

**A STUDY ON GENDER ROLE CONDITIONING IN
PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN OF KERALA**

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

*Submitted to the Deputy Secretary & Regional Head,
University Grants Commission - SWRO, Bangalore*

UGC-MRP in EDUCATION

Ref. No. MRP (H) – 1662/11-12/KLKE024/UGC-SWRO

Dr. V. K. USHADEVI

Associate Professor & HOD, M.Ed Department

N.S.S. Training College, Pandalam – 689 501

Pathanamthitta District, Kerala State

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

UGC-MRP IN EDUCATION, XITH PLAN PERIOD

UNIVERSITY OF KERALA

2012 - 2014

OBJECTIVES

To study gender role conditioning in Pre-school children by :

- i. Direct observation of children's behaviour in classroom and in play grounds.
- ii. Questionnaire survey among parents to get information regarding children's preference according to gender.
- iii. Questionnaire survey to get an idea about opinion / attitude towards gender stereotyped views of parents of pre-school children.
- iv. Video taping of children's behaviour (responses from unstructured interviews with children) to find out gendered behaviours, if any.
- v. Content analysis of story books/picture books for children.
- vi. Content analysis of pictures drawn by pre-school children.

1.5 HYPOTHESES

- i. Pre-schooler's Preferences for play materials, animals, stickers / Name slips, dress, cartoons and stories, are dependent of their gender.
- ii. The extent of Gender Stereotype of parents of Pre-school children varies.
- iii. Gender Stereotype of parents is dependent of the Gender of their children.
- iv. Gender Preferences of Pre-school children are dependent of the Gender Stereotype of their parents.

- v. Significant difference exists between boys and girls in the Gender Stereotype of their parents.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Method

Questionnaire survey, direct observation, and videotaping- Non experimental method is used for the present study. Content analysis of children's story books and content analysis of drawings by children are also done.

Sample

Sample for the questionnaire survey consists of 165 pre-school children and 165 parents from northern, southern and central districts of Kerala, Viz, Thrissur, Pathanamthitta and Kollam districts, using stratified sampling technique, the strata being gender of the subjects class in which children are enrolled, and the districts in which the schools are located.

Sample for the video recording consists of 60 Pre-school children; sample for unstructured interview with children consists of 10 Pre-school children, and sample for self-reflection through drawings consists of 100 Pre-school children from the same schools.

Tools

Already developed by the investigator are :

1. Questionnaire for parents on Gender Role Conditioning with 20 questions (Appended)
2. Content Analysis Schedule for Story Books for Children with 20 criteria adapted from Day, F.A. (1999)

Analysis

1. Quantitative Analysis using :
 - i. Percentage analysis
 - ii. Chi-square Test of Independence
 - iii. Test of significance of difference between Means for large independent samples.
2. Qualitative content analysis of text books and story books for Pre-schoolers.
3. Qualitative content analysis of videotaped materials on gendered behaviours.
4. Qualitative content analysis of drawings by children.

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS

The data required for the present study are collected by means of questionnaire survey, direct observation and qualitative content analysis of story books for children and

drawings by Pre-school children. Tools of adequate validity and reliability are used for data collection through questionnaire survey. Direct observation and recording of behaviours of pre-school children using handycamera was done seeking the help of trained field assistants proficient in research methods. The same conditions were maintained throughout the process of data collection. Enough rapport with the subjects was established before videotaping. The investigator hopes that the data thus collected would be reliable in further analysis and interpretation of results regarding Gender Role Conditioning in Pre-school children.

As school is the next socializing agency of a child after family, the findings of the study can have implications on how to interact with Pre-schoolers in classrooms and thereby teachers can restructure class room environment to minimize the effect of Gender Role Conditioning.

The present study is delimited to 165 parents of Pre-school children for the questionnaire survey and 60 Pre-school children for direct observation and 10 Pre-school children for the unstructured interview carried out with children. Content analysis of stories which are familiar to Pre-schoolers under study and content analysis of video recordings inside classroom and outdoors and drawings by children (N=100) are also analysed qualitatively using appropriate methods.

