

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: COMPARISON OF GENDER STEREOTYPES AMONG BUREAUCRATS AND NON-BUREAUCRATS

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the comparative patterns of social construction of gender among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats. For the purpose of this study purposive sample of 8 respondents including both male and females bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats was collected from Gujranwala and Lahore. The measures for collecting data included an indigenous demographic information sheet and interview protocol related to gender roles, social construction of gender and managerial performance. The collected data was analyzed through Nvivo version 11 and analysis reveals that there are diverse perceptions regarding male and female stereotyping among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats as different kind of social environment lead to the modification of stereotypes. The research is a contribution to gender studies specifically in context of Pakistani society. There are very few studies available and empirical data about gender construction is scanty, so study provides an impetus for future research. It is suggested for future researches to explore the phenomenon of at larger scale including more respondents and other dimension by keeping in view the socio-economic factors and policies of government regarding elimination of gender discrimination in Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a social construct. Gender must be understood as a domain of social practice with its own structure and dynamics (Connell, 1996). There are certain combinations of attributes and roles, which are typically associated with male or female. These roles are being inculcated into a child by the parents and society in accordance with their biological sex. Here we should have to differentiate between gender and sex as sex is related to biological makeup while gender relates to sociological conception. Our gender includes a complex mix of beliefs, behaviors, and characteristics. Sex is biological and includes our genetic makeup, our hormones, and our body

parts, especially our sex and reproductive organs. Gender refers to society's expectations about how we should think and act as girls and boys, and women and men. It is our biological, social, and legal status as women and men.

Perception about Gender roles are socially constructed which varies across cultures and societies (Manwell, 2007). Femininity and masculinity or gender identity refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society. Femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social rather than the biological (Stets & Burke, 2009). Therefore, every culture

and society has his own gender identities, reflections, perceptions, attributes, status and roles. Pakistani society has also its own distinct conceptions of gender. Therefore, present study aims to explore gender conceptions among Pakistan individuals.

A comparison of returned migrants with non-migrants was made by (Khalid, 2011) to explore how migration influenced gender role perceptions. He found different gender roles perceptions among migrants and non-migrants of different backgrounds. According to Sathar and Lloyd (1994), there is considerable deviation among the perception about the education of boys and girls in Pakistan. People think that education of boys is more important as compared to boys.

There is also a prevailing perception that men are better politicians (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003) while women are associated with children and home activities. Apparently there seems a major shift regarding these thoughts as women are taking part in every walk of life ranging from education, health, and economics to armed forces. Similarly there is a shift regarding husband and wife stereotypes. Being an ideological Islamic country we are given with the complete code of life and our religion provide completed details regarding gender role and equity in society (Khalid & Frieze, 2004). But unfortunately there are certain cases regarding discrimination against women like females are deprived of their share in family income and assets, and it is a major hurdle in development and poverty alleviation. On the other side, age, marital status, and occupation were not found significant variables. Aziz and Kamal (2012) explored significant difference in occupational aspirations of males and females as men aspired more for traditional men occupations and women aspired more for traditional women occupations than traditional men occupations. Education and occupation has great influence over the conceptual formation about gender. Due to significant effect of demographic variables on gender conceptions, this study aims to highlight and compare gender conceptions among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats.

Exposure and education as well as other societal factors impact the individual in perpetuating the

existing stereotypes against both genders which ultimately harm the advancement in connection with gender biasness in their careers especially in management (Mirza & Jabeen, 2011). Moghadam (1992) explored that stereotypes have significant effect on gender and this leads to inequality between gender. This leads to bad effect on thinking, behaviors, values and customs of Pakistani society. The established stereotypes are not easy to wipe out from the society but these should be modifies by awareness and knowledge to people and changing the pattern of socialization. When we analyze our society in this respect we find out that women are often associated with stereotypes like child caring, house duties, beauty and emotional, softness and loving. Similarly there are certain stereotypes which are associated with men like authoritative, decision maker, job oriented, leadership, toughness and hard working. This study in an attempt to highlight the perception and stereotyping of gender and it also provides comparative analysis of these characteristics among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats. Gender equality is also a major concern of this study.

Objectives of Study

Followings are the major objectives of this study;

- To identify the conception of major gender stereotypes among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats.
- To explore the gender stereotypes among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats.
- To compare the gender stereotypes among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats.
- To explore the avenues for gender equality.

