



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Gender, Patriarchy And Identity: Understanding The Construction Of Men's Identity In Indian Society

AUTHOR: PRATHIK SUVARNA

COURSE: BACHOLER OF ARTS

YEAR: THIRD YEAR

CORRESPONDENT ADDRESS: GOREGAON WEST

ABSTRACT

In our society when we think about men, we think about power, dominance, patriarchy, masculinity, authoritative, ambitious, competitive etc. We think about them in such way because our thoughts are often shaped by cultural, societal, and personal influences. These perceptions of ours about men are influenced by stereotypes, personal experiences and the media. Power, dominance, authoritative, ambitious and competitive can also be the qualities of a woman but because we are so influenced by the gender roles and societal norms that we always consider men as the one who should take responsibility and be the provider for their family. In our society we expect men to toughen up, ignore their emotions and just focus on becoming the breadwinners of the family. Because of these reasons many men try to bottle up their emotions and just work towards providing for their family irrespective of their current mental and emotional state. Through this research we will be able to understand that how societal norms and expectations shape men's identity, influencing their personality, behaviour and character. To have a better understanding of this phenomena, interviews were conducted of male participants, which included in depth interaction and telephonic interviews of the participants. Through these discussions and interviews it has been discovered that the social institutions like media, family, peer groups and the society itself plays a major role in the development of men's identity, influencing their choices, their reactions to a particular situation, their way of thinking and thoughts about masculinity. From this research we can understand that not only women but men are also affected by patriarchy and gender roles impacting their overall personality, behaviour and character.

KEYWORDS

Patriarchy, Gender roles, Societal norms, Men's Identity, Masculinity, Indian society

INTRODUCTION

Be a man, toughen up, men don't cry. There are million different ways to tell a man "How to be a man" and have a "*chappan inch ka chatti*". But where do these ideas originate from and why is it so great to be a man? If we go back in time during the stone age, men and women both had diverse but equal roles. They both found food, raised children and made decisions for the family and community. But all these things changed when humans started practicing agriculture. They began to settle down in a place near to their agricultural lands and felt a need to protect their settlements from invaders and raiders. Because of this reason focus on physical strength became a priority in the settlements. Settlements with more physically strong men started dominating other settlements and became powerful.

Later in the medieval period, war being an important part of the society, the need for physically strong men became a necessity. Due to the rise of industrialization in the 18th and 19th centuries the focus on production and capitalism was increased. Men were required to be both mentally and physically strong so that they can endure the toxic work culture of the production factories. From women society expected to be docile, sensitive and empathetic so that they can take care of the family and help their husbands in running the house. This type of masculinity which emerged through industrialisation gave rise to gender roles and patriarchy in the European society. The Britishers brought this home-grown masculinity to India when they colonised it. According to them, Indian masculinity is not masculine and hence they were able to colonise India. Therefore, in order protect their national pride and end colonial tyranny Indian men emphasised more on physical strength and virility. But even after independence this idea of masculinity still remained in the Indian society.

Even today in the present times, young boys and men are expected to be physically tough in our society. Men are looked up by their family right from their birth as their family's successor. They are forcefully adjusted in this patriarchal society and their upbringing is done in such way that right from their tender age they are told that you should not be crying, boys don't cry. When they grow up, they are looked up as a provider for their family and they have to sacrifice their dreams and passion for them. Men face this issue but they always silently sweep this under the carpet and move on. They hide their emotions and feelings within them and start to assume their role in their family and society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In our society, what is the major challenge that men face today? Some may say, their ability to express themselves emotionally, while others may say depression, loneliness and aggression. But the most important problem that young boys and men face today is of idealizing the negative stereotypes of being a man. From a very early age most of the boys are made to believe that in order to become successful its necessary to dominate and control everything around them. They are taught that they need to become a lone wolf and try to figure out everything by themselves. Because of which many boys and young men today think that to express oneself emotionally is not what a real man does. According to them they are stronger if they suppress their emotions.