As Pre-school education is an induction period, the present study has immense sociological and psychological relevance in shaping personality patterns suitable for recognizing the dignity of integration of roles.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings as a result of Quantitative Analysis are as follows :

Percentage Analysis revealed that Pre-school Children have preferences for play materials, dress, animals, stickers/Name-slips, cartoons and stories.

Percentage Analysis revealed that Gender Stereotyped parents are more when compared to Gender Non-stereotyped parents in the Total Sample and that parents of boys are more Gender Stereotyped than parents of girls; and parents of girls are more Gender Non-Stereotyped when compared to parents of boys.

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Play Materials is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 134.474, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.01]$$

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Dress is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 131.729, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.01]$$

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Animals is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 7.066, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.1]$$

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Stickers/Name-slips is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 64.773, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.01]$$

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Cartoons is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 21.321, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.01]$$

Pre-school Children's Preferences for Stories is dependent on their Gender.

$$[\chi^2 = 14.917, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.01]$$

Extent of Gender Stereotype of parents of boys and girls varies.

Percentage of Gender Stereotyped parents is more when compared to Gender Non-Stereotyped parents in the Total sample.

Parents of boys are more Gender Stereotyped when compared to parents of girls.

Parents of boys having Gender Preference are more Gender Stereotyped when compared to all the other groups of Pre-school Children.

Gender Stereotype of parents is independent on the Gender of their children.

$$[\chi^2 = 0.954, \text{d.f} = 1; p > 0.05]$$

Gender Stereotype of Boys is dependent on the Gender Stereotype of their parents.

$$[\chi^2 = 4.908, \text{d.f} = 1; p < 0.05]$$

Gender Stereotype of Girls is independent of the Gender Stereotype of their parents.

$$[\chi^2 = 0.088, \text{d.f} = 1; p > 0.05]$$

No significant difference exists between boys and girls in the Gender Stereotype of their parents. [C.R., $t = 0.632$, $p > 0.05$]

The major findings as a result of Qualitative Analysis are as follows :

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF STORIES FOR CHILDREN

The stories analysed revealed that

Men are active doers.

Women are happy with their beauty.

Decisions are taken by men most often.

Men are depicted as the mighty warriors and women are depicted as tender.

Pride and beauty are depicted as female attributes.

Physical appearance is important for females.

Beautiful ladies are not intelligent.

Beauty will be rewarded, prince would come to rescue.

Women should sacrifice themselves for men's achievements.

Beauty never lasts too long.

A girl is to get married.

Groom should be given dowry.

It is the father who decides whom the girl should marry.

Boys are mischievous by nature.

Girls' duties are different.

Boys create problem for girls.

Walking at night in darkness is unsafe.

Day-time is safe.

Youngsters should obey the elders.

There are enemies and friends-friends are good, enemies are bad.

SUMMARY OF THE OBSERVATIONS FROM GROUP PLAY

Observations from Group play were :

Initially, children play together, gradually forming groups.

Children form play groups, boys have their groups; girls have their groups, naturally.

Girls visit boys groups sometimes.

But they go back to their original groups immediately.

Boys most often form rigid groups.
Boys won't normally visit girls group.
Boys play more active and sport-like
Girls wait for a long time to be included in boys' groups.
Adventurous play and playing rough noticed more among boys.

SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES FROM INTERVIEWS.

Observations from interview with children

Video No.1 – Alna

The subject interviewed is a girl. She likes to be called by her name only. She likes to wear laacha, the long flowy dress girls wear.

She said, she doesn't like to wear a trouser and shirt as she thinks it a boy's dress.

She thinks mother has to do the home chores and father has to do the outside work. She prefers to wear a bindi for herself but the same things is not suitable for her brother, she says, because he's a boy. Similarly nail polish is meant for girls and women, and not for men, and since her papa is a man, he never puts nail polish. She agrees men and women are different. But at the same time, she notices that both of her parents come home at the same time.

