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Perceived familial gender discrimination in relation to adjustment level of adolescent girls

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Abstract

Gender disparity still exists in India. Being born as women in the Indian society one has to face gender discrimination at all levels. At the household level females are confined to the bounds of their household chores, raising children and looking after families, irrespective of her education degrees or her job profile.

The impact of perceived familial gender discrimination can be significant during early adolescence, as this is a critical period for the development of ethnic identity and gender intensification.

What the woman will experience at the age of 21 years of age does not obviously begin then, but at the time of her birth and even prior to that - as foetus.

Gender discrimination and inferior status combine to cause the most suffering to the victims, both quantitatively and qualitatively; although this suffering may often go unnoticed and unrecognized.

Thus, we see that the girls, on the one hand are asked to walk according to the changing circumstances by the reformists, but at the same time emphasis is laid on the practice of traditions and culture too. Therefore, she finds herself in a dilemma whether she should fight against gender discrimination or follow the culture that practice discrimination. Thus in this age of storm and stress, these dilemmas cause a change in her adjustment level.

These findings suggest that parents' cultural orientations and values related to gender can serve as protective and vulnerability factors in the associations between adolescents' perceived discrimination and their adjustment.

Keywords: Perceived familial, discrimination, adolescent girls

Introduction

From time immemorial, a girl child has been considered as an unwanted entity and a burden whom the parents would not mind doing away with. Discrimination against women begins even before her birth. The gruesome evils of female feticide and infanticide prove how brutal the world could be to women.

The origin of the Indian idea of appropriate female behavior can be traced to the rules laid down by Manu in 200 BC: "by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house". "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Some patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage.

Cultural institutions in India, particularly those of patrilineality (inheritance through male descendants) and patrilocality (married couples living with or near the husband's parents), play a central role in perpetuating gender inequality and ideas about gender-appropriate behaviour.

A culturally ingrained parental preference for sons - emanating from their importance as caregivers for parents in old age - is linked to poorer consequences for daughters.

The dowry system, involving a cash or in-kind payment from the bride's family to the groom's at the time of marriage, is another institution that disempowers women. The incidence of dowry payment, which is often a substantial part of a household's income, has been steadily rising over time across all regions and socioeconomic classes.

These practices create incentives for parents not to have girl children or to invest less in girls'

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health and education. Such parental preferences are reflected in increasingly masculine sex ratios in India. In 2011, there were 919 girls under age six per 1000 boys, despite sex determination being outlawed in India.

Gender inequality has been a historic worldwide phenomenon, a human invention and based on gender assumptions. It is linked to kinship rules rooted in cultures and gender norms that organizes human social life, human relations, as well as promotes subordination of women in a form of social strata. In India, cultural influences favour the preference for sons for reasons related to kinship, lineage, inheritance, identity, status, and economic security. This preference cuts across class and caste lines, and it discriminates against girls.

Involvement of mother and father (Mexican culture) may moderate the associations between adolescents' perceived discrimination and adjustment. The extent to which family members adopt the values and practices of the cultural contexts is related to family socialization processes and adolescent adjustment and may also play a role in discrimination-adjustment associations. For instance, by incorporating the practices of their ethnicity in everyday life, parents may actively ensure that their adolescents hold a positive view of their culture that could minimize the relationship between discrimination and adjustment. Further, familistic values are considered among the key values transmitted across generations among most of the families.

Materials and Methods

Measurement devices

Tools used

Gender discrimination scale: To ascertain perceived familial gender discrimination of adolescent girls of Std. X, a scale was prepared by the researcher.

Adjustment inventory for school students (AISS) by AKP Sinha and RP Singh.

Participants included 400 adolescents (200 urban and 200 rural). Scores obtained by all three groups i.e urban, rural and total was calculated.

The second phase: of the study included case study of selected subjects. For this a semi structured interview schedule was prepared. Sample consisted of 20 girls each from urban and rural group scoring high on perceived familial gender discrimination scale (perceiving less gender discrimination) and 20 girls each from urban and rural group scoring low on perceived familial gender discrimination scale (perceiving more gender discrimination). Thus a total 80 sample were selected for the case study.

The result revealed that girls perceiving familial gender discrimination among all the three groups (Urban, Rural and total) experienced more mental health problems. Thus proving the hypothesis.

Table: Research Design N=400

RURAL	URBAN
200	200

Hypothesis

The perceived familial gender discrimination will be found significantly related to the adjustment level of adolescent girls.

Methodology

Sample: 200 urban adolescent girls and 200 rural adolescent girls of Std. - X constituted the sample for the present study. Girls were selected from Rajasthan Government Senior Higher Secondary Schools, belonging to Jaipur District. Only those girls were selected as subjects who had one or more brothers. Girls who had no brothers were not included.

