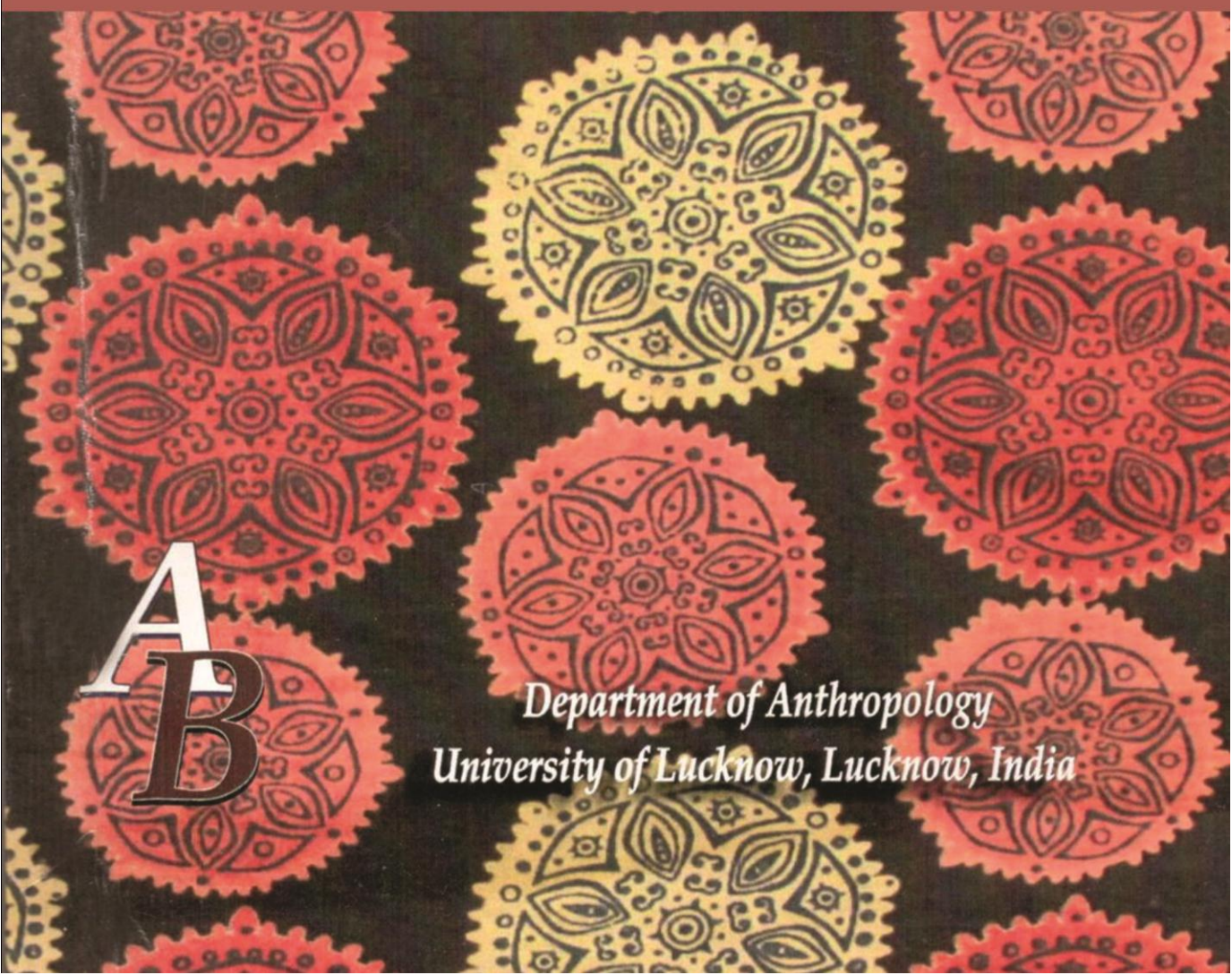


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Demographic predictors of attitudes towards women among school going boys

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the demographic predictors of attitudes towards women among school-going boys. The formation of attitudes during adolescence is a critical factor in understanding the development of gender-based behaviors and societal norms. These attitudes play a substantial role in shaping boys' perspectives and behaviors as they transition into adulthood. The study draws upon the complex interplay of various factors, including societal norms, family dynamics, media influence, and education.

