Research Paper

The Influence of Media on Gender Stereotype Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses media representation as the continuator of gender stereotypes among the youth, aged 18 to 25. This research adopts a quantitative correlational approach in setting how the media differ in their role in shaping perceptions of gender roles. This paper applies the theories on media influence in agenda-setting, framing, and cultivation to relate it to public opinion in a general reinforcement of traditional gender norms. The Gender Stereotype Scale (GSS) and Multimedia Influence Scale (MMIS) were employed to gather data, revealing that participants show moderate endorsement of gender stereotypes while perceiving limited media influence. Thus, both social and traditional media in the forms of television and cinema are either separately or together strengthening as well as weakening gender norms. The traditional portrayals are accentuated within the cultural context, particularly in India, so that young adults learn stereotypical gender roles from media intake. The study underlines the necessity for divergent media replications and focused educational interventions to challenge stereotypes and promote equity. Limitations include reliance upon self-report data and a small, nonrepresentative sample, with longitudinal investigations being called to the fore.

***Keywords:** Media Influence, Gender Stereotypes, Young Adults, Social Norms, Representation*

Media influence could be the power of the media (be it television, newspapers, social media, and any other form of communication) to influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The media can shape how one perceives the world while making choices and achieving a standpoint or opinion about political matters, consumer habits, and basically anything else.

Being an indispensable part of a sociological study for this long time, media has catered to perform one of the fundamental functions of sociology-that is to shape the way a person perceives the specific reality by influencing public opinion. From newspaper and radio and television to social media, internet media too mark a pronounced influence on people's perception of reality. For a long time, scholars have debated on the extent and nature of this tendency. Accompanying these roles Walter Lippmann described in 1922 that a media

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creates the pictures in our heads or set how we conceive the existing reality. Similarly, media effect theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964) proposed that the means in which messages are conveyed plays a highly influential role in how those messages are received by arguing that the medium itself is the message. In recent years, the tendency of some writers including Chomsky and Herman (1988) has looked at how media supports dominant social class by framing the reality in a way that supports politics and economy of the state. In the case of today's availability of digital media, the role of media in molding individual behavior, social perception, and various other social actions has become more intense. Media influence has only heightened with the advent of digital media into the lives of people, their social attitude, and their collective actions. However, this study was extremely important on its own not only to understand how modern society came into being but also for the challenge that it has been witnessing in the process of fast-moving information and misinformation coming across in the digital ecosystem.

The gender stereotype is a preconceived notion or belief of the supposed characteristics, roles, and behaviors considered appropriate or acceptable for an individual based on whether that person is male or female. Stereotypes often contain assignations of certain qualities or roles to men and women, which perpetuate traditional gender norms.

Historically, these stereotypes have contributed to inequality in treatment and expectations as they add depth to social norms and shape every aspect of life, from career choices to leadership positions and interpersonal relationships to family roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Stereotypes are deeply embedded in cultural, social, and institutional structures, influencing perceptions and the self-concept. Research has shown that such biases can run as deep as any sector, including hiring, academic performance, and outcomes for mental health, as stated by Ridgeway and Correll (2004). For instance, gender stereotyping portrays women as more nurturing and communal and men as more agentic and dominant. That status influences behavior, restricts opportunities, and fuels disparities in science and technology, leadership, and other areas, according to Heilman (2012). Media plays a significant role in confirming and perpetuating gender stereotypes, primarily because it often brings with it what society considers to be the roles of men or women.

On the other hand, through advertising, film and television, and indeed through social media, the media sports stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity-for instance that women are nurturing and appearance-conscious while men are most likely to be assertive and career-oriented. Representations that can silently or openly reinforce the expectations of the society in question may also affect individual self-concept, aspiration, and practice. Since it remains a source of influence, the current need for more diverse, nuanced, and inclusive representations that challenge normative gender rather than reinforce them is increasing.

Aim
To study the influence of media on gender stereotype among young adults. The study on the influence of media on gender stereotypes aims to explore how various forms of media contribute to the development and reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes among young adults. This research is significant as it addresses the pervasive impact of media representations on individual beliefs and societal norms regarding gender.

