

## **Changing Gender Roles and Expectations in Modern Society: A Case Study in Mysore City in Karnataka**

### **Nagendrakumar P.M.**

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Government First Grade College, Chamarajanagar.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17953833>

#### **ABSTRACT:**

India's gender roles have evolved due to social, economic, and cultural changes. Greater access to education and employment empowers women, enhances decision-making, challenges traditional norms, and promotes equality. These shifts enable women's active participation in the workforce and society, fostering broader acceptance of diverse roles and advancing a more inclusive society. This study examines the evolving gender roles and expectations of women in modern society, with a focus on Mysore, Karnataka. It explores how education and employment opportunities contribute to the transformation of traditional gender norms, enabling women to participate more actively in economic, social, and familial spheres. A sample of 60 women from Mysore was surveyed using a structured questionnaire, and data were analyzed using Chi-Square tests to assess the impact of education and employment on changing gender roles. The findings reveal that higher educational attainment and increased participation in the workforce significantly enhance women's autonomy, decision-making power, and societal influence, challenging conventional norms. The study underscores the importance of promoting gender-sensitive policies and interventions to support women's empowerment and foster equitable participation in all areas of life.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Gender Roles, Gender Expectations, Modern Society.

.....

## **Introduction**

India has experienced significant changes in gender roles and expectations over recent decades due to social, economic, and cultural transformations. Expanded access to education has increased literacy rates, higher education enrollment, and aspirations for professional careers, gradually shifting women from traditional domestic roles toward active workforce and public participation. Education and employment empower women with knowledge, skills, and financial independence, enhancing their role in family and societal decision-making. These opportunities challenge conventional norms, promote gender equality, and create role models, fostering broader societal acceptance of diverse and equitable gender roles in modern Indian society.

Gender roles and expectations refer to the socially constructed responsibilities, behaviors, and norms assigned to individuals based on their gender. Traditionally, men were expected to be strong breadwinners and decision-makers, while women were largely confined to domestic roles such as caregiving and household management. However, rapid social, economic, and cultural changes have significantly transformed these traditional perceptions, leading to evolving gender roles in modern society.

In earlier societies, gender roles were rigid and deeply rooted in cultural traditions and patriarchal systems. Women's participation in education and paid employment was limited, and their primary identity was linked to marriage and motherhood. Men, on the other hand, were discouraged from expressing emotions and were burdened with the responsibility of earning and providing for the family. These expectations not only restricted individual freedom but also reinforced gender inequality.

With increased access to education, urbanization, and globalization, gender roles have gradually become more flexible. Women are now actively involved in higher education, professional careers, and leadership positions across various sectors. At the same time, men are increasingly participating in domestic duties, child care, and emotional labor within families. This shift reflects a broader understanding that abilities and responsibilities should not be determined by gender but by choice and capability.

Despite progress, traditional gender expectations continue to persist in many societies. Women often face the double burden of managing both professional work and household responsibilities. In workplaces, gender

stereotypes contribute to wage gaps, limited leadership opportunities, and discrimination. Men, too, experience pressure to conform to ideals of masculinity, which can negatively impact their mental health and emotional well-being.

Media and popular culture play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing gender norms. While some media representations challenge stereotypes by promoting diverse and inclusive gender identities, others continue to portray unrealistic expectations of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, conscious efforts are needed to promote positive representations that encourage equality and respect.

### **Gender roles**

Gender roles refer to the socially constructed expectations, behaviors, and attributes that a society considers appropriate for individuals based on their gender. These roles define expected tasks, attitudes, and appearances, such as men being viewed as strong providers and women as nurturing caregivers or homemakers. Gender roles are learned through socialization processes within the family, media, educational institutions, and peer groups. They vary across cultures and historical contexts and can change over time in response to social, economic, and political developments. Gender roles significantly influence individuals' self-concept, social relationships, opportunities, and life choices.

### **Gender Expectations**

Gender expectations are socially constructed norms that prescribe how individuals should behave, express emotions, and present themselves based on their perceived gender. Traditionally, these expectations have encouraged women to adopt nurturing, polite, and domestic roles, while men have been associated with leadership, strength, assertiveness, and the role of primary provider. However, these restrictive norms are increasingly being challenged as societies recognize their limiting and harmful effects. Contemporary shifts promote more inclusive and diverse roles for all genders in professional life, household responsibilities, and personal expression. Despite this progress, persistent gender stereotypes continue to influence individual choices, opportunities, and mental well-being.

Gender roles and expectations refer to the socially and culturally defined behaviors, responsibilities, rights, and norms that society considers appropriate for individuals based on their gender.

