The Impact of Socialization on Increasing High School Student's Gender Stereotypes

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Abstract: While stereotypes are a rigid system of beliefs held by society about certain groups of people, gender stereotypes are a particular type of these beliefs, whereby socio-culture assigns certain characteristics or values to individuals based on their biological sex. While many scholars have explored the development of gender stereotypes during the socialisation stage, few studies have focused on the specific factors that reinforce these stereotypes. This study analysed the factors that influence the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in high school students, including teachers, parents and peers, and the role these factors play in reinforcing gender stereotypes in high school students was analysed and explored in this study through a literature review. The analysis reveals that teachers, parents and peers have a role to play in reinforcing gender stereotypes among senior secondary school students, and based on this conclusion, a suitable method of investigation, i.e. a combination of questionnaire survey and non-participant observation, is proposed and designed to provide a direction of development and a tool for revealing the dynamics that lead to the persistence of gender stereotypes in the critical period of socialisation.

Keywords: socialization, high school students, gender stereotype

1. Introduction

Gender stereotypes, a pervasive and dominant form of stereotyping, continue to be entrenched in society today. For example, even if women achieve higher achievements in biology, men will still be regarded as "biologically proficient" [1]. Negative gender stereotypes may have negative effects on individuals in many aspects, including health and academic aspects. Studies have shown that the average arterial growth rate of individuals threatened by stereotypes is greater and more likely to suffer from hypertension [2]. In addition, the research of Leslie et al. shows that gender stereotypes cause women to be considered inferior to men in all scientific fields [2]. If gender stereotypes are internalized during childhood, many talented girls might abandon their interest in so-called "intellectually demanding" fields before even reaching college [3].

In the past, many experts and scholars have analyzed the relationship between stereotypes and high school students. For example, the stereotype associated with physics as a subject positively influences men's likelihood of choosing physics, while negatively affecting women [4]; and the portrayal of male characters with higher professional social status in high school English textbooks contributes to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes [5].

Nonetheless, there has been little research on the reinforcement of gender stereotypes through the process of socialisation for high school students, who are at a critical moment in the development of their personality and worldview. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of socialisation on the formation of gender stereotypes among high school students. Through such a study, this paper seeks to identify strategies and methods to alleviate gender stereotypes in society and promote greater gender equality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual definition

2.1.1. Definition of Socialization

Under specific social material and cultural conditions, the process of becoming a qualified member of society with an independent personality through interaction with the social environment is called socialization. The fundamental task of socialization is to master basic life skills, clarify the fighting goals of life, learn social norms of conduct, cultivate social roles, and consciously restrict their own behaviors with social norms. The process of continuous learning and self-improvement is the process of socialization [6].

2.1.2. Definition of gender stereotypes

Gender stereotype is a specific social cognitive schema, which is a relatively fixed concept or idea about the characteristics of members of a group and the reasons for their formation. Gender stereotypes are often not based on objective experience, but on some fixed views and concepts in people's minds. In social life, it refers to the widely accepted more rigid and fixed views of men and women [7]. The manifestation of gender stereotypes is primarily evident in various aspects of life, including attire, appearance and behavior, personality, and choices regarding family and career. For instance, in terms of clothing and grooming, there is an expectation that men should maintain short hair, refrain from wearing jewelry, and avoid makeup, while women are expected to have long hair, wear skirts, and apply makeup. In terms of appearance and behavior, the stereotype often dictates that men should be tall and robust, and women should be slender and demure. Regarding personality traits, men are stereotypically perceived as assertive, whereas women are seen as emotional and sensitive. When it comes to career choices, women are often steered towards roles such as teachers and nurses, while men are directed towards fields like physics, mathematics, and engineering. In the realm of family responsibilities, the stereotype suggests that women should be the primary caregivers for children, handle cooking, and care for the elderly, whereas men are expected to be the providers, offering financial support to the family [8]. These stereotypes not only limit individual potential but also perpetuate inequality and bias, reinforcing traditional gender roles that may not align with the diverse realities and aspirations of contemporary society. Understanding and challenging these stereotypes is crucial for promoting gender equality and empowering individuals to pursue their own paths, unfettered by societal expectations.