Objective

Today growing individualism, modernization and rapid urbanization is causing disruption in the traditional patterns of family life and the position of women as well as the way she was treated in the family.

On one hand she is expected to follow the traditions of the family which, sometimes do not fit according to the changing daily circumstances. On the other hand, the modern urban world emphasizes that females are no longer under subjection, but have an equal status with their male counterparts. Many parents expect that their daughters should excel in many fields and at the same time they also expect them to follow traditional and cultural values and behave accordingly in order to make adjustments with the discriminatory practices at home. Their behavior is ambiguous towards their daughters. Thus the girl is in a dilemma of whether she should act according to the traditional values which her parents expect (culture) her to follow or according to the changing circumstances. She is also in the dilemma whether she should fight against gender discrimination or not and whether she should give importance to these discriminatory practices or not. These dilemmas create in her stress and ultimately their adjustment level is affected along with the influence of the perceived familial gender discrimination in the family.

Therefore, keeping this in mind the research was undertaken.

Review of Literature

Amartya Sen highlighted the need to consider the socio-cultural influences that promote gender inequalities. Sen, A. (2001) [15].

When a woman does not conform to expected gender norms she is insulted and humiliated because it impacts both her and her family's honor, and perhaps her ability to marry. The causes of gender inequalities are complex, but a number of cultural factors in India can explain how son preference, a key driver of daughter neglect, is so prevalent. Shekhar TV *et al.*, Gupta MD (1987) [6], Kabeer N. (1996) [8].

While women express a strong preference for having at least one son, the evidence of discrimination against girls after they are born is mixed. A study of 1990s survey data by scholars Ranga Mutha Mutha Rayappa, MK. (1997) [13]. found less evidence of systematic discrimination in feeding practices between young boys and girls, or gender based nutritional discrimination in India. In impoverished families, these scholars found that daughters face discrimination in the medical treatment of illnesses and in the administration of vaccinations against serious childhood diseases. These practices were a cause of health and survival inequality for girls. While gender discrimination is a universal phenomenon in poor nations, a 2005 UN study found that social norms-based gender discrimination leads to gender inequality in India. Periodic Review: India report 2005

Combinations of factors has shaped the imbalanced view of sexes in India. A 2005 study in Madurai, India, found that old age security, economic motivation, and to a lesser extent, religious obligations, continuation of the family name, and help in business or farm, were key reasons for son preference.

In turn, emotional support and old age security were main reasons for daughter preference. The study underscored a strong belief that a daughter is a liability. Begum and Singh; CH Sekher and Hatti, (2007)^[1, 17].

A decline in the child sex ratio (0–6 years) was observed with India's 2011 census reporting that it stands at 914 females against 1,000 males, dropping from 927 in 2001 – the lowest since India's independence.

Sons are believed to have a higher economic utility as they can provide additional labour in agriculture. Another factor is that of religious practices, which can only be performed by males for their parent's afterlife. All these factors make sons more desirable. Moreover, the prospect of parents 'losing' daughters to the husband's family and expensive dowry of daughters further discourages parents from having daughters Muthulakshmi, R. (1997)^[11]. Ranga Mutha Mutha Rayappa, M. K. (1997)^[13]. Additionally, sons are often the only person entitled to performing funeral rights for their parents. Shekhar and Hatti (2007)^[1, 17]

Examples of patriarchy in India include prevailing customs where inheritance passes from father to son, women move in with the husband and his family upon marriage, and marriages include a bride price or dowry. This 'intergenerational contract' provides strong social and economic incentives for raising sons and disincentives for raising daughters.

During this stage of development, youth become more aware of personal and societal discrimination and negative racial and gender stereotypes (Brown & Bigler, 2005; Quintana & Vera, 1999; Ruble & Martin, 1998). Furthermore, adolescents have more advanced cognitive abilities, which enable them to have a more nuanced conceptualization of discrimination (Brown & Bigler, 2005; Quintana & Vera, 1999). Stress, including peer discrimination, was positively associated with depressive symptoms for adolescents from all three ethnic groups. Discrimination may be related to ethnic minority youths' depression during adolescence because of the process of identity formation when adolescents become more aware, than in their earlier childhood years, of their native ethnic cultures via peers' opinions and values (Harter, 1999)^[7].

The integrative model (García Coll *et al.*, 1996)^[4], and the risk and resilience perspective suggest that the magnitude of the association between perceived discrimination and adjustment depends upon certain circumstances. In particular, cultural adaptation processes may be the conditions under which discrimination poses more or less risk. Although studies on how cultural factors may shape reactions to or protect against risk are few, limited evidence points to this process. For instance, in a study of Mexican-origin adolescents, acceptance of Mexican cultural norms protected those who were exposed to risk factors (i.e., peer and family smoking) from engaging in risky behaviors (i.e., smoking; Morgan-Lopez, Castro, Chassin, MacKinnon, 2003)^[10]. Similarly, Germán, Gonzales, and Dumka (2009)^[5], found Mexican-origin adolescents who were associated with deviant peers at school were protected against externalizing behavior problems when they and their parents strongly endorsed familism values. Thus, cultural orientations and values may, indeed, play an important moderating role in the relationship between discrimination and adjustment for Mexican-origin adolescents.