In most societies, gender roles shape how men and women are

expected to think, act, dress, and interact. For example, women are often expected to take primary responsibility for caregiving, household work, and nurturing roles, while men are traditionally expected to be financial providers and decision-makers. These expectations influence education choices, employment opportunities, family roles, and participation in public life.

Gender expectations are not biologically fixed; they are learned through socialization in families, schools, media, and cultural traditions. Over time, these roles can change due to factors such as education, economic development, legal reforms, urbanization, and social movements. In modern society, evolving gender roles have led to increased participation of women in education and employment, as well as greater involvement of men in domestic and caregiving responsibilities, challenging traditional norms and promoting gender equality.

### **Review of Literature**

Qaf Qurat Ul Ain (2024) “Women’s Health and the Impact of Gender Roles and Expectations: Challenges and Opportunities” in this study highlights that gender roles and societal expectations significantly influence women’s health and well-being. Women’s disproportionate responsibility for caregiving and household work limits their access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare, negatively affecting physical and mental health. Research identifies gender-specific health concerns, including reproductive health issues, mental health disorders, and chronic diseases, which are often intensified by economic dependency and restricted decision-making power. Additionally, cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination pose serious risks to women’s physical and psychological health. Previous studies emphasize the value of mixed-methods and thematic analyses in capturing both broader patterns and lived experiences. Overall, the literature underscores the need for gender-sensitive interventions to reduce structural inequalities, improve access to resources, and promote health equity for women.

Tush Arora and others (2024) “Gender Roles and Expectations of a Family” The literature indicates that gender roles and expectations in India have evolved significantly since the mid-nineteenth century. In the pre-industrial period, Indian society was largely patriarchal, with women confined to domestic roles and often considered a social burden, while men dominated social, economic, and political life. The early twentieth

century marked a turning point with the introduction of social reforms and government initiatives aimed at improving women's status through education, legal rights, and employment opportunities. Studies examining these reforms highlight notable progress in women's empowerment; however, they also reveal the persistence of gender inequalities in areas such as workforce participation, decision-making, and social attitudes. Scholarly works further emphasize that despite legislative advancements, cultural norms and structural barriers continue to hinder full gender equality. Overall, the literature underscores both the historical transformation and ongoing challenges faced by women in Indian society, highlighting the need for sustained policy efforts and social change to achieve equitable gender relations.

### **Research Gap**

Extensive research has been conducted on gender roles and expectations in modern society; however, several critical gaps remain. Most existing studies focus on macro-level analyses or national-level trends, often overlooking city-specific and culturally contextual experiences. There is limited empirical evidence examining how education and employment opportunities specifically influence changing gender roles at the local level, particularly in medium-sized urban settings such as Mysore city. Additionally, many studies rely on either qualitative narratives or descriptive statistics, with fewer applying inferential techniques such as the Chi-square test to statistically examine associations between education, employment, and gender role attitudes. Furthermore, women lived experiences across different age groups and occupational categories are underrepresented, especially regarding the negotiation of traditional expectations alongside modern responsibilities. There is also limited integration of quantitative findings with qualitative insights to explain how and why gender role transitions occur. Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a mixed-methods approach to provide localized, evidence-based understanding of the changing gender roles and expectations in contemporary society.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the concept and evolution of gender roles and expectations in society.
2. To study the influence of gender expectations on education and employment opportunities.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- Increased education and employment opportunities contribute to the changing gender roles of women.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design to examine changing gender roles and expectations in modern society, with specific reference to Mysore city in Karnataka. The main objective of the study is to examine how education and employment opportunities contribute to the changing gender roles of women. Primary data were collected from 60 respondents using a structured questionnaire covering socio-demographic characteristics and attitudes toward gender roles related to household responsibilities, caregiving, employment, and decision-making. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different age groups, educational levels, and occupational categories. To test the association between education, employment status, and gender role attitudes in the study area, the Chi-square test was applied. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents, and qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained throughout the study.

### **Trends in Changing Gender Roles and Expectations in India**

India has witnessed significant changes in gender roles and expectations over the past few decades due to social, economic, and cultural transformation. One major trend is the expansion of women's access to education, leading to higher literacy rates, increased enrollment in higher education, and greater aspirations for professional careers. This has contributed to a gradual shift from traditional domestic roles toward greater participation of women in the workforce and public life.

Another important trend is the changing nature of employment. Women are increasingly entering diverse sectors such as education, healthcare, information technology, and entrepreneurship, challenging the notion of men as sole breadwinners. Simultaneously, there is a slow but visible shift in men's roles, with greater involvement in household chores and caregiving, particularly in urban areas.

Legal reforms, government schemes, and awareness campaigns promoting gender equality have also influenced attitudes toward women's rights, education, and decision-making. However, patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and unequal wage opportunities persist, especially

in rural areas. Overall, India is experiencing a transitional phase where modern ideals of gender equality coexist with traditional expectations, indicating both progress and continuing challenges.

