the child by watching their parents, family and the culture that they live in. Children who are brought up in different cultures will have different schemas. These schemas shape one's thinking styles.

### ***Gender non-conformity***

Gender non-conformity refers to not adhering to traditional gender roles. Gender non-conforming individuals do not associate themselves with any gender role of society. These individuals may prefer terms such as 'agender', 'androgenous', gender-fluid, genderqueer, etc. Many different cultures of society still have traditional gender roles and the individuals are expected to follow those roles. These gender roles include characteristics traits, behavior, attitudes and other tasks that are expected from one sex.

These gender roles often lead to stereotyping of the sexes. "Men are strong and stoic", "Women are caring and look after kids and family", these roles often end up dictating who is the one responsible for earning money, provide protection and who is responsible to look after and take care of the members of the family. But that might not always be the case. Men and women can take up each other's roles and perform them well. Gender non-conforming individuals often struggle with their own identity because they do not relate to the gender roles that society expects from them.

### ***Non-binary***

The dictionary definition of non-binary is: 'not relating to, composed of, or involving just two things. Non-binary individuals refer to the people who do not identify themselves with either of the genders. They are born with a specific sex but identify with the opposite sex. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella which supports many gender identities that do not fit in the binary genders.

The population of the non-binary has long been neglected and is seen as something which is 'abnormal'. But what is important to note here is that one in every 2000 people is born with an intersex condition, according to Intersex Society of North America. Non-binaries are not confused about their identity. They are sure of who they are and aware of the fact that they do not fall into gender stereotypes. There are a lot of stereotypes regarding non-binary

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individuals that they are deemed 'crazy' and 'not human'. But we can see more individuals step up and give representation of the community so they can be included without any prejudices and taboos about them.

### *Youth*

Youth is best understood as the transition between childhood and adulthood, given by United Nations (2013). The United Nations, for statistical purposes defines youth between the age of 15 to 24 years. Youth is the time when one is young. The dictionary defines youth as appearance, freshness, vigor, spirit, etc. It is the characteristic of when someone is young and has a lot of potential to help themselves and society.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Margaret L. Signorella and Irene Hanson Frieze (2007) conducted a study on girls in grades 2 to 12. The test was designed to measure gender related activities, occupational preferences and gender related traits. The study showed a significant change between the result of children and adolescent; especially a decrease in gender stereotyping with age. It also showed that children had stronger and more rigid associations than adolescents.

Joyce Endendijk and Christel Portengen (2022) their study was about children's views about their career and the contribution of the family associated with the children's understanding of their own gender schemas along with the parents' career and gender roles in the family. The reports from the children and the parents were then combined and it was seen that parents' especially women's gender roles and family involvement are associated with children's gender roles and involvement in the family. Additionally, children felt similarity with the same gender parent. This study shows that parents' career, work and roles affect how children envision their future and their roles.

Sergio, Leonardo, et., al (2019) conducted their study among adolescent student girls. They conducted the study on 93 girls (16 years old), the data was collected through the application of Female Inventory of Gender Schemas of Self-Conception. This test measures the factors of the female gender schema. The data was analyzed by Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed that the gender schemas differed significantly from Egocentricism, Neglect, Social adjustment, and sensuality.

### *Sample*

This study was conducted on youth across the world. Data is largely collected from USA, UK, and India.

### *Objectives*

1. To understand the influence of gender schemas on career opportunity.
2. To study the dilemma of gender non-conforming and non-binary people.
3. To investigate the increase aid for non-binary.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

Gender schemas basically categorize us and other people we use in our everyday life. We refer to various individuals and work with them every day. The youth must face a lot of challenges and make important decisions to find out and secure their place in the world. Apart from having to play the role of a mature adult, they have yet to figure out a lot of things. The most important decision that youth must make in this time is what career they

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should choose to lead a good life. They must look for a role or a career that caters to their needs, desires and interests.

The main goal while looking for any career opportunity is that the job should pay them well, may not be overexerting and be something that they like to do. So, where do the schemas come in play? While deciding for a job, the individual looks for long term goals to fulfill. Wanting to settle down, have a nice pay, stable job, and something that will promise longevity and assurance. Our idea of the future and our roles is based on these schemas. More young girls tend to look for jobs that do not need much labour work whereas men are more likely to take up jobs that are more challenging. There are also workplace hurdles that women face more than men. Gender pay gaps, not receiving promotions and doubting your talent and abilities, pregnancy discrimination, etc. are all caused due to gender schemas. Because traditionally women are supposed to be at home and look after children and the family.

Women aren't looked at as the breadwinners of the family. If a husband and wife are both working, and the family faces a crisis which requires one of them quitting the job; usually the wife is asked to quit the job, because 'how can a man stay home and do nothing?' 'It is the woman's duty to look after the family.' Such prejudices can lead to discrimination. Girls and women are supposed take up the more submissive role not only in the family but also in their workplace and society. But the picture is changing in the recent times and there are more women who are stepping forward and taking lead and speaking up about the discrimination that is faced. For the second objective of this study; physiologically men and women are different from each other. When a person is born, they are assigned a gender at birth. Most of them resonate with and can relate to their sex and are also able to perform all the tasks that are expected from them. However, there are individuals who aren't used to or for some reason do not fit into these gender roles. These individuals fit under the umbrella of either 'gender non-conformity' or 'non-binary'. There are a lot of stereotypes when it comes to gender non-conforming and non-binary. Non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals are aware of the choices that they make. It is important to keep in our minds that there is nothing wrong with them. They are human beings who can work and gain their place in society. The reason why gender non-conforming individuals and non-binary individuals are excluded so often is because people don't know how to approach them, are confused about their identity and they just 'seem different' i.e. They don't fit into the gender schemas. As society is progressing, there is significantly more awareness about various cultures and access to so many new things. We can observe many young people trying to create space for non-binary and give them representation. Being repressed and not having many opportunities to show their talents, there still are a lot of areas where they need representation. Individuals at jobs and colleges should be more accepting and respectful toward them. Lots of non-binary individuals are also opening up about their struggles on social media.

### **Limitations of the research:**

1. The research only talks about the roles of youth, non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals. It does not elaborate on the physiology and psychology of them.
2. It is not quantitative research; hence the data used is referenced from various articles and websites on the internet.

## CONCLUSION

From this study, we can say that not only career choices but almost all our expectations for our future and goal setting are based on our gender schemas. It is important to address this issue and provide a platform so that men and women can understand each other's differences and respect them. Even gender non-conforming youth and non-binary youth need the representation to come up and work. This is qualitative research, so we can conduct a quantitative study in the future.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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