

# EXPLORING GENDER ROLES AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: AN BRIEF STUDY

Sneha Chakrabarti<sup>1\*</sup>, Anjali Hasija<sup>2</sup>, Khangembam Nganbi chanu<sup>3</sup>, Gautam<sup>4</sup>, Kaveri Divan<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1\*,2,3,4,5</sup> Ba. Hons, Lovely Professional University

\*(Corresponding Author)

## Abstract

The society has evolved over the centuries, the 21st century has questioned the concept of 'Individuality' and how an individual seek their identity in the society(Sagar Aryaman, 'Society: Evolution and Disruption'. *Readers' Blog*, 07-May-2021). The abstract ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality is the most prevalent one in the contemporary society(Carla Moterio 'Sexual Orientation and gender identity'. *Frontiers*, 01-October-2015). Filling out an form or application, we come across the section to mention our sex or gender, but never sex and gender, the difference lies in the society, sex is biological, while gender is a social structure, therefore gender roles are social obligations and sex alongside sexuality are marginalized in our heteronormative society (William Little 'Introduction to Sociology'. *BC Campus*). The paper seeks to give a brief overview of the complex and evolving idea of gender roles and sexual identity, as the ideas do justice in describing gender oppression, Heteropatriarchy, Heteronormativity, queer theory, intersectionality, and the freedom of an individual. Gender based crimes against women has rose from 57.5 in 2020 to 82.5 in 2021(Shane Romig 'Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have Same Economic Rights as the Men'. *The World Bank*, 01-March-2022), while 52% of LGBTQIA+ people suffer from hate crimes in India(Sumit Chaturvedi, *Hindustan Times*, 09-October-2018). The society has witnessed a change in how an individual seeks its identity through its gender and sexuality. The manuscript focuses on highlighting the changing gender roles, diversity of sexual identity, and how society receives it. The paper tries to justify the nature of gender roles and sexual identity, and describes the need of diversity, inclusivity, and acceptance, in the rapidly changing world.

## Introduction

Gender roles and sexual identity are intricately linked facets of human identity. Gender roles are cultural expectations and norms that govern how people of various genders are expected to behave, think, and interact. These roles differ across countries and time periods, but they frequently incorporate assumptions about what is deemed "masculine" or "feminine" conduct. It is vital to remember that these roles are not innate or biologically given, but are influenced by cultural, social, and historical influences. Sexual identity is a personal and deeply entrenched notion of one's own sexual orientation and inclinations. It may include heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other orientations. Sexual identity refers to who a person is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to. It is an inherent component of a person's identity that may or may not correspond to standard gender norms. It is critical to note that various parts of identity are different and can exist independently of one another. People may have gender identities that correspond to their assigned sex at birth, or they may identify with a different gender. They may also have sexual identities that are congruent with or contradict their gender identification. Understanding and valuing the diversity of gender roles and sexual identities is essential for promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and human rights. Society has made significant progress in recognizing and supporting LGBTQ+ people's rights and identities, but there is still work to be done to combat gender and sexual orientation discrimination and prejudice.

## Objectives

Gender roles and sexual identity objectives often aim to foster awareness, equality, and respect for varied gender identities and sexual orientations. These aims can vary depending on the environment and organization, but some common ones are:

- 1.Promoting Inclusivity: The fundamental goal is to promote inclusive environments in which people of all gender identities and sexual orientations feel secure, respected, and cherished. This entails creating a culture that values diversity and is free of discrimination.
- 2.Support and Resources: It is critical to provide persons who are questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation with access to support and resources. This could include developing LGBTQ+ support groups, crisis hotlines, and access to mental health care.
3. Increasing Self-Acceptance: It is critical for individuals' mental and emotional well-being to encourage them to accept and appreciate their gender identity and sexual orientation. Self-acceptance can help minimize the stigma and shame that are frequently connected with being LGBTQ+.
- 4.Advocacy and Support: It is critical to encourage allies to support the LGBTQ+ community. Allies can assist increase awareness, combat discrimination, and advocate for LGBTQ+ people's rights and well-being.

