

## GENDER-ROLE TYPING AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

Gender -role typing is the process by which children acquire the values, motives and behaviors viewed as appropriate to either males or females in a specific culture. developmental patterns of gender-typing generally differ for boys and girls. The present study was conducted to know the factors that determine the gender-role typing among (elementary school children. The study sample were 180 children (90 boys and 90 girls) who were selected using purposive stratified random sampling method from three classes (3rd, 4th id 5th grade) and who belonged to three different socio-economic status group (high, middle and low) studying in elementary schools (English and Telugu medium) in Tirupati town. The tools used were socio-economic status scale developed by Singh and Saxena 1993) and an interview schedule specially developed to assessed sex-role typing. Results revealed that there was significant association between gender and choice of preference for a rent and choice of preference for sex appropriate game. Socio-economic status was also found to be associated. As the socio- economic status decreased, liking for sex - appropriate game increased. Significant association was not found between socioeconomic status and choice of preference for a parent. The results help parents and the teacher to understand the factors that influence gender-role typing and help to guide children to follow sex- appropriate roles.

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## Introduction

Gender-role typing or sex role typing in the process by which children acquire the values, motives and behaviours viewed as appropriate to either males or females in a specific culture, which differ widely between cultures over time.

Del Boca and Ashmore (1980) defined gender – stereotypes as beliefs about the behaviour and characteristics of each sex.

The American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology (2007) defines gender typing as expectation about people's behaviour that are based on their biological sex.

Developmental patterns of sex typing difference for boys and girls, sex-role standards and pressure to adopt sex typed behaviour pattern on child comes from a variety of source – viz., family, teacher, friends, television, children's books etc .

Gender role development is one of the most important areas of human development. The often controversial study of the development of gender is a topic that inherently interesting to parents, students and researchers for several reasons, first and foremost, one's sex is one of the most salient characteristic that is presented to other people. Second reason of interest is that the gender of a person becomes a significant part of one's overall identity. Labeling oneself as a boy or girl can begin as early as infancy.

Many theorists believed that perceived gender role form the basis for the development of gender identity.

Social role theory proposes that the social structure is the underlying force for the gender differences. Social role theory proposes that the sex differentiated behaviour is driven by the division of labour between two sexes within a Society. Division of Labour creates gender roles, which inturn, lead to gendered social behaviour (Eagly, 1997).

Traditionally only female and masculine gender roles existed. Androgyny, a term denoting the display of both male and female behaviour also exists. Recently emphasis has been placed on training children to become more androgynous, to develop socially desirable attributes without concern for their appropriateness to male or female roles. A more androgynous society would free both male and female children to capitalize on their positive temperamental and intellectual differences without the constraints of stereotyped sex-role standards.

Sex-role typing which began shortly after birth, continues with new agencies playing an important role in the typing process as the child proceeds from early childhood to late childhood. By the time children enter school, they have been sex-role typed according to the standard – traditional or egalitarian accepted in their homes. However, after children come in contact with their age mates in school their sex – role typing may change.

The sex role typing adapted by children may vary depending on their age, birth order, type of family, socio-economic status, religion etc.

Reputed studies have shown that age is an influencing factor on sex-role typing (Casler and Levy, 1988; Cerol Carolyn and Jan 1990; Sushila Srivastava (1991)). The studies revealed that boys and girls develop appropriate sex role preferences at different ages. It was reported that girl's sex-role identity is more than boys (Susheela Srivastava, 1991). It is also seen that sex role preferences are established during pre-school period and there may not be much variation after the fifth year.

With regard to association between child's gender and their sex-role identification and differentiation, results of the studies are mixed. Studies conducted by Hapkiewicz and Aubrey Roden (1971), Walter and Shepard (1982) showed that in general, interests were more strongly

sex stereotyped by boys than by girls. Kasturi (1990) found that there was no significant difference (age wise and sex-wise) in the preference of out door play for pre-school children.

The influence of socio-economic status on changing sex-role typing cannot be overlooked. But, limited studies are available. Hence, the present study was initiated to study the determination factors of children's Gender – role typing among elementary school children with the following:

### Objectives

1. To find out the association between the age of children and their choice with regard to different domains.
2. To find out the association between the gender of children and their choice with regard to different domains.
3. To find out the association between the socio-economic status of children and their choice with regard to different domains.

### Hypothesis

To test the above objectives the following null hypothesis were framed.

1. There was no association between the age of children and their choice with regard to different domains.
2. There was no association between the gender of the child and their choice with regard to different domains.
3. There was no association between SES of children and their choice with regard to different domains.

### Methodology

**Sample:** The sample of the study were 180 children studying III<sup>rd</sup>, IV<sup>th</sup> and V<sup>th</sup> grades, in two English Medium and two Telugu Medium schools in Tirupati Town. The children were selected using stratified purposive random sampling techniques given equal consideration to age (8<sup>+</sup>, 9<sup>+</sup> and 10<sup>+</sup> years) and socio-economic status (High, Middle and low income groups).

The sample distribution is shown in Table – 1.

**Table – 1**

### Tools

The following tools were used for collection of data

- 1) Socio-Economic Status Scale by Singh and Saxena (1993).
- 2) Interview Schedule to assess sex –role typing in children in different domains.