Research Question
1. What impact does media exposure have on the young adult's perceptions of gender roles?
2. What types of media-do for example, social media, television, and cinema-between the most young adults' beliefs about gender stereotypes?
3. What role does social media play in reifying or debunking the stereotypes of gender among young people?

Hypothesis
1. Exposure to content in the media; exposure to content in traditional media-pictures from movies and television significantly influences young adults' perceptions of traditional gender roles by reinforcing stereotypical beliefs.
2. The belief in gender-related stereotypes runs deeper with young adults than traditional media and is much more substantial with media that allow or promote the use of user-generated content.
3. The social media interfaces young adults with gender-related information in such a manner that, both by challenging and reinforcing the norms, it affects perception regarding gender stereotypes based on the nature of the content accessed and influencers followed.

Variables
- **Independent variable:**
  - Media influence
- **Dependent variable:**
  - Gender stereotype

Operational Definition
Independent variable
Media Influence:
Media influence refers to the ability of messages conveyed through the media to influence people's thoughts, opinions, or actions. There are quite a few types of media influence, including cognitive changes—changes in what people know or understand—emotional responses—feelings created by media content—and behavioral changes—changes in what people do or how they make choices.

Gender Stereotypes:
The term gender stereotype refers to the overall and very simplistic assumption or belief pertaining to what the characteristics, roles, and behaviors appropriate for an individual would be based on his or her gender. It has preconceived notions assuming what men or women should or shouldn't do, based upon societal norms and how people are culturally educated to behave.

Conceptual definition
Media influence
1. Media Effect Theories:
Agenda-Setting Theory: This theory assumes that the media sets agenda and controls agenda-setting by placing some issues ahead of others in the media. Consequently, audiences then believe that is what matters in their own lives as well (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Framing Theory: This theory explains how the presentation of information incites audience interpretation. Media frames the way audiences think of a problem, by focusing on specified aspects of the story (Entman, 1993).

Cultivation Theory: This explains that the long-term exposure of media content will mold a person's perceptions of reality such that they would assimilate the views of the dominant messages themselves in the media (Gerbner et al. 1986).

2. Audience Demographics:
Moderators of message acceptance and interpretation can even be individual differences including age, gender, education level, or previous beliefs, among others. For instance, some stereotypes presented in media could affect younger audiences more because they have yet to reach the peak stage of human development (Wood, 1994).

3. Contextual Factors:
The influence of the media is heavily relied on the social and cultural context within which it is being consumed. For instance, through the impacts of peer influence, family dynamics, or societal norms, the ideas mediated can be reinforcing or challenging of them (Nikonov, 2013).

4. Feedback Mechanisms: The interaction between the media producer and the consumer is dynamic. Audiences not only receive messages but also give feedback through their consumption patterns and social interactions, which may influence future media content (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

Gender stereotype
Stereotypes about gender refer to generalized beliefs of what attributes, characteristics, or roles are deemed appropriate for men and women. Stereotypes can be either descriptive-that is, describing what men and women are believed to be like-or prescriptive-that is, prescribing what they ought to be like (EIGE, 2021).

1. Development of Gender Stereotypes:
Socialization Processes: From an early age, the individual is socialized to fit into gender roles by family, education, and media. Such socialization is used to perpetuate traditional views of masculinity and femininity (Wood, 1994).
Cultural Norms: By social norms, the accepted behaviors would vary with sexes. This leads to individuals adopting such stereotypes (OHCHR, 2020).

2. Effect on Behaviours and Attitudes: -Gender stereotypes limit human development by locking out individuals in education, careers, and other personal relationships. For instance, they may lock out women to take STEM-related careers like electrical engineering because of stereotypes indicating that it is a masculine job (Iberdrola, 2023).
- These stereotypes fuel discrimination and inequality in almost all fields, ranging from work life, where stereotyping about the gender kind prevents women from attaining career advancement (NYU Scholars, 2012).