Research Questions

Followings are the research questions of study.

1. What are the major stereotypes associated with male and females in our society?
2. What is the gender conception about male and females?
3. To what extent, gender conceptions vary among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats?

Methodology

Research Design

This study is exploratory in nature and qualitative research design is adopted for conducting the research. For this purpose In-depth interview method was employed to investigate gender perception among male and females bureaucrats.

Participants

2 male bureaucrats (PSP & PAS) and 2 female bureaucrats (PAS) officers while 2 house wives and 2 businessmen were interviewed. Respondents were accessed personally. Formal permission was taken before starting interview. They were introduced the topic, and they were granted right to withdraw from interview at any stage if they feel uncomfortable. Respondents were also ensured about confidentiality of information. Thematic analysis was performed on the collected data.

Interview Protocol

An interview protocol was developed which includes demographic details, women and men conception, men and women roles in society, specific services groups for male and female officers, social problems of male and females, departmental issues, social problems and gender equality especially in relation with bureaucratic offices.

Results

Respondents were interviewed and themes were derived from collected data of all the 8 respondents including 2 male bureaucrats, 2 female bureaucrats, 2 male non-bureaucrats and 2 female non-bureaucrats. Themes were identified and arranged in table form which further explained by graphical representation to explain in

more detail. Table 1 & figure 1 shows that there are certain differences among the gender conception of male bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats. Bureaucrats associate male conception with loyalty, leadership, decision making, confident and honesty. The data further explain the stereotypes which are generally associated with male conception are also visible among bureaucratic mind set like bold, confident and authoritative. These stereotypes are highlighted with maroon bubbles in the figure. The analysis of collected data also reveals that non-bureaucrat's conception of men differs as they conceived male role more closely as a custodian of family rather than an active participant of society. Hence they associate gender superiority, responsibility, custodianship, financial powers and domination with their conception of male. Similarly there are certain gender stereotypes which exist among non-bureaucrats like domination, toughness, hardworking and decision making skills. These findings are visible in table 1 and figure 2.

Conception about females also varies among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats as data analysis revealed that female conception among bureaucrats is associated with intelligence, boldness, mannerism, emotionally stable and firm which is evident from table 1 and figure 3. There are also some stereotypes which are associated with females like politeness, intelligence and decent etc. While non-bureaucrats associate their female conception with attributes like soft, weak, emotional, house lady, caring and dependent. The stereotypes raised regarding females are emotional, home oriented, weak, kind and conservative. These observations are coded in table 1 and figure 4.

Table 1

Category	Bureaucrats	Non-bureaucrats
Male Conception	Decision Maker, Brave, Intelligent, Confident, Bold, Honest, Loyal, Leader	Dominant, Financially Stable, Responsible, Superior custodian
Female Conception	Intelligent, Daring, Bold, Well-Mannered, Character, Firm, Emotionally stable	Soft, Weak, Emotional, House lady, dependent, Ethical, obedient, caring
Male Stereotypes	Decision Maker, Confident, Brave, Bold, Authoritative	Hard worker, Dominant, Tough, Decision Maker, family custodian
Female Stereotypes	Polite, Decent, Intelligent, Emotionally Stable	House lady, kind, conservative, family oriented, emotional