### Operational definitions of variables

#### Children

Children in the sample refer to elementary school children studying 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

#### Domains

The importance of assessing multiple domains, when studying the development of gender constructs. This approach advances earlier measures by allowing researchers to examine domain-specific trends and comparisons within the same study. For instance, multi-domain measures make it possible for researchers to examine if knowledge in one domain is associated with knowledge in another domain and if gender and cultural differences are domain-specific. Moreover, researchers can now reliably explore if knowledge within certain domains (e.g., activity and toys) predicts children's behaviors in those domains (e.g., toy preferences). Choice of preference of child towards a parent of same sex or opposite sex toy preference like gun,

marble, kitchen toys etc., role model. These types of domain-specific analyses are essential for a comprehensive and accurate picture of gender development.

### Procedure

In the first stage four schools (2 English Medium and 2 Telugu Medium) were selected randomly from the schools of Tirupati Town.

The investigator personally visited the selected schools and after getting permission from the school authorities children were administered with SES Scale. Based on the data the children were classified into 3 groups – High, Middle and Low Income Groups. From each income group 30 boys and 30 girls were selected giving equal consideration from III, IV and V standards.

### Results and Discussion

The first hypothesis framed was *“There was no association between the age of children and their choice with regard to different domains”*.

To test the hypothesis chi-square test of association was employed. Table 2 shows the association between choice of children with regard to selected domain and age of children.

**Table 2**

From table it is evident that there was no association between gender of the child and the choice of preference of parent, and role model by the children. The  $X^2$  value were not significant.

During late childhood years children prefer playing in gangs and develop sex role typing. The data reveals that as the age increased number of children showing sex appropriate behavior also increased. At the same time the number of children showing in appropriate sex behavior decreased and the  $X^2$  value was 0.01 level.

The Second hypothesis framed was *“There was no association between the gender of the child and their choice with regard to different domains.”*

**Table – 3**

From the table it is known that the choice of domain was significantly associated with the gender of the child.

Majority of the children have chosen opposite sex parent as their choice of preferences.

With regard to gender also sex in appropriate dolls are preferred by the children reason might be that now a days parents purchase doll and toys irrespective of their children’s sex. Eg. Cycle for girl child and kitchen equipment for boys. Moreover the influence of media, only child concept might have made parents to purchase all types of toys to their children.

Majority of the children mentioned sex –appropriate role model activity. The chi Square values were highly significant.

The third hypothesis framed was *“There was no association between socio economic status of children and their choice with regard to different domains”.*

**Table -4**

From the table it is clear that there was no association between SES and choice of preference for parent and choice of doll. However, significant association was found between SES and role model activity. As the income increases sex appropriate role model activity increased. When compared to Low Income Group higher number of children from Middle Income Group and High Income Group mentioned sex appropriate role models.

**Conclusion**

1. There was no significant association between the domain of most liking persons across age, gender and Socio Economic Status. (*However majority of the children expressed liking towards opposite sex parent.*)
2. With regard to preference of toys significant association was found across age and gender. But not with socio economic status. (*As the age increased choice for sex appropriate toys also increased.*)
3. The role model preference of sample has no association with age but significant association was found with regard to gender and socio economic status.

**Implication:**

The results help to understand the gender role typing among elementary school children and to know the factors that affect the gender role typing among elementary school children. This will help to educate the parents in Parents Teachers Association meetings regarding their childrens preferences. Children from low socio economic status can be educated regarding identification with a proper role model, to be appropriate to their gender and to perform their roles according to societal expectation.

**Table -1**

**Sample Distribution according to their socio-economic status**

Grades	HIG		MIG		LIG		Total
	B	G	B	G	B	G	
III	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
IV	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
V	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
<b>Total</b>	30	30	30	30	30	30	180



**Table- 2**  
**Sex Role type of sample across Age and Domains**

S.No	Domain	Choice	8 <sup>+</sup>	9 <sup>+</sup>	10 <sup>+</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>
1.	Most liking person	Opposite sex	48	41	48	2.994 (NS)
		same sex	12	19	12	
2.	Gun (or) Doll	Sex appropriate	13	17	24	4.921 (S)**
		sex in appropriate	47	43	36	
3.	Role model	Sex appropriate	51	52	50	2.973 (NS)
		sex inappropriate	3	4	3	
		Androgynous	6	4	3	

**Table -3**  
**Sex role typing of sample across gender and domain**

S.No	Domain	Choice	Boys	Girls	X <sup>2</sup>
1.	Most liking person	Opposite sex parent	61	76	6.875 (S)**
		Same sex parent	29	14	
2.	Gun (or) Doll	sex appropriate	41	13	20.741 (S)**
		sex inappropriate	49	77	
3.	Role model	Sex appropriate	67	86	15.733 (S)**
		Sex inappropriate	12	2	
		Androgynous	11	2	

**Table 4:**  
**Sex role typing of sample across Domain and Socio Economic Status**

S.No	Domain	Choice	HIG	MIG	LIG	X <sup>2</sup>
1.	Most liking person	Opposite sex parent	47	46	44	0.428 (NS)
		Same sex parent	13	14	16	
2.	Gun (or) Doll	sex appropriate	16	19	19	0.476 (NS)
		sex inappropriate	44	41	41	
3.	Role model	Sex appropriate	52	52	49	10.041 (S)*
		Sex inappropriate	1	4	9	
		Androgynous	7	4	2	

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