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ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this research is to empirically determine the extent to which age and gender affect attitudes toward women among a representative student population. The study aims to bridge the gap in understanding between two pivotal life stages: middle adolescence (ages 14-15) and emerging adulthood (ages 24-25). By comparing school students with postgraduate (PG) students, the investigation seeks to identify whether increased educational attainment and life experience correlate with a shift toward more egalitarian gender-role attitudes. This is particularly salient in a society undergoing rapid modernization while simultaneously maintaining deeply rooted traditional values. The investigation was structured around a sample of 200 participants, bifurcated into two age-specific groups of 100 each. Each group maintained an equal gender distribution of 50 males and 50 females to ensure statistical parity for comparative analysis. The central research hypothesis posited that there would be a significant effect of both age and gender on attitudes toward women. The 25-item Attitude towards Women Scale (AWS) was administered, a tool designed to place individuals on a continuum ranging from traditional conservative to pro-feminist-egalitarian.

The results of the ANOVA analysis confirmed the hypothesis with high statistical significance. For the effect of age, the analysis yielded $F(1,196) = 24.214, p < .001$, while gender emerged as an even more powerful predictor with $F(1,196) = 121.41, p < .001$. The findings revealed that females across both cohorts held significantly more egalitarian attitudes ($M = 61.42, SD = 7.562$) than males ($M = 47.47, SD = 10.154$). Furthermore, school students exhibited higher levels of egalitarian attitudes than postgraduate students, suggesting a complex relationship between age, education, and gender-role perceptions. These findings highlight the influence of developmental and gender-based factors in shaping attitudes toward women and underscore the need for targeted interventions to promote gender equality across different life stages.

Aim

To study the effect of age and gender on attitude toward women.

Introduction

Attitude is a central construct in psychology, referring to a learned predisposition to evaluate an object, person, group, or concept in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner. It encompasses cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and behavioral (action tendencies) components, making it a multidimensional and relatively enduring system shaped through socialization, personal experiences, and cultural norms. Attitudes serve as mental shortcuts that help individuals interpret and respond to their social environment, often guiding judgments and behaviors toward others (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Among various types of attitudes, attitudes toward women have been extensively studied due to their strong connection with gender roles, social equality, and cultural development. These attitudes reflect broader societal beliefs about the roles, rights, and capabilities of women and are deeply embedded in cultural traditions and institutional structures. Gender-role attitudes are not static; rather, they evolve across generations, influenced by education, economic participation, feminist movements, and policy changes (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004).

A substantial body of research has consistently shown gender differences in attitudes toward women, with women generally exhibiting more egalitarian views than men. This difference is often explained through social identity theory and lived experiences, as women are more directly affected by gender inequality (Spence & Helmreich, 1972; Twenge, 1997). Longitudinal and cohort studies further reveal that younger generations tend to hold more progressive and egalitarian attitudes compared to older cohorts, suggesting a shift in societal norms over time (Firebaugh, 1992).

The Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS) developed by Spence and Helmreich has been a widely used instrument to measure such attitudes. Studies using AWS have demonstrated significant cohort effects, where individuals from more recent generations report less traditional gender-role beliefs. For instance, research comparing cohorts from 1972 to 1992 found that both men and women became increasingly egalitarian over time, with women consistently scoring higher in egalitarianism (Spence & Hahn, 1997). However, even within progressive cohorts, subtle gender differences persist.

Age also plays a critical role in shaping attitudes. Younger individuals, especially those exposed to higher education and diverse social contexts, are more likely to challenge traditional gender norms. In contrast, older individuals may retain more conventional beliefs due to early socialization in more patriarchal environments (Brooks & Bolzendahl, 2004). Furthermore, modernization theory suggests that socio-economic development and increased participation of women in the workforce contribute to shifts in gender-role attitudes across age groups and societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2003).

In addition, cross-cultural studies indicate that attitudes toward women vary significantly across societies depending on cultural values, religious influences, and levels of gender equality (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The concept of ambivalent sexism highlights that attitudes toward women are not purely negative or positive but can include both hostile and benevolent components, reflecting complex and sometimes contradictory societal expectations.

Mostafa (2005) revealed that UAE students have significantly different attitudes towards women managers from those of the older generations (n = 189). There are significant differences between males' and females' perceptions of women's roles and participation in society. The study predicts that modernity may diminish patriarchal attitudes towards women managers in the Arab world.

Lynott and McCandless, 2000 concluded that the gender role attitudes of older women are more traditional in orientation. This line of research, however, has often confounded the impact of age and cohort. Consequently, cohort differences in life experiences have not been systematically explored. This study addresses the relationship between age and gender role attitudes, taking into account the potential mediating effects of life experiences and controlling for cohort. The conclusions suggest that the impact of age on gender role attitudes is not as strong as might be expected. Rather, the results show that the life experiences of different cohorts are better predictors of gender role attitudes among older women, though such experiences do not have the same impact on all women.