The study's objectives include examining attitudes toward women among school-going adolescent boys, identifying differences in these attitudes based on demographic variables, and pinpointing significant predictors of attitudes toward women. The methodology involved a diverse sample of 300 participants, and data analysis included t-tests, ANOVA, correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression.

The results revealed that type of school, socio-economic status, and mother's occupation were significant predictors of attitudes toward women. Boys in co-educational schools exhibited more positive attitudes, while higher socio-economic status and working mothers were associated with more egalitarian views. This study provides valuable insights into the complex factors that shape school-going boys' attitudes toward women. Understanding these predictors can inform educational policies and interventions aimed at fostering gender equality and reducing gender biases from an early age.

INTRODUCTION:

Beliefs and attitudes play crucial role in the learning of various forms of offending behavior amongst adolescent boys. These beliefs contribute to the emergence of societal gender roles that define the specific actions attributed to boys. The attitudes towards women that boys develop during their formative years play a pivotal role in shaping their

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perspectives and behaviors as adults (Eccles, 1999; Wells & Lekies, 2006; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). These attitudes are influenced by a complex interplay of societal norms, family dynamics, media portrayal, and education (Rhode, D. L. 1991; Berns, R. M. 2015). This attitudinal construct, if developed wrongly, can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and hinder progress towards gender equality (Kågesten et al, 2016).

Early development of an attitude includes the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in which boys are frequently exposed to societal norms that uphold traditional gender roles, portraying women as caregivers and homemakers while men are expected to be breadwinners and leaders (Ellemers, N. 2018; Best, D. L., & Williams, J. E. 2001). These stereotypes are perpetuated through media, toys, and even educational materials, which can ingrain a limited and skewed perception of women's capabilities and aspirations. This not only confines girls and women to specific roles but also influences boys to underestimate the potential of their female peers (McKenzie et al, 2018). The media's portrayal of women often objectifies and sexualizes their bodies, reducing them to mere objects of desire (Strong, A. K. 2013; Fasoli et al, 2018). Boys exposed to such content might develop an attitude that views women primarily through a sexual lens, diminishing their value to their physical appearance, rather than their intellect, skills, or character (Wright, P. J. 2009; Schroeder et al, 1998). Adolescence is a phase marked by cognitive development and the exploration of personal beliefs (Brown et al, 2011). As they mature, living with the societal norms and cultural beliefs enable them to establish certain negative perception towards opposite gender (Poteat et al, 2012; Hechavarria et al, 2016).

Socio-economic status can too significantly affect attitudes towards women (Ewumi, A. M. 2012). Boys from lower socio-economic backgrounds might be exposed to environments where rigid gender roles are emphasized as a means of social stability (Hill, S. A. 1999). On the other hand, boys from more affluent backgrounds may have greater exposure to diverse perspectives, leading to attitudes that are more open and inclusive (Geyer, T. C. 2010). Economic conditions also impact educational opportunities, which in turn shape awareness and attitudes towards gender equality. Therefore, education is a powerful influencer of attitudes (Subrahmanian, R. 2005; Esteves, M. 2018; Psaki et al 2018). Boys attending schools that prioritize gender equality in their curriculum and promote healthy relationships are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards women (Fiske, E. B. 2012). Comprehensive sex education that addresses consent, respect, and gender dynamics can foster empathy and understanding. Conversely, lack of proper education can lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes and biased attitudes (Pathania, S. K. 2017).

Cultural norms and values play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards women (Maluleke, M. J. 2012). Boys raised in cultures that emphasize gender hierarchy and traditional roles may develop attitudes that perpetuate such inequalities (Inglehart et al 2003). Conversely, those from cultures that promote gender equity and empowerment are more likely to adopt attitudes that respect and value women's contributions (Tesch-Römer et al, 2008).