Impact of Education and Employment Opportunities on Gender Roles and Expectations in Modern Society

**The impact of education and employment opportunities on changing gender roles of women is significant and multi-dimensional:**

**Empowerment and Independence:** Education equips women with knowledge, critical thinking, and skills, enabling them to make informed decisions, pursue careers, and gain financial independence, which challenges traditional norms that limit women to domestic roles.

**Economic Participation:** Employment opportunities allow women to contribute to household and national income, increasing their bargaining power in family and society. Women in professional roles are more likely to challenge stereotypes and redefine expectations of femininity and work.

**Social Awareness:** Exposure to education and workplaces increases awareness of rights, gender equality, and social issues, fostering confidence to question restrictive societal norms.

**Shift in Family Dynamics:** Educated and employed women often participate in family decision-making, influence child-rearing practices, and encourage gender-neutral upbringing, gradually transforming traditional roles.

**Role Modeling:** Educated and working women become role models for younger generations, inspiring broader societal change in perceptions of women's capabilities.

In summary, education and employment are key drivers in redefining women's roles, promoting equality, and reducing gender-based disparities.

### **Survey-Based Analysis and Data Interpretation**

The survey was conducted among 60 women in Mysore city, Karnataka, to understand the changing gender roles and expectations in modern society, focusing on the impact of education and employment. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation, with Chi-Square tests applied to examine relationships between education, employment, and gender role attitudes. The research findings are as follows,

**Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
20–25	13	21.7
26–30	13	21.7
31–35	12	20.0
36–40	11	18.3
41–45	11	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The age-wise distribution of 60 respondents shows a balanced representation across adulthood. The largest groups, 20–25 and 26–30 years (21.7% each), reflect young women pursuing education or early careers. Middle and older age groups (31–45 years) represent women balancing professional and family roles, capturing diverse perspectives on changing gender roles.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Education Level**

Education Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
SSLC	5	8.3
PUC	6	10.0
Diploma	6	10.0
Degree	30	50.0
PG	13	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table indicates that the majority of respondents hold a degree, comprising 50% of the sample, reflecting a high level of educational attainment among participants. Postgraduate respondents account for 21.7%, showing representation of highly educated women. Diploma and PUC holders each constitute 10%, while SSLC holders are the least at 8.3%. This distribution suggests that the study predominantly captures the perspectives of educated women, which is crucial for understanding the impact of education on changing gender roles and expectations in modern society.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status**

Employment Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Employed	43	71.66
Unemployed	11	18.33
Student	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table reveals that a majority of respondents (71.66%) are employed, indicating strong workforce participation among the sample. Unemployed women constitute 18.33%, while students make up 10% of respondents. This distribution highlights that most participants have exposure to professional environments, which may influence their perspectives on changing gender roles and expectations. Employment provides women with financial independence, decision-making power, and the ability to challenge traditional norms, reflecting the significant role of work in shaping modern gender dynamics.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation Type**

Occupation Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Private Sector	10	16.7
Government	4	6.7
Teaching	6	10.0
IT	6	10.0
Banking	4	6.7
Corporate	6	10.0
Factory	6	10.0
NGO	4	6.7
Self-employed	4	6.7
Not Working (Unemployed/Student)	10	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table shows a diverse occupational distribution among respondents. The largest groups are those employed in the private sector and those not currently working (16.7% each). Teaching, IT, corporate,

and factory occupations each represent 10%, while government, banking, NGO, and self-employed respondents each constitute 6.7%. This variety highlights women's engagement across multiple professional sectors and roles. Such occupational diversity reflects the changing nature of gender roles, demonstrating that women are increasingly participating in both traditional and non-traditional career paths, challenging conventional societal expectations.

**Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Family Decision Role**

Family Decision Role	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Main Decision Maker	15	25.0
Joint Decision Making	34	56.7
Low / No Role	11	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table indicates that the majority of respondents (56.7%) participate in joint decision-making within their families, reflecting shared responsibilities and increasing influence of women in family matters. About 25% act as the main decision-makers, showing significant autonomy. Only 18.3% have little or no role, indicating that traditional limitations still exist for some women. Overall, the data suggest a shift toward more equitable participation of women in family decisions, highlighting changing gender roles and expectations in modern society.

**Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Gender Role Attitude**

Gender Role Attitude	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Traditional	11	18.3
Moderate	18	30.0
Modern	31	51.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table shows that a majority of respondents (51.7%) hold modern gender role attitudes, reflecting progressive views on women's roles in family, work, and society. About 30% have moderate attitudes, indicating a blend of traditional and modern perspectives. Only 18.3% maintain traditional views, suggesting that conventional gender norms are gradually

declining. Overall, the data highlight a clear shift toward modern attitudes, signifying evolving gender roles and expectations among women in the study area.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Hypothesis of the Study

Increased education and employment opportunities contribute to the changing gender roles of women.

