



“Gender Role Attitudes and Social Media Influence among Adolescents”

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Introduction: Social Media Significantly shapes adolescent gender role attitudes by acting as a double-edged sword, simultaneously reinforcing traditional stereotypes and providing platforms to challenge them. While algorithms and peer content can entrench rigid, sometimes misogynistic views, they also enable the exploration of diverse identities and promote gender equality. Throughout history, people have used social learning to acquire adaptive information by copying others' behaviours. When the use of social learning results in successful outcomes, individuals continue to undertake these successful behaviours, indicating the development of new social norms. Social norms serve as cultural rules that prescribe acceptable behaviours, and as such, norms guide individuals' behaviours.

Social norms may also push an individual to undertake an action that they may not necessarily want to do. Gender presents an additional dimension to the conceptualization of norms. Some scholars believe system of gender includes social norms as one of its several elements, in addition to gender roles, socialization, and gendered power relations. Gender can be thought of as a social system in which resources and power are distributed according to whether a person is perceived as masculine or feminine, and as such, gender is also embedded within ideologies and institutions. As individuals interact with other members of society or a group, gender norms are enforced and go on to shape attitudes.

In other words, gender norms are learned and reproduced through social interaction and result in unequal access to resources and freedoms between men and women. Gender attitudes and norms shape the material conditions of people worldwide, from women's participation in the labour force, healthcare provision, gendered violence, and the treatment of the community. The literature on gender norms in South Asia specifically also tends to focus on these material impacts. For example, Akter et al. and Psaki et al. describe norms as contributing to a high rate of child marriage in Bangladesh, poverty, lack of agency, climate change insecurity, financial burdens associated with raising girls, and the desire to protect girls from sexual harassment. These phenomena indicate that they will subsequently influence adolescents' attitudes and behaviours in multidimensional aspects. The review of literature contributes to further studies on the potential impact of new media on adolescents' perception of gender roles.

This paper reviews the gender stereotypes in traditional media printed media magazines and printed advertisements and social media regarding how these contents influence adolescents' perception of gender roles. The majority of literature focuses on adolescents in western countries, and a few of them include Asian countries, however, none of them studies Chinese adolescents. After reviewing several previous studies, this paper summarizes that male and female characters tend to be depicted stereotypically in traditional media and printed media; and in social media, adolescents tend to present themselves in a stereotyped way.

Anecdotal evidence implies clear links between social media use and a rise of discriminatory gender norms in adolescent boys, but the research to date suggests it is not a straightforward cause and effect relationship. Social media comprises many platforms, which adolescents use in different ways at different times. Personal

experiences, pre-existing attitudes, social context, and platform design all play pivotal roles in influencing boys' perspectives towards gender norms. The report synthesises available evidence on the impact of social media use on gender norms among adolescent boys. Rather than framing social media as a risk in general, it is helpful to focus on both the dangers and the positive potential of particular kinds of use in a specific context. It then presents a framework for thinking about the potential sources of risk and thus entry points for mitigating harm and reinforcing positive effects.

Key words: Gender attitudes among adolescents, social categories, quantitative data, contemporary society, To Analyse Social Media Usage Patterns, Rise of Influencer Culture, Everyday Life Experiences.

Gender attitudes among adolescents : Adolescence is a crucial stage in human development, a phase during which young people become more capable of abstract thinking about social categories, such as gender, and start to develop a desire for peer acceptance. Therefore, it is a period during which young people define their gender norms and attitudes. Attitudes toward gender equity can significantly influence adolescents' decisions and their self-definition during this period of identity formation. Previous research has suggested that reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes in adolescence results in attitudes that limit women's career expectations, promote submissive roles, and make men more likely to engage in risky behaviours. Thus, gender norms and attitudes consolidated during this stage influence not only self-concept but also later educational and occupational choices

It important to know how quantitative studies look at gender attitudes among adolescents : Understanding how quantitative research addresses gender attitudes among adolescents is important for several reasons. The primary value of quantitative research lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive view of the changes and variability in social phenomena. It enables the identification of patterns and trends, and the examination of factors associated with those patterns, making it well-suited to analysing gender attitudes across large populations and diverse contexts. The use of quantitative data can complement an individual-focused understanding of discrimination, revealing systematic and structural inequities, and considering complex dimensions of gender inequality at structural levels. Thus, identifying trends in gender attitudes enables researchers to assess gender equity among adolescents at the population level and to pinpoint areas requiring greater attention, particularly in education.