5. Objectives may include developing rules and practices that prevent discrimination and harassment based on gender identity and sexual orientation. This can be done in schools, businesses, healthcare facilities, and other establishments.

6. Research and Data Collection: A goal is to collect data on gender and sexual identity in order to better understand the experiences and needs of various populations. This can help to shape policies and initiatives addressing gender and sexual identity concerns.

7. Educational Awareness: Education is a critical component in overcoming gender and sexual identity myths and biases. Among the goals is to provide accurate and thorough information regarding various gender identities and sexual orientations, as well as their historical and cultural settings.

These goals strive to make society more inclusive, welcoming, and egalitarian for persons of various gender identities and sexual orientations. They also contribute to the larger goal of human rights and social justice.

## **Discussion**

### **Gender stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs and assumptions about the qualities, roles, and behaviours associated with people based on their perceived or given gender. These stereotypes frequently support traditional and binary gender beliefs in which masculinity and femininity are rigidly defined, and they can have a substantial impact on individuals and society as a whole. Here are some important facts about gender stereotypes:

1. Pervasiveness: Gender stereotypes are strongly embedded in many cultures and societies. They can be found in a variety of settings, including as the media, education, employment, and social interactions.

2. Gender preconceptions: Gender preconceptions frequently foster gender inequity. Certain responsibilities or qualities associated with one gender can result in unequal access to school, employment, and other opportunities.

3. Impact on Mental Health: Living inside the confines of gender stereotypes can be detrimental to one's mental health. Individuals who do not fit these assumptions may face social stigma, discrimination, and increased stress.

4. Gender stereotypes can intersect with other forms of prejudice, such as race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Individuals who belong to various marginalized groups may face distinct issues as a result of this.

5. Influence of the Media: The media can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. Media depictions of varied gender roles and identities can have a positive impact on influencing cultural beliefs.

6. Education and Awareness: It is critical to educate people about the damaging effects of gender stereotypes and to raise awareness of the fluidity and diversity of gender identities. This can be accomplished through education, workplaces, and public awareness initiatives.

7. Legal Protections: Many nations have enacted legal protections against gender discrimination, and these laws are critical for eliminating gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality.

Gender stereotypes must be challenged and changed in order to create a more inclusive, egalitarian, and just society in which people can express their gender identities and pursue their dreams without fear of prejudice or bias.

### **Gender Socialization**

Gender socialisation refers to the process through which individuals learn and internalise the societal norms, roles and expectations associated with their perceived gender. It often begins from a young age and influence how people behave, express themselves and interact with others based on societal gender stereotypes. This process can have a significant impact on individuals identities and their roles in society. Traditional gender roles are being redefined with more men and women challenging stereotypes. Women are increasingly pursuing careers and men are taking more on caregiving roles. There is growing awareness and push for gender equality with movements advocating for equal opportunities, pay and rights for all genders. Society is becoming more accepting of diverse gender identities, including transgender and non-binary individuals. The digital age has amplified the impact of media and technology on gender socialisation. Many companies are working to create more inclusive and diverse workplaces recognising the value of diverse perspectives and talents. Laws and policies are evolving to protect the rights of individuals of all gender identities, addressing issues such as discrimination, access to healthcare and legal recognition. Cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence gender roles and expectations. Some societies have more rigid gender roles while others are more progressive in their views on gender equality. The language we use also reinforces gender roles. Words, phrases and expressions can carry gender roles. Words, phrases and expressions can carry gender biases, affecting how people perceive themselves and others. Ultimately, individuals develop their own understanding of gender, which may or may not conform to societal norms. Some people may identify as transgender or non-binary, challenging the binary understanding of gender. In this contemporary era, there is greater emphasis on challenging and dismantling traditional gender norms and expectations to create a more inclusive and accepting society. However, gender inequality and discrimination still persist in many parts of the world making ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and awareness essential. Gender Socialisation is not a 'one size fits all' process and it varies widely depending on culture, location and individual experiences. Challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality is an ongoing societal effort to create more inclusive and accepting environments for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

**Key Explanation**

**Gender Socialization:** This is the process through which society, And culture transmit norms, values, and expectations related to gender To individuals. It begins from a young age and continues throughout One's life. Children learn what it means to be male or female in their Society and internalise these gender roles.