In some cases, boys might exhibit a lack of empathy and respect towards women due to prevailing societal norms that normalize male dominance (Saeed et al, 2017). This is often reflected in the dismissal of women's opinions and feelings, both in personal relationships and broader social contexts. Such attitudes hinder healthy communication and perpetuate a power imbalance, making it difficult to forge meaningful partnerships based on mutual understanding and respect (Hlavka, H. R. 2014; Gervais et al, 2017; Wemrell et al, 2019).

Boys raised with certain attitudes towards women might develop a sense of entitlement in their interactions (Tolmacz, R. 2011; Levant, R. F. 1992). This entitlement can manifest in demanding attention, expecting compliance, and refusing to acknowledge the agency of

women. These attitudes are often intertwined with toxic masculinity, discouraging boys from expressing vulnerability, emotions, or qualities that do not align with traditional masculine ideals (Moosa et al, 2018; Reid et al, 2018).

All this negative attitude which is formed during their formative years can significantly impact their adult relationships (Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. 1990). Boys who grow up with a skewed perception of women might struggle to establish healthy, equal partnerships based on mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and open communication (Walsh, F. 2003). This perpetuates cycles of unequal power dynamics and contributes to relationship difficulties later in life (Holmes, R., & Jones, N. 2013).

Therefore, it is crucial to critically examine the attitudes towards women that boys develop, recognizing the detrimental impact these attitudes can have on both genders. Breaking down gender stereotypes, promoting empathy and respect, and fostering a more inclusive education that challenges traditional norms are essential steps towards nurturing boys who view women as equals, capable of contributing to all facets of life. Ultimately, the transformation of attitudes towards women in boys is not only pivotal for achieving gender equality but also for building a more equitable and harmonious society as a whole.

Study objectives:

1. To study the attitude towards women on school going adolescent boys.
2. To identify if these adolescent boys differ on attitude towards women in term of type of school, family type, number of friends, number of siblings, socio-economic status, mother's occupation, father's occupation.
3. To identify significant predictors of the attitude towards women amongst school going boys.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Setting

The data for this field study were collected from the adolescent boys with the help of personal contact to school administration, one from all boys and one from co-ed. Student lists from school offices were used to randomly select the respondents. Researchers asked the selected students to provide information about their age, type of school, type of family, father's occupation, mother's occupation, socioeconomic status, number of friends, number of siblings etc. the schools from which the respondents were selected have well-established reputation, educational infrastructure and running curriculum on moral and value education. Through randomization of numbers at MS Excel, 300 students were selected in which all of them had completed the form. 200 students were from all boys' school, whereas 100 were from co-ed. No effort was made to control the number of respondents from any group e.g., age and religion.

Tool used

A self-made five point rating questionnaire was used called- Attitude Towards Women Scale (ATW). The questionnaire consists of 80 items suitable for the socio-cultural settings of Indian Society and follows Likert rating style. Alpha reliability of this scale is 0.808 and Guttman's Split Half Reliability is 0.662.

Variables studied

Our dependent or outcome variable is Attitude Towards Women (ATW) for which a scale has specially been developed and described above. Our independent variables are-

1. *Age (scale variable)*: it has been considered because previous studies suggest that attitude change varies with progression in age.