2.2. Theoretical basis

According to the social learning theory proposed by Bandura, human behaviour is limited to some extent by physiological factors, but is determined more by acquired social learning processes such as observation and imitation. In the socialisation process of high school students, observing and imitating adult gender roles is one of the important ways in which high school students receive

socialisation influences, and this information strengthens their understanding of gender-fixed characteristics.

Furthermore, the theory of cognitive development posits that the manner in which individuals conceptualize and address issues evolves with age as they adapt to their surroundings post-birth. In high school, individuals already have a basic understanding of the concept of gender, and at the same time individual behaviours are aligned with the concept of gender.

2.3. Family field

The interaction and emotional relationship between parents and children will form children's expectations and reactions to future social relationships, and cultural beliefs, values and attitudes will be transmitted to children in a highly personal way through parents [7]. Family is an important part of the socialization process of high school students. The different gender characteristics of parents and the education methods of different families will have an impact on individual values and behaviors. Because adults have a more distinct gender stereotype, in the family, parents often implement differential education for boys and girls. At the same time, parents' own personality characteristics and behavior in daily life also have a significant impact on aggravating the gender stereotype of teenagers [9].

2.4. Campus field

2.4.1. Peer group

Research indicates that children's awareness of gender-specific traits typically emerges as they enter group settings, particularly during interactions with peers following their exposure to formal education [10]. This suggests that during the socialization of adolescents, their understanding of gender stereotypes is often reinforced through the observation of peers' distinct characteristics. For instance, as teenagers engage with their classmates, they may notice that girls in their grade tend to exhibit quieter personalities, while boys display more exuberant and enthusiastic behaviors. These observations contribute to the reinforcement of preconceived notions about gender roles and characteristics. Through these social interactions, adolescents learn to associate certain behaviors and traits with specific genders, thereby deepening their recognition of what they perceive as fixed gender attributes.

2.4.2. Teachers

Children's understanding of gender stereotypes is often shaped by the information they receive from authoritative figures, who evaluate their peers and influence their perceptions accordingly [11]. In the socialization process of teenagers, teachers emerge as the most influential adults, playing a crucial role in how children and teenagers form their initial impressions of gender-specific characteristics. If teachers harbor beliefs that girls are less intellectually capable than boys, particularly in fields like engineering, these biases can be internalized by students. Consequently, teenagers may come to view being "smart" and proficiency in "engineering subjects" as masculine gender traits [11].

2.5. Criticism

Many studies have focussed on exploring the influence of different factors such as toys, picture book illustrations or characters in textbooks on the extent of gender stereotyping. However, few studies have explored the differences in the degree of gender stereotyping among adolescents due to the different groups they are exposed to during the socialisation process from both the home and school dimensions. In order to address this phenomenon, this paper proposes that gender stereotyping among

adolescents can be studied from three dimensions, namely, family, peer group and teachers, so as to fill in the research gaps and realise research innovation.

3. Research hypothesis and method

3.1. Research hypothesis

3.1.1. The impact of the family field on the gender stereotype of high school students

According to previous studies, the family affects the socialisation of senior secondary school students in two ways: parental differentiation and children's perceptions of parenting styles.

The way parents treat their gender-differentiated children is a key factor in the socialisation of adolescents. Parents reward them with smiles or excitement when they see them displaying behaviours that are consistent with their own gender characteristics, and conversely, they oppose and criticise them [11]. On the other hand, the traditional division of roles in the nuclear family in today's society naturally primed adolescents for fixed characteristics of gender. For example, adolescents will position males in society, country, and career and females in the family [9]. In addition, if parents impose all kinds of restrictions on the behaviour of high school students, they can inhibit their curiosity, creativity and flexibility in solving intellectual, learning and time problems. If the family atmosphere is warm but somewhat restrictive, then high school students are polite, neat, dependent and submissive. If the family atmosphere is warm but high school students enjoy age-appropriate autonomy, then they are assertive, independent, enterprising, and disobedient.

Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Parents in the family field have a positive impact on aggravating the gender stereotypes of high school students.

3.1.2. The impact of campus on the gender stereotype of high school students

People's behaviour is largely influenced by their peers, and individuals constantly compare themselves with others to judge the reasonableness of their own behaviour [12]. Adolescents can further deepen their understanding of gender-fixed characteristics by observing the behaviour of different gender peer groups. For example, adolescents may see that girls in their class have long hair and often wear skirts, while boys tend to have short hair and wear trousers. As a result, adolescents may assume that long hair and skirts belong to females, while short hair and trousers belong to males, and imitate the behaviour of their peers.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper:

H2: The peer group in the campus has a positive impact on the gender stereotype of high school students.

In addition, one will tend to listen to the ideas and comments of authority and show behaviours such as agreeing and following the approved ideas. The most authoritative figures at the high school socialisation stage are mainly the school teachers. Teachers give traditional ideas to label students as different genders, which can cause students to fall into self-identification, which leads them to believe and act on a fixed gender identity. For example, if a teacher believes that girls are not suited to study biology, then girls may believe in this label and believe that they are unlikely to achieve success in biology, thus dropping out of the biology major before entering university. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this paper:

H3: Teachers in the campus field have a positive impact on the stereotype of high school students

3.2. Research samples

According to the search and study of relevant literature, the behaviour of parents as well as the behaviour of classmates and teachers on campus can positively influence students' gender stereotypes. In order to verify this view and based on previous studies, the authors believe that the appropriate research method is to combine questionnaires and interviews to study and analyse gender stereotypes.

Through random sampling, 100-200 high school students were randomly selected from different types of high schools to complete the questionnaire in order to obtain relevant data. Secondly, 10 -20 high school students were randomly selected through stratified sampling method to conduct interviews to obtain the interview results.

After obtaining the data, stata will be used as the statistical analysis method to analyse the data in order to ensure the scientificity and accuracy of the data analysis. As the content of the interviews usually cannot provide quantitative data for analysis, but can provide a basis for qualitative analysis.

4. Analysis

This proposal uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is expected that quantitative data can be obtained and analysed from questionnaires distributed to high school students to demonstrate whether the home field and campus field have an impact on the increase in gender stereotypes among high school students. In addition, it is expected that quantitative data will be obtained from interviews with male and female high school students separately to further explore how the home field and campus field influence gender stereotypes among high school students.

This paper proposes theories, hypotheses, and survey methods to study the factors that exacerbate gender stereotypes among high school students at the socialisation stage. However, the geographical limitation of taking samples during the design of the research method may lead to the lack of reliability and representativeness of the final data. Therefore, attention needs to be paid to expanding the sample range in questionnaire distribution to improve the reliability and accuracy of the data.

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the pervasive problem of gender stereotyping and its multifaceted impact on high school students at a critical stage of their socialisation process. By examining the roles of the family, peer groups and teachers, an attempt is made to understand the factors that contribute to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes among adolescents.

Firstly, the family plays an important role in the formation of gender stereotypes, with parental differentiation and children's perceptions of parenting styles playing a key role in this process. Secondly, the school environment, including peer groups and teachers, had a significant impact on students' gender perceptions. Peer group interactions and the attitudes of authority figures, such as teachers, have been shown to deepen students' adherence to traditional gender roles. In conclusion, gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in society and have a significant impact on the lives of high school students.

This paper only confirmed the research hypotheses and proposed a research protocol, and did not actually complete the questionnaires and interviews due to time and geographical issues. Future research should aim to expand the size and diversity of the sample while realising the study in order to improve the representativeness of the findings. In addition, longitudinal studies can provide more insight into how gender stereotypes develop and change over time.

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