The design of quantitative studies has crucial implications for the knowledge they produce. Research designs, theoretical frameworks, measurement tools, and analytical methods influence which dimensions of gender attitudes are studied, how they are measured, and whose experiences are represented. As D Ignazio and Klein 2020 explain, data production always involves decisions about what to measure, how to measure it, and whose perspectives are included or excluded, meaning that these choices shape research outcomes. Examining these aspects is essential to assess whether existing research adequately captures the complexity of gender attitudes, especially in relation to intersecting factors such as age, social class, ethnicity, or migration background .The use of quantitative methods to study gender inequalities has been subject to debate within some strands of feminist scholarship. Nevertheless, as Scott 2010 notes, no serious researcher would claim that women's experiences can be reduced to numbers as the criticism raises. Quantitative research has provided substantial evidence showing how gender inequalities have increased for women. As well, one of the advantages of quantitative research is that it is possible to deduce hypotheses from theoretical frameworks, and "see how data support or refute these expectations Additionally, the quantitative approach offers the possibility of accounting for intersecting forms of inequality. The ability to account for these multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination is critical for understanding how gender attitudes are shaped within broader systems of power. D' Ignazio and Klein 2023 argue that data science has the potential to reveal hidden patterns of inequality, but such approaches are still underutilised in this area. Critically reflecting on how quantitative research approaches gender attitudes among adolescents is therefore valuable for the broader field. It provides insights into the assumptions embedded in existing research, helps to identify areas that remain underexplored, and encourages greater attention to methodological diversity and theoretical rigour. Such reflection is necessary to ensure that future research can better capture the complex social processes that shape adolescents' gender attitudes and contribute to more comprehensive understandings of gender inequalities.

Existing studies of gender attitudes among adolescents: First, the study by Kagesten examines the factors that are associated with gender attitudes in early adolescence 10 to 14 years old, incorporating articles from 1984 to 2014 into their analysis. The key findings of this publication highlight the interpersonal, familial, and peer influences, as well as the lack of community-level factors such as media, and the experiences that

qualitative studies synthesise, including the clashing cultural messages that immigrant adolescents face. Kagesten and colleagues 2016 published their review 10 years ago, which included studies up to 2014, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The questions addressed in this review are twofold: what factors are associated with gender attitudes in quantitative studies, and how adolescents acquire gender attitudes, as explored in the qualitative analyses.

Second, the study de Morais . 2024 the analysis examines various methodological strategies employed over the past decade in psychological studies, regarding gender stereotypes in children aged up to 12 years old. According to the results of this study, publications adopted cross-sectional, descriptive or correlational designs, with few using standardised instruments. And stereotypes were assessed regarding activities, attributes and traits, occupations and STEM topics, focusing on the attitudes toward these areas, and mainly analysing girls between 3 and 8 years old. Notably, de Morais 2024 focuses on psychological studies, and the analysis does not focus on a particular methodology. The study is oriented to gender stereotypes, which is not precisely “attitudes”. Nevertheless, they have also encountered “attitudes” among the topics they analysed. This review has objectives rather than questions, focusing on methods, instruments, and domains of gender stereotypes in their selected publications

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING ATTITUDES:

Social media refers to a variety of online resources, programmers, or platforms that highlight online social interaction, teamwork, and artistic expression. Social networking has become an essential tool for preserving social connections, reading news, and finding amusement, especially for young people, as cell phones have been more widely used. Youth who use social media may become more self-objectifying, have biased body images, or struggle with eating disorders. Moreover, the mediating effects of social comparison and self-esteem may lead to unpleasant emotions in teenagers who use social media extensively, like anxiety and depression. Social media plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles and sexuality in contemporary society. It serves as a powerful platform for communication, information sharing, and the expression of diverse perspectives. Social media facilitates the dissemination of information about gender roles and sexuality, raising awareness about various perspectives, identities, and issues. Educational content, including articles, videos, and infographics, can challenge traditional norms and provide a more inclusive understanding of gender and sexuality. Social media allows for the representation of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. It gives a platform for individuals to share their stories and perspectives, helping to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Influencers, celebrities, and activists on social media can have a substantial impact on shaping public opinion and challenging traditional norms. Social media provides a space for challenging and breaking down traditional gender stereotypes. Campaigns and movements on platforms like Twitter and Instagram aim to challenge harmful narratives and promote positive change. Hashtags and viral challenges can amplify messages related to gender equality, breaking down barriers, and encouraging open dialogue.

❖ **Aims and objectives of the Study**

- ✓ **To Assess Gender Attitudes:** To measure the extent to which adolescents hold traditional versus egalitarian gender role attitudes.
- ✓ **To Analyse Social Media Usage Patterns:** To evaluate the frequency and type of social media content consumed by adolescents and its correlation with gendered behaviour.
- ✓ **To Examine Reciprocal Relationships:** To investigate if, over time, exposure to online gendered content predicts changes in adolescents' attitudes, or if pre-existing attitudes dictate their content consumption.
- ✓ **To Identify Risk and Protective Factors:** To identify how social media acts as a risk factor for rigid, stereotypical, or misogynistic views, or as a protective factor promoting equality.
- ✓ **Analyse Developmental Differences:** To understand how exposure to online gender content differs across ages younger vs. older adolescents and influences, particularly for boys.
- ✓ **Examine Online Self-Presentation:** To explore the relationship between the content adolescents post, sexy or traditional self-presentation and their own gender attitudes.
- ✓ **Assess Impact of Algorithms:** To determine how social media algorithms may promote sexist content or, conversely, provide diverse role models that challenge stereotypes

- ✓ **Identify Media Impact on Gender Norms:** To investigate how social media platforms shape, reinforce, or challenge traditional gender roles and attitudes.

Important Events and Trends Influencing Attitudes

- **The 2020 Lockdowns:** The rapid shift to remote life confined teenagers to their devices, significantly intensifying the relationship between social media, self-identity, and the adoption of gendered roles.
- **Rise of Influencer Culture:** The rise of online influencers has accelerated the spread of rigid gender norms, often blurring the lines between online and offline realities.
- **The Gender Intensification Hypothesis:** The ongoing, and intensified, pressure during adolescence to conform to traditional, socially sanctioned gender roles as social media provides new arenas for peer comparison
- **UNESCO "Technology on Her Terms" Report July 2024:** This landmark report warned that algorithm-driven, image-based content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok amplifies negative gender stereotypes, specifically impacting girls' well-being, body image, and career aspirations in STEM.
- **Rise of the "Manosphere" and "Incel" Ideologies 2024–2025:** Research from UC Santa Cruz identified a growing cultural backlash where platforms like Reddit and TikTok are used to spread "incel" involuntary celibate ideologies that view gender equality as a threat to traditional masculinity.
- **Global Legislative Push for Teen Online Safety February 2026:** A widespread movement across Europe and Asia is gaining momentum to strictly limit social media use for minors under 16, driven by concerns over cyberbullying, mental health, and exposure to harmful gendered content. **Stereotype Reinforcement:** Algorithms often "radicalize" existing attitudes; if an adolescent begins viewing sexist content, they are progressively shown more of it.
- **Authentic Self-Expression:** Conversely, platforms like **Tumblr** and **TikTok** have become vital resources for transgender and non-binary youth to navigate gender affirmation and explore identities that may not be supported in their offline environments.