Video No.2 - Aiswarya

The second subject is also a girl. After the initial rapport formation, the child was noticed to wear a chain. On asking who else will wear a chain, she said her sister and her mother wear chains. She said her brothers will not wear chains since they are boys. She also said that only girls wear ear rings, bangles, nose studs and other jewellery, and not boys. When it comes to driving a car, she said father and mother will do it. She likes to play sitting in one place ("Akkuthicku") and also likes to play with dolls. She also likes to role play a teacher. Her responses revealed that she has clear cut view points and preferences regarding names for boys and girls. When the interviewer told her not to wear ear rings from then onwards, she said she will continue wearing it. She knows that girls grow long hair and boys will cut it and shape it short. She clearly differentiates a boys' dress from a girls dress. She said only girls keep flowers on hair, not boys. Regarding play, she said girls will play "Akkuthicku" and boys will play cricket. She said, at school, boys play separate. Even when sitting inside classroom, boys and girls sit separately. She has also noticed that girls will wear a bindi on forehead, whereas some boys will wear the sandal paste instead.

Video No.3 - Shivani

The third interviewer is a girl. Her name is Shivani. Initial rapport was established prior to interview. She likes to wear frock. For boys, it's pants. Girls wear chains, whereas boys don't. Her mummy rides a scooter whereas gents ride a bike, as she said. She said ladies also ride a bike sometimes. Her mummy puts nail polish and she observed her papa won't since he is a man. Girls will put bindi, eyeliner, keeps long hair, ear rings etc. She said boys will wear single ear rings. The interview continued after she singing her favourite song. She said she likes to play with her "Bommakkutty" (Doll). She prefers dolls to cars to play with. She likes cricket but boys play cricket. Homechores, she observed, are done by her mother and father buys things at night. Her mother does all the make-up for her and father goes to the office. When she was asked by the interviewer whether she be called Appu, she said no, since she believes it is a boy's name.

Video No.4 - Ambady

The fourth subject interviewed is a boy. His name is Ambady. He said his mother suggested the name for him. When the interviewer asked whether he would like to be called Ammu, he at once rejected it saying he doesn't like a girl's name. According to him, girls only wear bangles, but boys wear a watch. Girls only will grow long hair, he said, but boys won't. His dress preferences are trouser and shirt. He said girls wear frocks, and boys wear trouser and shirt and he said girls won't wear pants, only boys do it. He said, he likes to play car racing, and not dolls. He likes only cars to play with. Other than cars, he would play with Pappay. He likes cricket. He said both boys and girls play cricket. In his observations only boys ride a bike and not girls. He said both boys and girls dance. Names recalled by him were distinct for boys and girls. He said boys will not wear bangles and chains, will not wear a bow on head, will not keep flowers on hair, will not put nail polish, no ear rings for boys, but he said boys wear ear rings only when they role play Lord Sri Krishna. He knows well that girls put Jasmine and Rose flowers on their hair. The interview ended up with a filmsong in Malayalam.

Video No.5 - Niranjana

Niranjana is a very very shy girl, speaks out very slowly and on prompting. She suggested girl's names only, no boy's name. She said she likes her "Pavakkutty" (doll) to play with. She said she doesn't like riding cars. She was repeatedly asked the same thing, but she said she doesn't like it. She said it's boys who play cricket, and ride cars, but both boys and girls do ride bike. She likes to wear chains, her mother bought it for her, she said only girls wear chains and not boys, girls only wears bindi on forehead, put nail

polish, wear hair clips, ear rings, but she said boys wear a watch. She said boys wear pants and shirt, and girls wear Sari, she too likes sarees. She also said that it is her mother who does the things in the kitchen. She likes to keep Jasmine flowers on hair too. She also likes to grow her hair long which boys don't do.