**G2. Agents of Socialization:** Various agents, such as family, peers, Media, and educational institutions, play a role in shaping an Individual's understanding of gender. For example, parents may Reinforce certain gender stereotypes, while media can perpetuate these Stereotypes through advertisements and programming.

**3. Gender Identity:** Gender identity is an individual's internal Sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with the sex Assigned to them at birth. Some people have a gender identity that Matches their assigned sex (cisgender), while others have a gender Identity that differs from their assigned sex (transgender).

**4.Social Construction of Gender:** Gender is seen as a socially Constructed concept, meaning it is not solely determined by biology But is shaped by societal norms and expectations. This perspective Highlights the flexibility and diversity of gender identities.

**5. Intersectionality:** Gender socialization and identity are often Influenced by other factors, such as race, class, and sexuality. Intersectionality theory recognizes that individuals' experiences of Gender are shaped by multiple social identities.

**6. Challenges and Progress:** Societal attitudes and norms Regarding gender have evolved over time, challenging traditional Gender roles and stereotypes. Movements advocating for gender Equality and LGBTQ+ rights have played a significant role in Reshaping these dynamics. Generally, gender socialization and identity theory help us understand How individuals develop their sense of self in relation to gender and How society's expectations and norms influence this process. These Concepts have significant implications for discussions about gender Equality, identity acceptance, and social change.

**Identity Theory**

Identity theory also known as mind brain identity theory, explains the relationship between mental and physical states in brain. Identity theory asserts that mental states are identical to physical states and processes in the brain. This theory takes a reductionist approach aiming to reduce mental phenomena to the physical. It holds that there is no separate non-physical 'mind' or 'soul' distinct from physical brain. Identity theory posits that a direct one to one relationship between mental states and physical states in the brain aiming to provide a comprehensive and reductive explanation of the mind. However, the theory has faced several challenges including the problem of multiple realizability which suggests that the same mental state can be realized in different physical systems like functionalism and eliminative materialism.

Types of Identity theory

Type Identity Theory, and Token Identity Theory

Type Identity Theory is a specific form of identity theory that suggests that each distinct type of mental state corresponds to a specific type of physical state. This theory is often associated with the idea that there is one to one correspondence between mental states and physical states such as specific neural processes or configurations. Token Identity Theory, also referred to as token physicalism is a position that asserts that mental events or tokens are identical to particular physical events or tokens in the brain. This position allows for more flexibility in the relationship between mental and physical events accommodating the idea that different physical processes can give rise to similar mental experiences

**Feminism**

Feminism, an social, political, cultural, and economical ideology or belief, which believes in the overall equality of all the gender and sexes.(Laura Burnell, Elinor Burkett, 'Feminism'. Britannia, 23-October-2023). Originated in the western countries with its diverse category of rights and beliefs, started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century , profoundly, but its roots can be seen in earliest eras of human civilization, main motive to liberate women politically, economically, socially, and culturally(History.COM EDITORS, 'Feminism's long history'. History Channel,28-february-2019). Separated in three waves, Feminism has dealt with different issues faced by women in different eras, with each passing decade, Feminism has become a diverse idea, claiming equality for all in the present world, aiming to dismantle gender inequality and seeking to give every individual a chance to express themselves freely(Kiara Alfonseca, 'The Feminist Movements has Changed Drastically'. Abc NEWS, 8-March-2023). Feminism redefine gender roles and the idea of sexual identity, gender roles being socially constructed and forcefully given, becoming a hindrance in the overall development of an independent individual, and it limiting their rights, self expression, and identity.('Greatest Hindrance to Development'. Commonwealth, 08-September-2016). Gender roles and stereotypes are the oppressive structure of the society, for a equal society Feminism seeking redemption of such institutions.(The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Patriarchy'. Britannia, 13-August-2023).