- **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura's social cognitive theory provides theoretical grounding to explore gender norms experienced in everyday life and perceived in the media. Social cognitive theory recognizes that the majority of gender differences are socially cultivated by a society that attributes stereotypical gender roles in a solely gender binary system of only men and women. Hence, the theory premises that ideas regarding gender and gender development are constructed throughout one's life in turn, these gendered conceptions influence one's gender-related behaviour. Various social influences like family, friends, and media contribute to this process. However, gender roles are also prone to change through individuals' own gendered attitudes and actions. In turn, this process has the potential to gradually alter societal gender norms.

- Importantly, in order to formally test social cognitive theory's connection to mediated content, a study's methodology must account for specific mediated models participants observe, how often these models are observed, the positive or negative nature of mediated behaviors observed, and the participants' corresponding positive or negative behavior outcomes. While the present study measures participants' media gender norm perceptions, television, movies, news, gender norm attitudes, and future gender norm life expectations, it does not ask participants about specific media models nor does it account for duration of exposure to media models. Thus, this study, like past research, employs social cognitive theory as a framework to help form hypotheses and explain the potential relationships between media perceptions, attitudes, and expectations. Accordingly, in line with social cognitive theory, since media content is more traditional in its gender norm portrayal, it is possible that when emerging adults report more traditional gender norm media perceptions, their personal gender norm attitudes will also be reinforced.
- Correspondingly, this study proposes that emerging adults' gender norm observations in everyday life and media are potentially connected to gender norm attitudes and future gender norm expectations. The following overview of literature is organized according to hypothesized path model relationships

Everyday Life Gender Norm Experiences 1 and Media Gender Norm Perceptions 2

Utilizing social cognitive theory's theoretical premises as a guiding framework, the present research investigates participants' everyday life gender norm experiences and media gender norm perceptions. Acknowledging researchers that have questioned the distinction between everyday life and media this study nonetheless adopts a phenomenological approach to the social construction of individuals' realities, which suggests that people are aware of their multiple realities. Following this approach, this research proposes that individuals are able to differentiate between their everyday life experiences and media perceptions. For example, Zemach and Cohen compared Israeli adults' perceptions of gender norms in everyday life and media and found that despite expressing a basic similarity between the two domains, participants differentiated between the two realms. Specifically, participants found media's portrayal of feminine traits, masculine occupations, and roles of grocery shopping, money management, and providing for family as more traditional than everyday life gender norms.

Everyday Life Experiences 1, Media Perceptions 2, and Gender Norm Attitudes 3

Past literature has studied the relationship between everyday life gender norm experiences and gender norm attitude formation. Scholars attribute adolescents' gender norm development to many social factors including family and peer groups. For example, Lemaster et al. surveyed college students and found that whereas men and women who participated in more masculine activities reported less feminist attitudes, same-sex peer affiliation, friendship or association was not significantly related to gender norm attitudes. Investigating parental influences, longitudinal research connected African American adolescents' 9–18 years attitudes about gender marital roles to mothers' gender marital role attitudes, finding that boys were more likely to adhere to traditional marital beliefs than were girls.

While studies following Zemach and Cohen have investigated participants' perceptions of media gender norms, they do not establish direct connections with gender norm attitudes. However, scholars have measured emerging adults' perceived realism of stereotypical media content and have found connections between perceiving the content as more realistic to everyday life and holding more stereotypical gender norm views. Relatedly, numerous studies have linked participants' television consumption to more traditional gender norm attitudes. Thus, it is still expected that media gender norm perceptions will predict participants' gender norm attitudes based on past research that has connected greater gendered TV with more traditional gender norm attitudes or stereotypical beliefs.

This investigation seeks to extend Zemach and Cohen's research by considering emerging adults' everyday life and media gender norms in relationship to gender norm attitudes. Concurrently analysing these two realms will hopefully facilitate comparisons between the information that is perceived on screen and the information acquired off screen that is possibly used to reinforce emerging adults' gender norm attitudes. Thus, the following is proposed. Participants' traditional everyday life gender norm experiences and media gender norm perceptions will positively correlate with traditional gender norm attitudes hypothesized relationships.