In a video of TEDx Talks, Connor Beaton, founder of Man Talks explains '**Machismo**' in which men have a strong sense of masculine pride and feel that they should dominate everyone around them. It is used to enforce toxic masculinity. He has explained that many young boys and men are admiring these macho stereotypes and are adapting these toxic traits to form their masculine personality and completely eliminating anything which is associated with feminine traits. Because of all these negative stereotypes and toxic traits most of the men are going through the worst phase of their life impacting their mental and emotional health. Connor Beaton calls this phenomenon '**The Mask of Masculinity**'. Similar content was published in Harjant S. Gill's article "India, Masculinity, Identity". In his article he has explained how '**Being a Mard**' is associated with dominance, strength, control over genders and display of power. He also mentioned that how patriarchy helps maintaining this toxic masculinity in the society by restricting expressions of emotions and promoting gender roles.

According to another research “Are you man enough?”, men follow a gender script and according to this script they restrict themselves from expressing their emotions and feelings as it is considered weak and feminine, they aspire to be strong, powerful, and be the man who takes charge and restrict their affection for other men. Now because of all these restrictions men place upon themselves to be real man, they face severe consequences for maintaining their mask of masculinity. The World Health Organisation (WHO) released a report, showing that the chances of men committing suicide is 4 times more than women. Aggression, loneliness and depression are seen more in males compared to females. Because of these toxic stereotypes men are damaging their overall well-being. They need to understand that expressing emotions and being affectionate is not a weakness or feminine and it will not hamper their masculinity, rather it is healthy and good for both mental and emotional health.

METHODOLOGY

To understand the construction of men’s identity and their personality, interviews were conducted of male participants, which included in depth interaction and telephonic interviews of the participants. Participants for the interviews were selected by using convenient sampling. To understand the views and opinions of the participants, they were asked a few questions regarding their views on masculinity, male identity, gender roles, the role of family and media in the construction of male identity.

FINDINGS

Interviews were conducted of 5 male participants using convenient sampling. All the participants are Indians and citizens of Mumbai. The participants were asked the following questions

1. Could you tell me, how was your relationship with your parents?
2. What role did your parents especially your father play in shaping your male identity?
3. According to you, what does masculinity mean? and how do you think a man can have a masculine personality?
4. According to you, how does toxic masculinity affect the well-being of men?
5. According to you, do social media and digital platforms play a role in the construction of male identity in contemporary India?

• Participant A

Participant A is 20 years old and is in his final year, pursuing his degree in psychology from KES Shroff college. For him, masculinity is something which you relate with personality. To have a masculine personality a person should have high IQ and EQ, they should be able to understand other person’s feeling, their emotions and being there for their family and friends whenever they need us. His relationship with his family has been a restraining one. Men in his family always maintain a formal aura around the other members and are very selective about their words whenever they speak and hence, it’s difficult for him to express himself and just bottle ups his emotions. According to him social media is affecting people negatively as there is no restriction on what content the person is consuming.

• Participant B

Participant B is 38 years old and is working as a Deputy general manager in a certain company. He is married and is father to a son. According to him masculinity comes through thoughts and behaviour and not from a muscular physique. For him masculinity can be a quality of both male or female. His relationship with his family was never challenging. His parents never forced anything on him and were very supportive. He was emotionally connected with his parents and both of them were very emotionally expressive. He thinks, through social media and digital platform there can be a positive change in the society as it has the power to create awareness among the masses.

• Participant C

Participant C is 20 years old and is in his final year, pursuing his degree in psychology from KES Shroff college. For him, Masculinity is something that comes from dominance, a strong physique, ability to retaliate when needed and leadership qualities. He thinks that men can be emotionally vulnerable but they should understand their situation and become mature. He has no emotional bond with his family and he doesn't feel emotionally connected with them. According to him, in social media, movies and TV series whatever content is shown is related to the real-world issues, but it is upon us what we learn and do with that information.

• Participant D

Participant D is 21 years old and is in his final year, pursuing his degree in philosophy from Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala College. According to him, providing, protecting and helping are the core principles of masculinity. For him, male identity, revolves around money, power and respect. His relationship with his family has always been good. They have always supported him and his brother, bought them whatever they needed and gave them the best life they could ask for. According to him media has both negative and positive things which affects the person either way. He thinks pornography and vulgar content on social media and digital platform can make a person mentally weak, which causes a decline in their masculinity.

• Participant E

Participant E is 28 years old and is currently working as a public relations executive in a certain company. He thinks that men should be able to understand others' emotions and feelings and be able to help someone whenever they need their help. According to him, a person should not do anything to prove that he is a man or has a masculine personality. His relationship with his parents has always been good. His family is very understanding and has always supported him whenever he needed them. According to him, social media plays very major role in shaping our thoughts and personality and influences our overall identity.