Relationship between perceived discrimination and adolescent adjustment

Our findings related to the first goal corroborated the

integrative model in that discrimination was related to adolescents' psychosocial functioning (García Coll *et al.*, 1996)^[4]. Consistent with study hypotheses and previous research on relationships between perceived discrimination and internalizing (e.g., Romero & Roberts, 2003; Szalacha *et al.*, 2003)^[14, 18], and externalizing behavior problems (e.g., Umaña-Taylor *et al.*, 2009)^[20], our findings add to the literature by providing evidence of the negative effects of discrimination on three indicators of adjustment for an ethnic-homogenous sample of Mexican-origin adolescents. For these Mexican-origin adolescents living in the southwestern U.S. more experiences of discrimination were related concurrently to higher depressive symptoms, more engagement in risky behaviors, and more affiliations with deviant peers.

Results

Scores obtained by all the three groups i.e. urban, rural and total on Gender discrimination scale and Adjustment Inventory for school students, was subjected to statistical analysis, which is presented in four sections.

- Statistics of variable under study.
- Pearson's 'r' between Perceived familial gender discrimination and variables under study.
- Mean difference between high and low perceived familial gender discrimination score groups on variables under study (t-ratio).
- Factor analysis of variables under study.

Result-I

Statistics of variables under study.

Table 5.1(a) shows the means of the thirty variables related to personality pattern, adjustment level, and ways of coping and mental health of the urban group. Along with the means, & Standard deviation (S.D.) and standard error Mean (SEM) are given.

Table 1(a): Statistics of Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination, Adjustment Level of Scores of Urban Adolescent Girls

S. No	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	SEM
1	Gender Discrimination GD	20.265	2.875	.203
16	Emotional Adjustment EM	11.120	5.797	.410
17	Social Adjustment SO	9.885	3.290	.233
18	Educational Adjustment ED	6.750	1.872	.132
19	Total Adjustment T1	9.600	3.189	.226

Table 1(b): Statistics of Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination, Personality Pattern, adjustment Level Ways of Coping and Mental Health Scores of Urban Adolescent Girls.

S. No	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	SEM
1	Gender Discrimination GD	20.045	3.193	.226
16	Emotional Adjustment EM	11.640	5.697	.403
17	Social Adjustment SO	9.200	2.778	.196
18	Educational Adjustment ED	6.505	2.176	.154
19	Total Adjustment T1	8.860	2.984	.226

N=200

Table 5.1(b) shows the means of all the thirty variables related to the personality pattern, adjustment level, ways of coping and mental health of the rural group. The standard deviation (S.D.) and the standard error of Mean (SEM) are also shown in the table.

Table 1(c): Statistics of Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination and Adjustment Level Scores of the Total Group.

S. No	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	SEM
1	Gender Discrimination GD	20.155	3.036	.152
15	Relaxed Vs Tensed Q4	9.370	2.750	.137
16	Emotional Adjustment EM	6.070	2.909	.145
17	Social Adjustment SO	7.652	2.991	.150
18	Educational Adjustment ED	6.093	2.818	.141
19	Total Adjustment T1	19.770	6.987	.349

N=400

Table 5.1(c) shows the mean of all the variables related to the adjustment level, of the total groups. The Standard deviation and the Standard error of means are also shown in the table.

Result – II

Pearson’s ‘R’ between perceived familial gender discrimination and adjustment level of adolescents

Intercorrelation

The Inter correlation perceived gender discrimination scores and adjustment level scores were found using Pearson’s ‘R’ method for all the three group separately (Urban, rural and Total). Some correlation were found to be highly significant whereas the other were found to be insignificant. The obtained results are presented in Table 5.2(a) to 5.2(1). The descriptions of results are as under:

Urban group

Inter Correlation between gender discrimination responses and adjustment level scores urban girls is shown in Table 5.2(a)

Table 2(a): All obtained ‘r’ were not significant. N= 200

Adjustment Variables	Pearson’s ‘r’
Emotional EM	-.0071
Social SO	.0038
Educational ED	.0594
Total T1	.0132

Table 5.2(b) reveals that no significant relationship was found between Perceived familial gender discrimination and Adjustment level in various areas among urban girls.

Table 2(b): Pearson’s ‘R’ between perceived familial gender discrimination and adjustment level of rural girls. N= 200

Adjustment Variables	Pearson’s ‘r’
Emotional (EM)	-.1507
Social (SO)	-.2145 (b)
Educational (ED)	-.1632
Total Adjustment (T1)	-.2145 (b)

b= significant at <.01 level
(1 tailed significance)

All obtained ‘r’ were not significant.