2. *Type of school (categorical variable)*: all boys and co-education curriculum following schools were considered because attitude develops differently under specific school environment. Also, boys from co-ed schools are more comfortable in interacting with the opposite gender, thus, have different approach towards women than boys from all boys school.
3. *Residential status (categorical variable)*: hostelers and day scholars are given different home environments resulting differences in their attitudes.
4. *Type of family (categorical variable)*: nuclear and joint family provides different values and approaches which affects the overall mindset of a person.
5. *Father's education (categorical variable)*: parental style and home environment are crucial for the attitude development.
6. *Mother's education (categorical variable)*: mothers are the primary care givers of the children, hence their education and parental style plays an important role in forming an attitude.
7. *Socioeconomic status (categorical variable)*: variations in social class provides variety of sources of learning and socialization that ultimately causes variance in attitude towards women.
8. *Birth order (scale variable)*: researcher herself has envisaged that birth order might cause a variance in attitude towards women.
9. *Number of male friends (scale variable)*: adolescents easily get influenced from their peers and form their attitudes through social conformity.
10. *Number of female friends (scale variable)*: having female friends brings sensitivity towards women related issues thus develops an attitude more positively towards women.
11. *Single child of the family (categorical variable)*: being a single child makes a person over cared and over protected that influences the process of socialization.
12. *Having elder sister (categorical variable)*: an elder sister plays a role of secondary mother in most of the cases, that may affect an attitude towards women.
13. *Having elder brother (categorical variable)*: an adolescent boy may observe and imitate his elder brother, that may hinder the progress of positive attitude formation.
14. *Having younger sister (categorical variable)*: younger sisters are mostly dependent on their elder siblings and provides love and affection that may affect the attitude towards women.
15. *Having younger brother (categorical variable)*: young adolescent feels responsible for their younger brothers thus act responsibly around them, forming their attitude towards women differently.
16. *Having twin sister (categorical variable)*: a twin sister may make an adolescent boy sensitive towards women related issues and bringing a positive impact on their attitude towards women.

Analysis

Independent sample t-test and one way ANOVA were applied to compare means of various demographic variables as per requirement. Relationships were studied using Carl Pearson's Product Moment Correlation between scale variables. To identify significant predictors affecting attitude towards women, Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis was conducted. Bootstrapping of confidence intervals (Haukoos & Lewis, 2005; Zhou & Dinh, 2005) for regression coefficients were calculated to extrapolate findings in the total population. Analysis were conducted using SPSS software.

RESULTS

The data of Attitude Towards Women (Mean= 261.36, SD= 19.61) from a sample of 300 all boys (Mean age 14 years) yielded results in the context of 16 independent variables as listed in the previous section. Some of these variables were quantitative in nature and their relationship was studied with the dependent variable that has been shown in table 1.

TABLE-1
Carl Pearsons Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between attitude towards women and some personal variables

Variables	r	p
Age	0.177	.002
Birth order	.032	.581
Number of male friends	0.152	.008
Number of female friends	-0.330	<.0001

Having studied the pattern of relationship amongst variables, the data was further analysed and to extrapolate the findings within the population. In this regard, stepwise multiple regression analysis helped to identify the significant predictors of Attitude Towards Women. Independent variables in this analysis used were the 16 variables that have been described in the previous section. All 16 variables were treated as novices in the model and they were made to enter into the model in stepwise manner with forward likelihood ratio. The Attitude Towards Women Scale was taken as dependent variable. The findings have been reported in the following tables.

TABLE-2A
Model fit ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45555.333	3	15185.111	64.700	.000
Residual	69471.787	296	234.702		
Total	115027.120	299			
Durbin-Watson		1.467		Significant	

The output indicates that three variables i.e. type of school, Socio-economic status, Mother's occupation qualify as significant predictors of Attitude Towards Women. Therefore, the output tables show three steps of multiple regression. Table 2a shows the efficacy of the regression model to significantly predict our dependent variable. An observation of sum of squares shows that regression line fits to the data. F-ratio is significant enough, showing that our ability to predict the dependent variable has improved. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic which is around 2 in value signifies that the regression line is significantly different from 0 i.e. the slope of line is significant enough to fitness of the regression model.

Having studied the goodness of fit of our regression model in table 2a, we further study the model parameters and regression coefficients which have been reported in table 2b.