DISCUSSION

Masculinity or *Mardangi* is something which is often associated with men in our society. From the responses of the participants, we can conclude that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon which includes a set of qualities that portrays one's personality. Strength, independence, self-reliant, ambitious, competitive and a problem solver are some of the masculine traits an individual can acquire irrespective of their sex to have a masculine personality. Family is another social institution that has a huge influence on men.

From the analysis of the relationship of participants A and C with their family we can understand that because of the restrictions placed upon them by their families these young men face issues of expressing themselves emotionally and are unable to form an emotional bond with their family. They eventually started

to bottle up their emotions and normalise being emotionally restrictive. Media also play a major role in constructing men's perspective on masculinity. There are both positive and negative aspects of masculinity shown in the media through films and social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube. Over the years in Bollywood, brute strength and the need to have a macho personality who is not afraid of anyone and does whatever he wants to do has been the core of masculinity. The whole plot revolves around a hero who is strong enough to beat up all the bad guys and rescues a woman who is labelled as weak and is dependent on the hero.

Very few movies like Udaan addresses issues related to masculinity and explore how these expectations placed on young boys and men impact their overall well-being. The movie casts light on how the pressure of being an '*asli mard*' restricts men from expressing their emotions and thus imprisoning themselves in the prison of toxic masculinity. The movie shows that there is need of new type of masculinity which does not punish the human vulnerability instead has love, compassion and sensitivity at its core. As men we should understand that caring for others and loving them doesn't make us less masculine or feminine. Instead, it makes us more human and a better person.

CONCLUSION

In our society, we expect young boys and men to be tough, face their issues and solve them like a man. We expect them to be stoic in nature so that they can face the hardships of this world without complaining about it. We make them believe that all these traits are necessary to be a real man in our society. We make them believe that expressing their emotions like sadness, fear, being vulnerable and asking for help is something that real men don't do. It's time that we redefine the idea about being a real man.

A real man is someone who has the courage to love and to dream, who has the courage to express their emotions in front of their loved ones and talk about it, who respects everyone irrespective of their sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity and religion. A real man is a person who is sensitive, who understands the other person and seeks equality for everyone. We should stop viewing tough men as superior and try to understand what toughness really mean. A women going through childbirth is tough, a person who accepts their sexuality and fights for it against their family is tough, a mother who takes care of her family by doing all the unpaid labour which goes unacknowledged is tough, a man who does heavy labour the whole day and comes home with a big smile on his face for his kids is tough. Toughness or strength doesn't come from a particular gender or sex, it comes through various ways and the strongest among us are the ones who accept this fact and don't define strength or toughness as per gender stereotypes.

REFERENCES

Journals:

Harjant S. Gill, 20 Feb (2024) - India, Masculinity, Identity - [India, Masculinity, Identity - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies](#)

Manirajah Sanggeet Mithra, (2013) "Are You Man Enough? A Look at the Attitudes of Young Male Professionals on Notions of Masculinity and Male Gender Norms in Modern India" - [Independent Study Project \(ISP\) Collection | SIT Study Abroad | SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad](#)

Sanghita Sen, Jan (2018) - Indian Masculinity: An Important Intervention in Gender and Masculinity Studies - [\(PDF\) Indian Masculinity: An Important Intervention in Gender and Masculinity Studies \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Websites:

[Machismo: Definition, History, Traits, Impact \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/machismo-definition-history-traits-impact-2795881)

[Gender Roles in Society | Definition & Examples - Lesson | Study.com](https://www.study.com/lesson/gender-roles-in-society-definition-examples)

[Worldwide Distribution of Suicides Rates by Gender and Age, 2000 \(chartsbin.com\)](https://www.chartsbin.com/worldwide-distribution-of-suicides-rates-by-gender-and-age-2000)

Media:

[Recasting: Masculinity ft. Udaan](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Udaan)

[What's So Great About "Being a Man"?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=What's%20So%20Great%20About%20Being%20a%20Man%3F)

[The Mask of Masculinity - the traditional role of men is evolving | Connor Beaton | TEDxStanleyPark](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=The%20Mask%20of%20Masculinity%20-%20the%20traditional%20role%20of%20men%20is%20evolving)