Table 5.2(b) shows that social adjustment and total adjustment was negatively correlated with perceived familial gender discrimination. It reveals that more the perceived familial gender discrimination, less will be the social adjustment and total adjustment of rural girls.

Table 2(c): N= 400

Adjustment Variables	Pearson’s ‘r’
Emotional (EM)	-.0796
Social (SO)	-.0937
Educational (ED)	-.0482
Total Adjustment (T1)	-.0983

All obtained correlations are not significant.
(1 tailed significance)

Table 5.2(j) all obtained correlations, between perceived familial gender discrimination and adjustment level in different areas were found to be not significant.

Result –III

Mean Difference between High and Low Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination Score Groups on Adjustment Level (T-Ratio)

In order to have a detail study to see the effect of perceived familial gender discrimination on the adjustment level of adolescent girls, t-ratio were also calculated between two groups.

1. Scoring high on perceived familial gender discrimination and 2. Scoring low on perceived familial Gender discrimination. For the formation of these group Quartiles were calculated separately for urban, rural and total group. Subject falling below Q1 were considered high on perceived familial gender discrimination (group one) and subject falling above Q3 were considered low on perceived familial gender discrimination (group two) which are shown in detail in the following tables:

Table 3(a): T-Ratio between mean of adjustment scores in urban high and low perceived familial gender discrimination score group.

Adjustment Variable	Group	Mean	t-ratio	2-tailed Prob.
Emotional Adjustment	1	6.625	.13	.897
	2	6.5556		
Social adjustment	1	8.7292	.32	.750
	2	8.533		
Educational adjustment	1	6.4792	.58	.563
	2	6.8444		
Total	1	21.8125	.21	.834
	2	21.5333		

None of the ‘t’ ratio was significant.
N= group 1=48, group 2= 45

Table 5.3(a) shows that there was no significant difference between the mean of adjustment scores in different areas of the two groups i.e. high and low perceived gender discrimination groups.

Table 3(b): T-Ratio between Mean of Adjustment Scores in Rural High and Low Perceived Familial Gender Discrimination Score Groups.

Adjustment Variables	Group	Mean	t-value	2 tail Prob.
Emotional Adjustment EM	1	6.1897	1.70	.092
	2	5.0417		
Social Adjustment SO	1	7.4483	3.48	.001
	2	5.6667		
Educational Adjustment ED	1	5.8966	2.08	.040
Total Adjustment T1	1	19.5517	2.85	.005
	2	15.4792		

N=group 1=58, group 2 =48

Table 5.3 (b) shows that the adjustment level of the Social adjustment, educational adjustment and total adjustment shows significant difference in the rural group Emotional adjustment does not show any significant difference.

It indicates that girls perceiving more familial gender discrimination have less social adjustment, educational adjustment and total adjustment, in comparison to girls perceiving less familial gender discrimination.

Table 5.3 (b) shows that the adjustment level (Social, educational, and total adjustment) shows significant difference in the rural group. Emotional adjustment does not show any significant difference.

It indicates that girls perceiving more familial gender discrimination have less social adjustment, educational adjustment and total adjustment, in comparison to girls perceiving less familial gender discrimination.

The table indicates that girls perceiving more gender discrimination are less emotionally stable and less adjusting in comparison to girls perceiving more familial gender discrimination amongst the total group.

Table 3(c): T-Ratio between mean on adjustment variable score in total high and low perceived familial gender discrimination score groups.

Adjustment Variables	Group	Mean	t-value	2 tail Prob.
Emotional Adjustment EM	1	6.4286	1.48	.139
	2	5.7742		
Social Adjustment SO	1	8.0571	2.34	.020
	2	7.0538		
Educational Adjustment ED	1	6.1810	.95	.343
	2	5.7742		
Total Adjustment T1	1	20.6667	2.19	.030
	2	18.4086		

N= group 1=105, group 2 = 93

Conclusion

Discrimination against women and girls is a pervasive and long-running phenomenon that characterises Indian society at every level

With growth comes education and prosperity, and a possible decline in adherence to traditional institutions and socially prescribed gender roles that hold women back.

Traditional value system, low level of literacy, more household responsibilities lack of awareness, non-availability of proper guidance, low mobility, lack of self-confidence family discouragement and advanced science and technology are some of the factors responsible to create gender disparity in our society. The most important causes of gender discrimination are poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social customs, belief and anti-female attitude.

Implications

Policies can be initiated to empower women in India in order to fight against the backdrop of economic growth

The force of patrilineal social structures can be reduced in order to reduce the son bias at birth.

Rising responsibilities of men can be coupled with rising responsibilities of women in caring for children

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