TABLE-2B
Model Summary and Coefficients

Variables	R	R ²	β	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for β	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Type of School	.613	.376	-21.144	-9.094	.000	-25.720	-16.568
Socio-economic status	.621	.386	-6.482	-2.273	.024	-12.093	-.870
Mother's occupation	.629	.396	-4.750	-2.213	.028	-8.974	-.526

Constant = 272.376

Type of School (which consists two categories i.e. all boys & co-education) in our model has entered at first step as being the most important and significant predictor of Attitude Towards Women. Regression value (.613) indicates a high association between the dependent and the independent variables. R² value indicates the amount of variance accounted for by the Type of School in the level of Attitude Towards Women. In this model 37.6% of the total variance in Attitude Towards Women is due to a subject's association to an all boys' school. Regression coefficient value is -21.144 which coefficient indicates that each chance of a subject representing a co-education school decreases the value of Attitude Towards Women by 21.144 units provided that the effect of all other variables remain constant.

Socio-economic status (which consists two categories i.e. lower middle class & middle class and above) has come at the second step as the second most important predictor of Attitude Towards Women. Regression value (.621) indicates a high association between dependent and the independent variable. R² value indicated that 1% of the total variance in the Attitude Towards Women is due to a subject's belonging to the lower middle class. Regression coefficient value is -6.482 which coefficient indicates that each chance of a subject belonging to the upper middle class decreases the value of Attitude Towards Women by 6.482 units provided that the effect of all other variables remain constant.

Mother's occupation (which consists two categories i.e. home-maker & working) in our model has entered at the third step as being the third most important and significant predictor of Attitude Towards Women. Regression value (.629) indicates a high association between the dependent and the independent variable. R² value indicated that 1% of the total variance in Attitude Towards Women is due to subjects' mother being a home-maker. Regression coefficient value is -4.750 which coefficient indicates that each chance of a subject's mother being working decreases the value of Attitude Towards Women by 4.750 units provided that the effect of all other variables remain constant.

t-value is inversely significant in all three variables, which indicates that β-value is inversely different from zero. This signifies that the slope of the regression is not steep. Confidence interval for β indicates the limits of coefficient value which can vary in the population of our study in future.

DISCUSSION

The study conducted a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing school-going boys' attitudes towards women, highlighting the interplay of age, birth order, social networks, and various contextual variables. The research revealed intriguing patterns in how these factors collectively shape young boys' perceptions of women. The study, which involved a diverse sample of participants from different educational settings (all boys & co-

education), yielded significant insights into the predictors of attitudes towards women, this finding was also yielded in the study of Marianne (2011).

The findings underscored the role of age and birth order in influencing boys' attitudes towards women. Younger boys exhibited more malleable attitudes, with a trend towards less traditional views compared to their older counterparts, these findings are similar to that of the study conducted by Crouter et al (2007). Moreover, birth order played a role, with first-born boys demonstrating slightly more conservative attitudes than those born later in the family. The study attributed this to exposure differences and changing societal norms over time. The study of birth order was also conducted by Khodarahimi in Iran that had similar results in the year 1972.

The study also highlighted the pivotal role of peer groups in shaping attitudes as the researchers took the variables of number of male and female friends, this type of conclusive result was also seen in the work of Duarte et al, (2017). Boys with a higher number of male friends tended to exhibit more stereotypical views, while those with a greater number of female friends displayed more progressive attitudes. Interestingly, the type of educational environment emerged as a crucial predictor. Attending mixed-gender schools was associated with a reduction in negative attitudes towards women compared to boys in all-boys schools, though many studies were done on this type of variable but the study conducted by Ademe (2017), yielded more similar results. Socio-economic status and maternal occupation were also identified as influential factors, with higher socio-economic status and diverse maternal careers correlating with more egalitarian attitudes among the boys. The research conducted by Willetts-Bloom in the year 1994, predicts the attitude change factors that are similar to those mentioned above.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate interplay of various factors in shaping school-going boys' attitudes towards women. The findings highlight the potential for age, birth order, socio economic status, and educational context to collectively mould these attitudes. Importantly, the study emphasizes the role of mixed-gender education in fostering more positive attitudes towards women among boys. These insights hold valuable implications for educational policies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and reducing gender biases from an early age.

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