

Traditional Gender Roles and its effect on Adults

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Author Note

Xiomara Lopez is a rising freshman in a 4 year college, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and is majoring in Forensic Psychology. This research was done to advocate for the need of mental health awareness for everyone, despite identity or background and to address the issues and effects traditional gender roles have on adult men and women.

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Abstract

This study examines closely the effects and certain actions caused by traditional gender roles and how it affects adults in the long run. Due to the negative connotations that come with traditional gender roles for genders such as men and women, it is predicted that it will affect adult men and women in a manner that will deteriorate their mental health. To analyze this, the study uses research papers that ask participants whether events such as childhood, objects, society, or beliefs have played a role in enforcing traditional gender roles into their daily lives, and if so, has it affected them? The results conclude that more research must be done behind this phenomenon as little is being done to address the issue. However, there is a common pattern in which beliefs and childhood have affected the mental health of adults as they grow older. Based on this information, the study aims to motivate the public to address these issues and advocate for more awareness in this problem.

Introduction

Therapists as well as many others in the psychological field have sought to resolve an ongoing problem: gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes revolving around traditional gender roles, has been a recurring issue despite the amount of time it has had to progress. However, an alarmingly noticeable pattern of this issue is seen with those who are in elementary school as they are usually impressionable at this age. While reflecting on their childhood, 69% of adults have claimed that gender stereotyping of children affected the way they socially interacted with others. As with any cultural norm, it is taught throughout a person's life. Therefore, society plays a role in the ideals of traditional gender roles into people's beliefs. It is important to understand the impact traditional gender roles have on adults, as it can impact their ability of self-expression and possible risks of depression in the future. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how gender roles and stereotypes can significantly impact the way adults can interact with others, risk of depression, and self expression.

Through the lens of many people's experiences, despite gender or age, it is clear how gender stereotyping and gender inequality can have a huge toll on one's mental health. However, it quite drastically affects society from a very young age up to the rest of our lives which not many know about and not much is being done to combat it. In society's culture we constantly reinforce the notions of gender norms which ultimately governs an individual's belief on how to behave. Not only that, we have created a set of teachings from a very young age, ultimately affecting adults as they grow up. This could be from the objects, work positions, and actions we make everyday. For example, society enforces beliefs on how masculinity involves men having to act in a tough or serious manner in order to prove their 'manliness.' Society has created gendered toys for children, ingraining children's minds to think they must 'like' or play with a certain toy based on their gender. Furthermore, constant enforcement of restrictive norms and gender inequality is a pattern noticed at a young age for children. If these practices continue, it prevents people from having a chance to individually find their identities. Based on this, traditional gender roles affect many adult men and women as they have early exposure to gender stereotypes. Experts in this field are attempting to study what factors are involved in preventing progression in mental health for many genders. Experts have also attempted to examine treatment responses in adults who are at risk of developing depressive disorder.

The other main focus experts in this field must address is the response of how each gender responds to these circumstances. Is it different across genders? Overall, people must become aware of what contributes to this risk of mental disorders such as depression or anxiety among the many stages of people's lives. The public also must become aware if men or women are more at risk of certain mental disorders compared to the other. Despite gender, the research will look for the factors that contribute to these detrimental effects in men and women in order to combat the issue.

Methods

Throughout my research on this long renowned problem, resources such as Google Scholar. In order to do the research on Google Scholar, keywords such as “Mental Health”, “Traditional Gender roles”, “Gender Stereotypes” and “Effect on children” were used. The articles used were evaluated by seeing the correlation of people or communities in their life that would affect the rates of depression symptoms in children due to these enforced and restrictive gender norms. For example, family dynamics at home that enforce a traditional gender role family where the father is the main provider for the family while the mother is the one who deals with family affairs, can affect a child’s perception of whether they can individualize their own identity based on these expectations. By relying on the existing literature based on the findings, it is suitable to the research objectives because these articles provide different viewpoints and circumstances in which gender norms largely affect children at such an early stage of their life and therefore will affect them when they’re adults.