3. Intersectionality: Gender stereotypes do not work in isolation but are aligned with other social categories of race, class, and sexual orientation. This exacerbates the effects for the marginalized group (EIGE, 2021).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Media representation of gender stereotypes is a critical area that scholars focus on, particularly concerning young adults in the Indian subcontinent. Many studies emphasize how media representations influence perceptions regarding gender roles to maintain traditionalism in personal lives.

Media Representation and Gender Stereotypes

Research shows that most media, particularly on television and cinema screens, portray women in stereotypical roles, such as only housewives or even fantasy objects. Indian television, according to Kaur and Singh (2021), is still habitual with depicting women in secondary roles, probably repeating the social traditions that make them stick in the same role. Underrepresentation situations decisively lead to the acceptance of gender stereotypes by young adults, thus building a perspective about the prospects in personal as well as professional lives.

Impact on Attitudes of Young Adults

Sharma et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between exposure to media and young adults' attitudes toward gender roles. The authors concluded from their study that youth who are exposed to media content that promotes traditional gender roles then internalize these beliefs. This maintains the stereotype that is limited, which means youth exposed to these media have a tendency to find expression in the more conventional gender roles.

Cultural Background in India

Add to that, cultural context makes it challenging for media influence in India. Ideas about masculinity and femininity are already well-set in society and often get replicated in regional media portrayals. According to Verma and Choudhury, " Stereotypical presentations of women are seen in every Bollywood movie. Through these movies, the social expectation of young adults towards gender behavior is outlined" (2021).

Emerging Research Trends

Modern researchers acknowledge digital media as an influencer in the creation of gender constructs among youths. Singh et al. (2024) proved that exposure to the critical discourses enhances the more complex understanding of gender identity among the youth. It means that even though traditional media continues to perform their stereotypes, the digital platform creates rooms for challenges of hegemonic perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

It is a quantitative co-relational research study which is based on the measurement quality or amount. It is emphasized on statistical and numerical analysis of data.

Sampling

Sampling is a technique used to arrive at a conclusion about a population by selecting and examining a small proportion of that population. The sample used in this research young adults aged between 18 to 25.

Sample Technique

Purposive sampling technique is used. It is non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of population and the objective of the study.

- Population: Young Adults
- Sample Size: 100

Inclusion Criteria

My study includes a population of young adults at the age of 18 to 25. Men and women were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

My study excludes individuals below 18 years of age and above the age 25. The study does not include people with learning disabilities and or those who have been diagnosed with mental disorders or conditions.

Tools Description

A questionnaire method is used to collect data for this study. This study uses two questionnaires to measure influence of media and gender stereotype.

The Gender Stereotype Scale

Author. Sekhar, A. P. M., & Parameswara, J. (2021)

Scoring Procedure. This questionnaire has 23 items Which has 5 points scale starts from (1 to 5). Items are rated on a five-point scale: 0-Strongly disagree, 1-Disagree, 2-Neutral, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly agree. The scale included 23 items, indicating a good model fit for these factors. The scale demonstrated strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.85 and a split-half reliability score of 0.76. Additionally, face validity and content validity were verified. The scale also showed concurrent validity with an existing standardized gender stereotype scale, yielding a score of 0.40.

Multidimensional media influence scale

Author. Cusumano and Thompson, (2001)

Scoring Procedure. The questionnaire has 11 items. It has a 3-point rating scale, having 11 items which are further grouped into 3 components: Awareness, Internalization, and Pressure. Validation of scores obtained in this research showed a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79).

Statistics Used

In this study, the influence of media on gender stereotype among young adults under the age of 18 to 25 is assessed using jamovi. This analysis determines the influence of media on gender stereotype among young adults.

Data Collection and presentation

Questionnaires were provided Online through Google Forms to the young adults. Prior to questions, they were informed of the objectives of the study and measures taken towards giving informed consent not to participate and responses are anonymous. Therefore, the provision for completing the survey at the participants' convenience in three weeks was available. To conceal identities and allow respondents to contribute in an honest, unbiased way, the responses were collected anonymously. Anonymity allowed for an open, reflective contribution in regard to their experiences of exam anxiety. The gathered responses during the data collection period were then compiled and prepared for further analysis into the influence of media on gender stereotype among young adults.