**1.1. Gender Oppression**

Dominance is often associated with masculinity, while the characteristic of vulnerability is treated as an attribute of women, gender. Gender oppression has been challenged by Feminism, gender oppression often talk about the distribution of power between a man and a woman, in a heterosexual relationship, and how gender roles cause the dominance of a

man in that relation in the society(Maxwell CCM, Racheal M, Thandi FK, 'Philosophising Experience and Vision of the Female Body, Mind, and Soul: Historical Context and Contemporary Theory'. IGI Global, 2021,). The idea of gender oppression arises from the basic societal organisation of Patriarchy. Patriarchy has placed women at the margin of the society, and has caused toxic masculinity, gender roles, and gender Oppression in the society, it has also limited the idea of sexual identity to just heterosexuality.(Ann Ferguson 'Sexual Democracy: Women, Oppression, and Revolution'. 1991). "Compulsory Heterosexuality is the key Mechanism of Patriarchy",(Adrienne Rich).

### **1.2 Heteropatriarchy**

Heteropatriarchy is an social, political, and cultural system of ideas, which lies under theory of Feminism, to describe the idea of dominance of heterosexual male over other cis-gendered males, females, and other genders and sexes. (Keele, Glenden, and Markham Campus, 'Cis-Heteropatriarchy'. York). The self proclaimed Dominance arises in heterosexual men through gender roles and widely accepted sexual identity of the individual(Alice Campbell, 'Sexual Fluidity Among Millennial Women: Heteropatriarchy, Sexual Violence, and Sexual Fluidity'. Springer Link, 25-September-2022). Feminism advocating LGBTQIA+ rights, have condemn Heteropatriarchy.

### **Queer Theory**

Binary way of thinking or describing something has existed in human nature from a very long time, man/woman, female/male, boy/girl, are the few binary queer theory reject(Bruce Henderson, 'Queer Theory: Beyond Binaries'. NOTCHES, 06-June-2021). Queer theory is a advance field of study that seeks to highlight the issues of LGBTQIA+ people, and as well as to seek freedom to approach non-Heteronormative activities. Queer theory challenges the heterosexual focussed society by broadcasting the oppression happening against the marginalized sexualities and genders(Allo Health, 'Examining the Impact of Queer Theory on Society' 27-July-2023). Queer theory seeks to break traditional boundaries, and stabilise a new and more inclusive and accepted society, it also describes the relation between gender and sexual identity, and how gender determines an individuals sexual identity in our heterosexual focussed society(Cynthia Vinney, 'Gender v/s Sexuality'. Very well mind, 14-Aprile-2023).

### **1.1 Gender Performativity**

The model of idea given by feminist philosopher Judith Butler in 1990 in book 'Gender Trouble' it describes gender as 'What we do', not 'Who you are'. Butler justified gender as an outward action, rather than something internal and natural(Paige Allen 'What is Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity'. Perlego). The idea describes the 'innate' gender, it claims by providing 'Gender Trouble' by cancelling the binary of thinking about gender, sex, and sexuality(Thekla Morgenroth, Michelle K.Ryan 'Gender Trouble in Social Psychology'. Frontiers, 27-July-2018). The illusion of binary has been so deep rooted in our heterosexual focussed society, that sex and sexuality is determined by our gender, which is given to an individual by their social environment('What are Gender Roles and Stereotypes'. Planned Parenthood).

1.2 Heteronormativity Heteronormativity, is the most prominent idea of binary view, it is an identities and experience of the cis-gender and heterosexual individuals, while under Heteronormativity these identities are considered 'normal' in our society, anything lying out of these description is considered 'defeat'(Kristen Cochrane 'Meaning: What does Heteronormativity Mean?'. Teen Vogue, 18-November-2022). Heteronormativity advocates actions against gender oppression, gender hierarchy, and exclusivity in the society, it not only cause discrimination against marginalized genders and sexes, but also causes violation of their human rights (Federico F, Chiara I, Tizian M 'Heteronormativity and the Justification of Gender Hierarchy'. Frontiers, 29-July-2021). While Indian courts legalize gay sex, gay marriages still stand on hold('Indian Courts Legalize gay sex in Land marking Ruling'. BBC, 06-September-2018).