Video No.6 - Akhilesh

Akhilesh is a boy, he suggested several names for boys and a few names for girls. He likes the toy lorry the most. He said he doesn't like to put nail polish, keep bow or flowers on hair, he likes to keep his hair short; he likes to play with dolls. He likes pants and shirt. He said it's girls who wear frocks and skirts. He also doesn't like to wear ear rings, bindi, bangles, which, he says, are all for girls. He said boys will drive a car and girls won't drive a car or ride a bike.

Video No.7 - Gayathri

Gayathri is a girl. She was asked whether she be called Vishnu, Hari, Vivek etc. She said no, no. She said Gayathri and Jisha are girl's names. She likes to play with purse. She also likes to ride a car and play cricket. She said both boys and girls play cricket. She also said there's a park in their school, but they are not allowed to enter into it. She likes to put nail polish but her brother won't because he is a boy. She said her mother puts nail polish on toes. She likes skirt and blouse, and doesn't like to wear pants and shirt. She said her brother won't wear a frock as he is a boy. When asked about her mother's duties, she said mother will do the kitchen chores and her father would scrape the coconut; mother cooks food in the kitchen and she'll take care of the baby. She said she likes to wear ear rings but boy's won't, she likes to wear bangles (raises her hand to show bangles); her father will not wear bangles but her younger brother wears bangles just because he is too small. She said she likes to grow long hair which boys do not do. She also said both boys and girls dance together. Then she sang her song "I hear thunder".

On further asking, she said her mother would grow plant in the garden but her father does not know how to grow plants in the garden. Running, revolving, ring-a-ring-a-roses, all she likes to play. She likes to pedal bicycles. But she said only boys ride a bike and not girls. But girls would drive a car, and ride a scooter. Father goes out to buy things at night, whereas mother doesn't, as mother is a girl. On further probing, why girls won't go out, she said, they just don't go out at night.

Video No.8 – Harisankar

The eighth subject for individual interview is Harisankar. He is a boy. He doesn't like to be called by Ammu which is a girl's name. He takes pride in saying about him as a boy (His gestures and body language are like that). He named some boys and he said boys are being called "eda", "poda" (hey lad!) and girls are being called "edi", "podi" (hey lass!). He stresses while he says so to emphasise dominance. He likes phone and car as toys; in the park he likes to play with the giant frog, which will revolve round, Train, Cycle (acts how he pedals it), then beating the drum etc. He likes very much to go to school because he has a lot of (this much!, shows). Friends there, he tells their names too. They get time to play with after studies and snacks time. He also plays merry-go-round. They are not allowed to play cricket in school. But they play football, small girls will wait till boys finish play and boys will play when the girls finish. He likes to wear pants and shirt. When asked whether he shall be presented with a frock, he got wild saying No !, No ! He gets wild to the extent that he asks "didn't I tell you earlier that I'm a boy?" He said only girls wear frocks. Later he sang two songs of his like.

On further asking about what all do they play in school he said – "We ride a bike... tr...r...r..." and that only boys will ride a byke and girls won't. Boys will go on the slider also; while girls will use the rocking horse and slider.

Video No.9 – Rohitha

Rohitha is a small girl. She likes toy phones, and dress of fish, she like pants and shirt, and she said boys normally wear pants and shirt. She likes to wear frock and trouser too. Her grandfather wears pants and shirt and dhoti. She likes to be called Mon (pet name for boys); She likes to play by keeping rose flower inside her bike. She said, she puts nail polish but her grandfather wouldn't and her grandmother does the homechores and cooking. She said grandfather won't do anything, instead he goes to office. She said her father would go to the ISRO near the office.

She sings a few lines of the National Anthem then she said she likes to wear ear rings, her mother too. She said mothers wear nose studs, and fathers don't. Grandfather rides a bike and girls won't ride a bike nor do they drive a car, only uncles would do it. Then girls will play with toys, she said. She likes to play with car, bus, fish, house etc. She likes to play with her elder brother. She said father has short hair and mother has long hair. She said she will take all the things brought for her and that she will show it and went back saying this.