Data Analysis

Descriptive		
	Multi Media Influence Scale	**Gender Stereotype Scale**
N	100	100
Missing	0	0
Mean	8.25	24.9
Median	7.50	24.0
Standard deviation	5.31	15.5
Minimum	0	0
Maximum	22	70

Multimedia influence scale

The analysis of the Multimedia Influence Scale, based on the provided descriptive statistics, reveals some important insights that one may get about multimedia influences on respondents' perceptions and experiences. The mean score achieved for MMIS is 8.25. Such a result indicates a moderate level of perceived influence exerted by multimedia respondents have, and it suggests that respondents are generally aware of impacts but do not assess as having greater influence the presence of multimedia. Not stated directly, one would presume the mode to be somewhere around 7 or 8. Thus, it can be deduced that most respondents' responses are concentrated within these figures that support the concept of moderate influence. Not stated directly, one would presume the mode to be somewhere around 7 or 8. Thus, it can be deduced that most respondents' responses are concentrated within these figures that support the concept of moderate influence. The standard deviation of 5.31 indicates moderate variability in responses. This suggests that while many respondents rated their experiences similarly, there are notable differences in individual perceptions of multimedia influence. The scores range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 22. This relatively wide range indicates that while some respondents perceive minimal influence from multimedia, others report significantly higher levels of influence.

The mean (8.25) is higher than the median (7.50), this suggests a right-skewed distribution, where a small number of respondents likely rated their experiences much higher than the majority.

The mean score reveals that respondents do perceive some degree of influence by multimedia, which can, however, be slight enough not to warrant attention or action yet. The spread in the distribution reveals that, whereas a number of people do have influential effects, there is, however, a section of the population that might be grossly affected by multimedia exposures. This may be attended to by more specified remedial measures to counteract unwanted effects or strengthen desired effects. The skewness of observed responses also asks for further qualitative research to specify the specific factors or types of content in multimedia that are perceived as most impactful or troubling.

Gender Stereotype Scale

Descriptive statistics would provide crucial evidence into respondents' perceptions regarding gender norms by analyzing the Gender Stereotype Scale. On GSS, the mean score is 24.9. This reflects partial endorsement of traditional notions about gender stereotypes by the respondents. It suggests that people usually give in to the fact that perhaps there are some gender norms, but they do not support these considerably. The median score is reported as 24.0, marginally lower than the mean score. This observation makes it indicative that,

though average scores are inflated by many high ratings, most of the respondents assessed their views on gender stereotypes at or below this median threshold. This is not mentioned but can be inferred that the mode also approximates to 24 since most of the respondents have clumped their responses around this figure in supporting the claim of a moderate affirmation of gender stereotypes.

A standard deviation of 15.5 suggests that the responses are widely dispersed. That is, although many respondents rated their perceptions similarly, there is a high degree of difference in perceptions regarding gender stereotypes. Scores range from 0, the lowest value, to 70, the highest value. Such a wide range suggests that some respondents reported low support for gender stereotypes and others a much higher level. The mean score is also slightly higher than the median score at 24.9 and 24.0, respectively, suggesting a relatively weak right-skewed distribution by which very few respondents probably scored their perceptions significantly higher than most respondents.

The average score means that people reach the level of conformity to traditional gender roles; however, they are probably still not compliant enough to raise any red flags or alert at this point. The standard deviation has emerged highly increased, indicating vast diversity in response, as people react in different manners towards genders. It may imply a call for focused educational initiatives or interventions against and in terms of challenging such stereotypes, particularly for the people who maintain them with greater intensity. The gap may also spur qualitative researches and other types to study factors or situations under which gender stereotypes are more firmly maintained or challenged.