Gender Norm Attitudes 3 and Future Life Expectations 4 and 5

An additional goal of this study was to investigate the connection between gender norm attitudes and expectations of gendered responsibilities or role allocation. percentage of a role assumed by one gender or the other in future families and careers.

Literature has employed multiple-item measures to evaluate emerging adults' gender norm attitudes and anticipated role allocation. Specifically, Kaufman found that women with less traditional gender norm attitudes were less likely than women with more traditional gender norm attitudes to expect to marry and have children whereas men with less traditional gender norm attitudes expected to spend less time at work and more time at home in comparison to men with more traditional gender norm attitudes. Further, Erchul. showed that women with less traditional gender norm attitudes anticipated doing fewer household and childcare chores, whereas men with less traditional gender norm attitudes expressed expectations of doing more of these chores. Similarly, Askari et al. showed that women who reported liberal feminist attitudes expected to do fewer

household chores than women with less liberal feminist attitudes and liberal men expected to do more household chores than men with less liberal attitudes.

Research that has investigated emerging adults' gender norm attitudes in relationship to workplace expectations has often done so through participants' career motivations. For instance, Morinaga's comparative analysis examined U.S., Slovenian, and Japanese college students' gender norm attitudes and career motivations and found that U.S. college women with less traditional gender norm attitudes were more career-oriented than U.S. college women with more traditional gender norm attitudes. More recently, using data collected from the 2009 Young Adult Panel Study, Kaufman and White examined Swedish adults' 29–41 years job attribute preferences in relationship to single-item measures assessing beliefs about whether men or women should take care of children or work. This study found that women with less traditional gender norm attitudes placed greater importance on career advancement and being proud of their work; however, they were less concerned with family-friendly work policies. In contrast, men with less traditional gender norm attitudes placed greater weight on family-friendly work policies and less weight on high salaries and workplace security. Following past scholars' findings, the following is predicted: Participants' more traditional gender norm attitudes will be associated with more traditional family division of labour and career role allocation expectations hypothesized relationships 3 and 4.

Everyday Life Experiences , Media Perceptions , and Future Life Expectations.

While research in this area is not extensive, multiple studies' findings lend support to this study's final hypothesis:

Specifically, Meeussen identified mostly positive associations between descriptive everyday life gender norms (i.e., what men and women currently do) and participants' life aspirations. For example, college women who reported more traditional descriptive family norms for men and women as well as more traditional descriptive career norms for women reported more traditional family aspirations. Additionally, women who reported more traditional descriptive family norms for women also reported more traditional career aspirations. Conversely, college men who reported more traditional descriptive family norms for women reported more traditional career aspirations. Notably, Meeussen found one negative relationship between college men's traditional descriptive career norms for men and traditional family aspirations. Nevertheless, this study did not measure media gender norm perceptions.

Further, other researchers suggest parent socialization, a practice that takes place in one's everyday life experiences, is important for adolescent development. Lawson's 15-year longitudinal survey examined how family gendered socialization experiences in adolescence were related to occupational choices in emerging adulthood. For emerging adult men, mothers' more traditional gender norm attitudes during childhood years predicted holding a gender-stereotyped career and more time spent with fathers during childhood predicted women holding less and men holding more gender-stereotyped careers later in life. A handful of studies have explored media's connection to future

Conclusion : Reinforcement vs. Transformation: While social media enables users to explore less gender-conforming identities, it simultaneously acts as a tool for spreading misogynistic discourse and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Targeted Influence: Adolescents often encounter content that reflects their pre-existing interests, but algorithms can narrow their worldview. For example, adolescent boys may face misogynistic content, whereas girls may face immense pressure regarding appearance validation, anxiety, and lower self-esteem. Gendered Usage Patterns: Girls often use social media for emotional bonding and appearance, while boys tend to use it for competitive activity and gaming. Impact on Well-being: The internalization of narrow, stereotypical gender roles through social media is linked to poor mental health outcomes, including depression and reduced body confidence. Intervention Need: Because social media acts as a powerful socialization agent, proactive intervention and media literacy are necessary to promote healthy, equitable gender attitudes among adolescents.

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