### **1.3 Intersectionality**

Term coined by Kimberte Crenshaw in 1970s, to describe the ' double discrimination' happening against many people. A gay brown women, is discriminated not only for her gender, but also because of her race and sexuality(Jane Coaston 'The Intersectional War'. Vox, 28-May-2018). Around 13 million people are identified as sexual and gender minority in the U.S.A, but they are discriminated in many field of facilities, like: health care, help by the forces or general facilities because of growing homophobia as well as growing racism in the western society because of an individual's race, the gay people of colour feel oppressed('Identity and Intersectionality'. Stanford University). Intersectionality highlights the need of acceptance of diversity, equity for the society, and inclusion of those who are demean from the society, intersectionality claims social reforms('Addressing Intersectionality in Diversity and Inclusion Analysis'. Pelsely).

### **Sexual Fluidity**

Human sexuality. This essay will discuss sexual fluidity and its implications, as well as its importance in modern society. Sexual fluidity challenges traditional ideas about fixed sexual orientation, such as that of a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual person. Instead, sexual orientation can be more varied and fluid. Sexual orientation is determined by a variety of factors, such as genetics, hormones, environment, and psychology. Studies have shown that some people's sexual

preferences and behaviours may change over time. A person who identifies as a heterosexual may later experience same-sex attraction or vice versa, while a gay or lesbian person. Similar to this, a person who identifies as homosexual or lesbian could occasionally feel attracted to people of the opposite sex. The conventional wisdom that a person's sexual orientation is fixed from birth is challenged by this mobility. Lisa Diamond, a psychologist who has done substantial research on women's sexual flexibility, is one of the pioneers in this field. According to her findings, women may be more prone than men to undergo changes in their sexual identities and inclinations. She suggested that it is crucial to recognize and accept these changes in people's lives, coining the phrase "sexual fluidity" to characterize these transitions. Sexual fluidity has far-reaching repercussions for both people and society at large. These implications are significant. It emphasizes how crucial it is to acknowledge and value the diversity of may develop opposite-sex attraction at a later point in their lives. The idea of sexual fluidity questions the binary and rigid conceptions of gender and sexual orientation in a larger perspective. It demands for greater acknowledgment and protection of LGBTQ+ people's rights and adds to the continuing conversations around gender and sexual diversity. In order to assist people in navigating their changing sexual identities, it highlights the necessity of more thorough sex education and understanding.

To sum up, the idea of sexual fluidity contradicts the conventional wisdom regarding fixed sexual orientation. It draws attention to how complicated and dynamic human sexuality is and makes the case for a more welcoming and inclusive society. It is critical to acknowledge and honour the flexibility of sexual attraction in order to advance LGBTQ+ rights, self-acceptance, and mental health. As civilization keeps changing and

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research paper has explored the complex and Evolving concepts of gender roles, sexual identity, and the societal Norms that shape them. It has highlighted the challenges posed by Gender stereotypes, gender socialization, and gender oppression. The Paper also discussed the impact of heteropatriarchy and the need for Feminist movements to promote gender equality and challenge Traditional norms. Furthermore, the research delved into queer theory, Emphasizing the rejection of binary thinking and the importance of Recognizing and accepting diverse sexualities and genders. It also Discussed the concept of sexual fluidity, challenging the idea of fixed Sexual orientations and the need for greater understanding and Acceptance of changing sexual identities. In a world that is rapidly changing, the paper has underscored the Importance of diversity, inclusivity, and acceptance. It calls for a more Inclusive and egalitarian society where individuals can freely express Their gender and sexual identities without fear of discrimination or bias. It is crucial to continue promoting awareness, education, and advocacy To achieve these goals and ensure a more just and accepting world for all.

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