**Table 7: Education Level and Gender Role Attitude**

Education Level	Traditional	Moderate	Modern	Total
SSLC + PUC	11	0	0	11
Diploma + Degree	0	18	18	36
Postgraduate (PG)	0	0	13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60</b>

**Source:** Field study

The table indicates a strong relationship between education level and gender role attitude. Respondents with lower education (SSLC + PUC) predominantly hold traditional views (100%), whereas those with diploma and degree levels exhibit both moderate and modern attitudes (50% each). All postgraduate respondents display modern attitudes (100%), showing that higher education significantly promotes progressive views on gender roles. This highlights the crucial role of education in shaping modern gender expectations and reducing traditional stereotypes in society.

**Table 8: Employment Status and Gender Role Attitude**

Employment Status	Traditional	Moderate	Modern	Total
Employed	0	18	31	49
Unemployed	11	0	0	11
Student	0	7	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60</b>

**Source:** Field study

Among employed women, 36. 7% hold moderate attitudes and 63. 3% hold modern attitudes, showing progressive gender views. All unemployed women (100%) maintain traditional attitudes, while all students (100%) have moderate attitudes. This demonstrates that employment strongly contributes to shaping modern gender roles and expectations.

### Test Summary

Statistic	Education Level Gender Role Attitude	Employment Status Gender Role Attitude
Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	72. 47	71. 41
Degrees of Freedom	4	4
Significance Level	0. 05	0. 05
Critical $\chi^2$	9. 488	9. 488
P-value	< 0. 001	< 0. 001
Decision	Reject H <sub>0</sub>	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Interpretation	» There is a strong association between Education Level and Gender Role Attitude. Lower education is linked to traditional attitudes, while higher education correlates with modern attitudes. » There is a strong association between Employment Status and Gender Role Attitude. Lower Employment Status is linked to traditional attitudes, while higher Employment Status correlates with modern attitudes.	

The analysis highlights that higher education and employment opportunities are key drivers in transforming women's gender roles and expectations in modern society. Women's participation in education, workforce, and decision-making contributes to progressive attitudes, greater autonomy, and a shift from traditional norms.

Both Education Level and Employment Status are significantly associated with Gender Role Attitude. Higher education and employment correlate with more modern gender role attitudes. Lower education and unemployment correlate with traditional attitudes.

### Conclusion

India has seen significant changes in gender roles due to social, economic, and cultural transformations. Greater access to education has increased literacy, higher education enrollment, and career aspirations, shifting women from traditional domestic roles to active participation in the workforce and society. Education and employment empower women with knowledge, skills, and financial independence, enhancing decision-making, challenging traditional norms, promoting equality, and fostering broader acceptance of diverse gender roles in modern India. Changing gender roles and expectations are a vital step toward achieving a more just

and inclusive society. While significant progress has been made, persistent stereotypes and inequalities must be addressed through education, legal reforms, and cultural awareness. Encouraging mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and freedom of choice will help create a society where individuals are valued for their potential rather than limited by traditional gender expectations. The findings of this study reveal that both education level and employment status are significantly associated with gender role attitude. Higher educational attainment and increased participation in the workforce significantly enhance women's autonomy, decision-making power, and societal influence, challenging conventional norms. The study underscores the importance of promoting gender-sensitive policies and interventions to support women's empowerment and foster equitable participation in all areas of life.

**References:**

1. Saewyc and others (2017) "A Global Perspective on Gender Roles and Identity" Journal of Adolescent Health, Volume 61, Issue 4, S1 – S2
2. Rakesh Ashok More (2023) "Roles of Gender in Modern Society" International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR) E-ISSN: 2582-2160, Volume 5, Issue 2, Page no: 1-3.
3. Qaf Qurat Ul Ain (2024) "Women's Health and the Impact of Gender Roles and Expectations: Challenges and Opportunities" The International Journal of Indian Psychology ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print) Volume 12, Issue 2, DIP: 18.01.056.20241202, DOI: 10.25215/1202.056, Page no:564-575.
4. Tush Arora and others (2024) "Gender Roles and Expectations of a Family" International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT) Volume 12, Issue 4, ISSN: 2320-2882, Page no:501-508.
5. Hemant Kumar and others (2017) "The Impact of Modernization on Female Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes: A Psychological Review" The International Journal of Indian Psychology ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print) Volume 12, Issue 2, DIP: 18.01.157.20241202, DOI: 10.25215/1202.157

**Funding:**

This study was not funded by any grant.

**Conflict of interest:**

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

**About the License:**

© The Authors 2024. The text of this article is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4. 0 International License.