Comparative Analysis
The comparison of the Multimedia Influence Scale and the Gender Stereotype Scale reveals a difference in beliefs and experiences among participants. Both scales have equal sample sizes that number 100 and are free from missing data to provide a big dataset. The mean score for GSS is much higher at 24.9 compared to that of MMIS at 8.25, hence concluding participants that perceive the opinion regarding greater endorsement of traditional gender stereotypes rather than the influence of multimedia. This is further validated when using median scores, which show that GSS has a median of 24.0 against 7.50 for MMIS, meaning that most respondents scored around average levels of endorsement of gender stereotypes while scoring lower on perceptions of influence by multimedia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Multimedia Influence Scale and Gender Stereotype Scale affords very good insight as to how respondents perceive multimedia in comparison to media and traditional gender roles. Using a sample size of 100 for the scales that had no missing responses should provide a rich summary of answers by participants. It was found that mean ratings were 24.9 for GSS, which represents a moderate to strong perception of gender stereotypes. On the other hand, MMIS has 8.25-that is, perception of influence of multimedia is rather low. Median ratings further make this gap evident: GSS at 24.0 and MMIS at 7.50, thus indicating that most the respondents' ratings clustered around these values.

The GSS has considerably greater variance in response variability, with a standard deviation of 15.5 against 5.31 for MMIS. This suggests that perceptions of gender stereotypes are quite diverse among the respondents; where some strongly support them, others entirely reject them, illustrating the wide range of social attitudes prevalent within the group. The lower variance indicated by MMIS presents that respondents generally share the same view

regarding the outcome of multimedia in that it may reflect a general consensus on their limited impacts.

Scores range also, from 0 to 70 for GSS and 0 to 22 for MMIS, which once again reflects that, comparatively, perceptions of gender stereotypes have a far greater range than those regarding the influence of multimedia. This infers that even though the respondent acknowledged some influence of multimedia, their attitudes towards gender are more marked and diverse, reflecting an intervention gap that calls for such programmers. Specialized education programs targeted at such disparities are likely to increase the impact of the media, make people aware of gender stereotyping, and enhance social interaction and well-being among individuals in schools.

CONCLUSION

The results of MMIS and GSS will give preliminary results as early findings in exploring the extent to which media and the related social norms serve as a source of influence on an individual's evaluation. From the results, there is an indication that the respondents are aware that there is an influence coming out of multimedia: by the average score in the MMIS being 8.25, but their opinion regarding the gender stereotype is much more sharpened, evident by the GSS average score of 24.9. This paradox proves that there is greater social influence on traditional gender orientation than the perceived media influence. Variability in the responses also presents differences-the GSS had a higher standard deviation-15.5, whereas the MMIS had 5.31. This result not only indicates that opinions about gender stereotypes vary widely but also conveys that there is strong intersubjectivity about gender stereotypes, wherein some respondents have been very for the stereotypes and others against.

This research finding suggests a call for targeted programs that will counter media influence and negative gender stereotyping in educational environments. If educators are willing to expose students to information about the nature and intent of media portrayals, while contesting unhealthy gender stereotypes, they may help their students resist these influences. Overall, this study advances understanding of how media and social perceptions are intertwined and, accordingly, the importance of developing comprehensive approaches that are designed to promote individual well-being and healthier social exchange.

Limitation

Research on the Multimedia Influence Scale (MMIS) and Gender Stereotype Scale (GSS) also involves several limitations that are considered to be of great importance. First, the sample size that has been used, which is 100 persons per scale, will not reflect the typical population in any of the demographics including age, gender, and cultural orientation. Furthermore, self-report instrumentation allows for the presence of social desirability bias and other respondent biases that may impact the validity of the responses obtained. The study limits the strength of the associations between multimedia influence and gender stereotypes made through cross-sectional investigations, thus requiring longitudinal investigations to clarify the direction of these changes over time. Further, as much as both instruments have established reliability and validity, there could be unmeasured variables that affect respondents' perceptions which may not have been captured, which could eventually affect the study outcomes. Finally, some external influences such as current or normal media consumption trend through the study period may have pervasively affected participants' perceptions hence the results would include additional complexity.

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