Video No.10 – Unnikuttan

Unnikkuttan is a boy who has a mature way of behaving. When asked who gave you this name, he said I don't know, on asking, he said, he won't like to be called Ammu because that's a girls' name. He told some names of boys and girls then. He likes car racing and playing with cars. He plays cricket too. He said boys normally plays cricket and some girls also play cricket. In his view, only girls put nailpolish, his mother does kitchen work and then hospital work and father won't do anything in the kitchen, but he goes out for work in the morning. He likes pants and shirt; and pants, shirt and trousers are boys' dress and frocks are girls' dress. He doesn't like to grow long hair or wear earrings and only girls would do that. But he said he has seen some boys wearing single ear rings; but he doesn't like to wear single ear rings.

Actually, the boy was wearing a bangle and the interviewer asked whether he likes to wear bangles, he said no, I don't like bangles. But the interviewer caught hold on this and asked that he is already wearing one, then he said, No, no! it is a "Kappu" (a boys' bangle!). He said only girls wear bangles. According to him both boys and girls do drive a car, but boys and some of the girls ride a bike. He said girls wear anklets too; and frock and Sari are girls' dress. He doesn't like to keep a bow or flower on hair because girls do that and not boys. When asked to tell the names of boys, he told some names, but when asked to tell some girls' names, he said he doesn't know girls' names. He said he won't play with girls too.

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT IN THE DRAWINGS

Girls are very often drawn with long hair and boys are drawn with short hair.
Girls are drawn with eyelashes and ornaments especially ear-rings which are long.
Girls with flowers on dress worn.
Boys with pants and shirt, girls wear frocks.
Girls are drawn in calm homely surroundings.
Girls holding flowers and ice-creams.
Girls with long and pointed fingers.
Long ear-rings are very common.
Girls characterized by gown and long hair.
Gowns of girls are with frills, flowers and other decoratives.
Girls wear chains with pendant around neck.
Hair of girls pleated sideways.
Girls wear bindi on forehead.
Frisled skirt and anklets seen in drawings.
Girls with dimple chin drawn.
Hair tied with ribbons in the case of girls.

Girls holding a purse in hand.
Boys holding a briefcase in hand.
Girls with hair clips, stylish trendy dress.
Boys seen smart.
Boys with trousers and shirts.
Boys taller, girls shorter.
Boys wearing tux and girls wearing gowns with sequences on it.
Boys wearing caps.
Girls with wide eyes and eye lashes.
Girls with flowers on hair.
Girls holding a doll, boy holding a ball and bat.
Blushing face for girls to depict shyness.
Eyeliner applied on girl's eyelashes.
Boys with pockets on shirts.
Boys with moustaches in drawings.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the Quantitative analysis (**hypotheses testing**) that Pre-school children have preferences for Play Materials, Dress, Animals, Stickers / Name slips, Cartoons and Stories which are dependent on their Gender and the Gender Preferences of boys are found to be dependent on the Gender Stereotype of their parents. There are more Gender Stereotyped parents than Gender Non-Stereotyped parents. Girls' Gender Preferences are found to be independent of the Gender Stereotype of their parents. Gender Stereotype of parents of boys and girls do not differ significantly.

The hypotheses evolved from the Qualitative analysis (**hypotheses formation**) were : Content analysis of picture books, video recorded materials, responses from interviews with Pre-school children, and analysis of drawings by children all point out to stereotyped views held by Pre-school children in general regarding dress, make-up, play, stories, group formation and gender roles and general behaviours. But a few of the incidences are the other way too. That means, majority of the incidences and evidences are related to typical masculine and feminine ways of doing, with a few exceptions. The evidences point out to Gender Role Conditioning in Pre-School Children and the role of parents, media, peers and other family members and books in strengthening Gender Role Conditioning in Pre-school children.