Male Conception of Bureaucrats

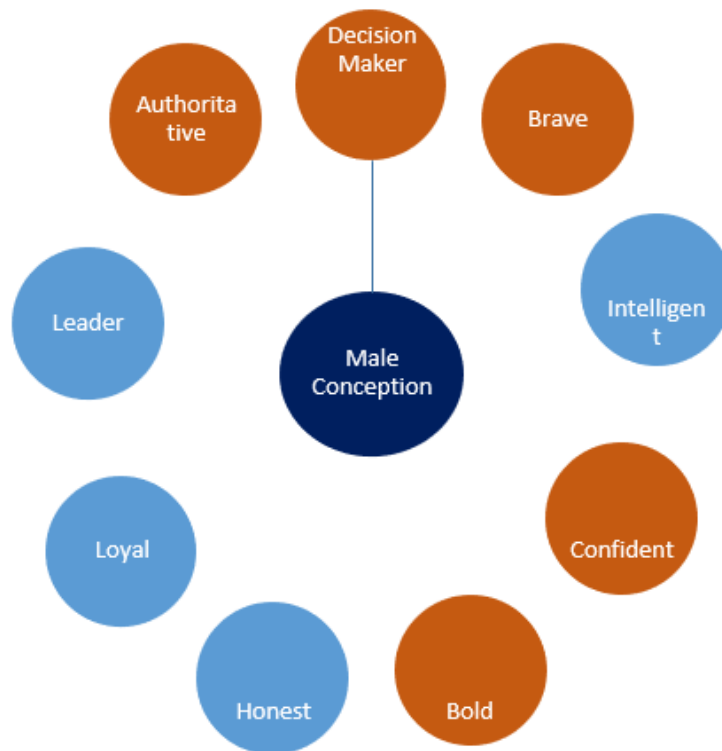


Figure 1

Male Conception of Non-Bureaucrats

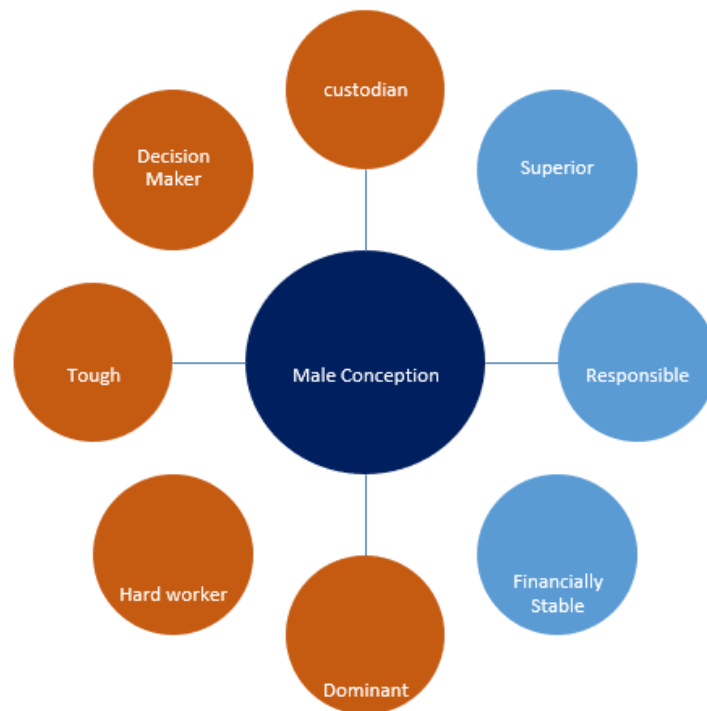


Figure 2

Female Conception of Bureaucrats

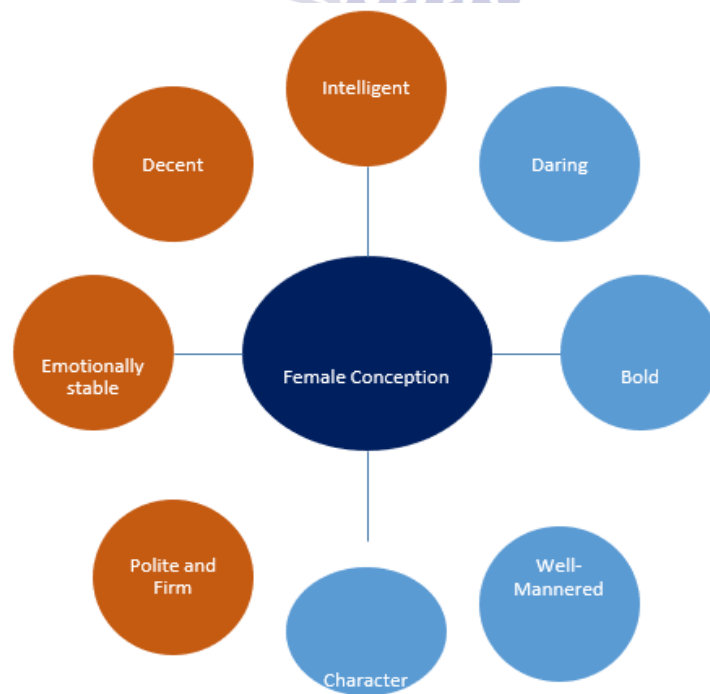


Figure 3

Female Conception of Non-Bureaucrats

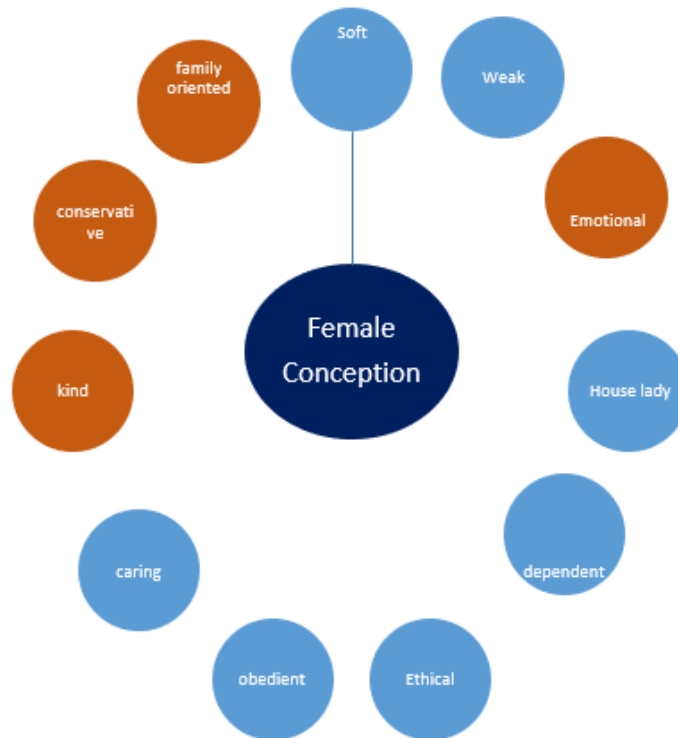


Figure 4

Discussion

This study was designed to measure and compare the gender conceptions of bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats. Gender is a social construction having different conception which varies from person to person keeping in view socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. The analysis of data reveals this deviation about conception of gender construction in our society and these finding are in accordance with the study of Lorber and Farrell (1991) which also asserts that individual differs in their perception about gender construction. There is considerable coherence among male and female bureaucrats about the conception of gender and stereotyping which might be caused by the influence of their prestigious status and trainings. These finding adds further strength to the findings of Sirin, McCreary, and Mahalik (2004) who also get similar findings.

Furthermore, study explored that there are significant differences about gender perception among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats.

Bureaucrats seem more impartial towards gender conception while non-bureaucrats have more tendencies towards gender stereotyping. In this way, study strengthen the previous findings of Eyben (2010). One of the main aim of this study was to find out stereotypes associated with gender hence certain stereotypes which are identified through this research are that Females are considered house wife, child caring, inferior to man, emotional and man are considered decision maker, responsible, job oriented, financially stable and independent. These stereotypes were identified by non-bureaucrats while there is considerable deviation from these stereotypes among bureaucrats who associate intelligence, daring, boldness, firm, well mannered, emotionally stable, polite and decent with females and attributes like brave, intelligence, confident, loyalty, honesty, leadership and decision making with males. With slight deviation these attributes refer to Basow (1992) who categories gender stereotypes. This study finds that there are stereotypes are prevailing in our society as well as

there are certain role and attributes which are specifically associated with males and females. Men and Women both are the social entities and cannot live apart. Being an Islamic country, we have complete code of ethics regarding gender roles and equality.

This study explores that there is variance regarding social construction of gender role among different people in society. This perception varies according to socio-economic and economic status as well as education level. As our sample belongs to bureaucratic class hence we analyzed that there is better gender perception prevails among bureaucrats as compares to non- bureaucrats who yet considered females as more centered towards the home rather than an active participant of social progress of society. There is need to further explore this phenomenon with different demographics and education levels so that a better picture can be drawn which definitely helps in devising policy regarding gender empowerment.

Conclusion

This study shows that there are different conception about gender construction and gender role among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats. This conception varies with the exposure, education and socio-economic variables. In our society there are huge socio-economic class difference and society seem divided into different classes. These classes have different set of ideologies and perception regarding gender which is evident from this research. People who are enjoying higher social status in society where male or females have entirely different conception regarding gender as compared to people with lower social status in society. Yet there are gender stereotyping prevails in our society at greater scale which should be handles through awareness and education. Although policies are being formulated at governmental level but no fruitful results are obtained due to improper implementation with lack of research. There is need to devise a comprehensive policy keeping in view the social and economic differences.