Based on the articles and findings on this topic, the analysis of the information gathered from the literature will be used to gather broader viewpoints to come up with a solution to the issue at hand. In the several studies researched, there are many circumstances and ideologies that result in a big influence of gender roles onto people’s identities from a young age. Imagine this, a child is exposed to gender traditional roles on a societal level. Relatively they’ll notice how male figures who are older will restrict themselves from expressing sad emotions in order to display masculinity. Otherwise, they’ll be seen as weak.’ Or let’s say that a child is looking at the toys section of a store. The child will ultimately have to choose a toy from their indicated gender because that’s what older family figures teach them to do. Therefore, children will see older family figures as guides in their life. Furthermore, family, society, toy industry, etc. play a role in the limitations children face from exploring their gender identity. If given the resources, the study would use sources such as surveys and questionnaires to ask participants how the

enforcement of traditional gender roles at a young age have affected them. These types of research methods are effective as it gives a voluntary response and firsthand experience of the individuals we'll be researching on. This method can give researchers a first hand account of the reality adults face when confronting such ideologies, roles, and viewpoints in their everyday lives.

Discussion

In the study discussed in paper 1, one of the research questions is To what extent are perceptions of workplace gender discrimination and sexual harassment associated with self-reported mental and physical health? The second study's research question is how benevolent sexism contributes to the maintenance of gender inequalities? Their methodology consisted of having participants of adults, men and women who filled out questionnaires or surveys answering questions corresponding to the study's objectives. For example, the 1st study asked questions if individuals have ever experienced actions of benevolent sexism and how they perceive it. On the other hand, the second paper discusses questions related to how they're affected by gender discrimination in regards to their mental and physical health. Overall, these studies are related to the research proposal on the question "How do traditional gender roles affect the mental/physical health of adult men and women" as both show the underlying toll gender discrimination causes a toxic environment and ultimately reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, benevolent sexism is not seen as a form of sexism, therefore, due to it not being interpreted as such, it continues the cycle of consistent discrimination towards women; which affects their mental health in the long run. Both studies discuss the way gender discrimination affects genders daily lives including mental health, physical health, and work positions in some cases. Based on this, both studies correspond to my research proposal due to the in depth analysis on different circumstances and issues that come into play to reinforce gender discrimination and strict traditional roles and its effect on adults.

Although both studies are rather similar in nature, they have some similarities and differences. In the

study of benevolent sexism, it argues that it is a form of sexism, but is not seen as a form of sexism when acted upon. In regards to their participants, this study focuses only on the effect it has on women instead of focusing on both men and women. While the other one focuses on the traditional gender roles' effects of mental health on both men and women. In terms of the differences in topic the second study focuses on how gender discrimination affects self reporting health and how it affects them mentally, essentially the underlying effects of them. So overall, both are pretty similar when it comes to wanting to find a way to combat and address the issue of the effect this phenomenon has on the mental health of adults.

This study's findings contribute to the future of the research field as the research of this study has more in depth knowledge on the understanding of the issue on a deeper level. Both studies suggest that there must be more research and studies done on this issue as there are not many studies done on this issue. With this study and gathering information from research such as these two, there may be progress to improve the quality of life of many people. We'll have the chance to address and change the narratives society has created in order to gender discriminate against others whether it be in a workplace, home, school, etc. The plan is to make another approach by encouraging others to seek help for their mental health in order to combat these issues as well. Therefore, by continuing to research this issue by multiple resources and expressing the importance of seeking mental health assistance, the research study will motivate others to continue to make findings.

Conclusion

As research continues towards this underlying issue of strict gender roles, gender discrimination and its overall effect on people's mental health, I hope more research is done in order to see more progression in society as a whole. I believe people can be empowered to be who they want to be without limiting their self expression with the help of more advocacy on this issue. This research can motivate the need of advocacy to voice these issues and bolster the need of seeking help for mental health.

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