Another study by Boehnke, 2011 demonstrate that over the last 50 years a shift towards more egalitarian gender role attitudes has been observed in most modern societies, including those in East Asia. This article addresses variations in gender role attitudes among 20- to 55-year-old women and men across highly developed countries. Using comparative survey data from 24 regions the study investigates factors that explain gender role attitudes on the basis of educational attainment, family background, personal

experience as working women, and cost-benefit considerations, as well as the influence of cultural climate and structural context. Results show that individuals with a higher level of educational attainment, as well as those who were themselves offspring of a working mother, had a higher propensity to support more egalitarian gender roles. Furthermore, being employed made women more prone to hold rather gender equal role attitudes. Having a child had a 'traditionalising' effect among women, but not among men. On the societal level, structural rather than cultural gender equality emerged as the more influential force toward gender role attitudes.

Given these findings, it becomes essential to examine how age and gender interact to influence attitudes toward women within specific populations. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into ongoing social change and help identify areas where gender equality efforts are still needed.

These studies collectively suggest that there is a tendency for older individuals to hold more negative attitudes towards women as compared to younger individuals. However, it's important to consider that attitudes are influenced by multiple factors, and gender differences within age groups can also be significant.

Hypothesis

There would be a significant effect of age and gender on attitude towards women.

Methods

Participant

The sample was divided into groups. Group 1 consists of school students with age of 14-15 while the group 2 consists of PG students with age of 24-25. Each group had 100 students out of which 50 were males and 50 were females.

Test and Tools

The study conducted with the help of a scale named Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich & Stapp, 1978). The scale consists of 25 statements. The statements listed in the scale describe attitudes toward the roles of women in society among different people. Each statement has 4 options i.e., (A) agree strongly, (B) agree mildly, (C) disagree mildly, or (D) disagree strongly. A software named JASP is used to calculate the descriptive as well as inferential statistics.

Design and Procedure

The aim of research was to study the effect of age and gender on attitude toward women. After the written consent of all the participant, the study conducted by providing a scale, Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich & Stapp, 1978) which contains 25 statements. The subject was also required to fill basic information such as Name, DOB, Gender, Date and Signature.

The instruction was given to all the participant as follows: *Instruction*: "The statements listed below describe attitudes toward the roles of women in society which different people have. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express yours feeling about each statement by indicating whether you (A) agree strongly, (B) agree mildly, (C) disagree mildly, or (D) disagree strongly."

In scoring the items, A=0, B=1, C=2, and D=3 except for the items with an asterisk where the scale is reversed. A high score indicates a pro-feminist, egalitarian attitude while a low score indicates a traditional, conservative attitude. The data was collected and were statistically analysed by the help of JASP.

Result

The aim of the research was to study the effect of age and gender on attitude towards women. The ANOVA results shows that $F(1,196) = 24.214$ is significant at $p < .001$. This implies that the effect of age on attitude towards women is significantly different among males ($M = 47.47$ & $SD = 10.154$) and females ($M = 61.42$ & $SD = 7.562$). As well as $F(1,196) = 121.41$ is significant at $p < .001$. This implies that the effect of gender on attitude towards women is significantly different between PG students and school students. Hence, the null hypothesis rejected and alternate hypothesis i.e., “There would be a significant effect of age and gender on attitude towards women.” is accepted. Therefore there are 999 out of 1000 chances that if the study repeated similar results will be obtained.

Descriptive statistics of all the participant shown in table 1 and the interaction graph shown in figure 1.

ANOVA Summary table

Source	Sum Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
AGE	1940.645	1	1940.645	24.214	< .001
GENDER	9730.125	1	9730.125	121.41	< .001
AGE × GENDER	330.245	1	330.245	4.121	< .05
Error	15708.38	196	80.145		

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

AGE	GENDER	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
SCHOOL STU	FEMALE	50	65.82	4.711	0.666	0.072
	MALE	50	49.3	10.473	1.481	0.212
PG STUDENT	FEMALE	50	57.02	9.601	1.358	0.168
	MALE	50	45.64	9.825	1.389	0.215

Figure 1
Shows the graph of means of males and females.

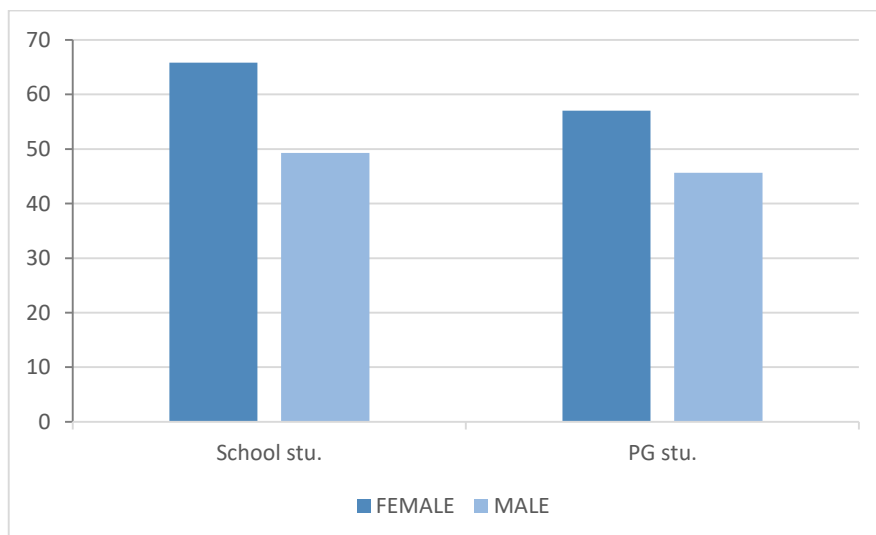
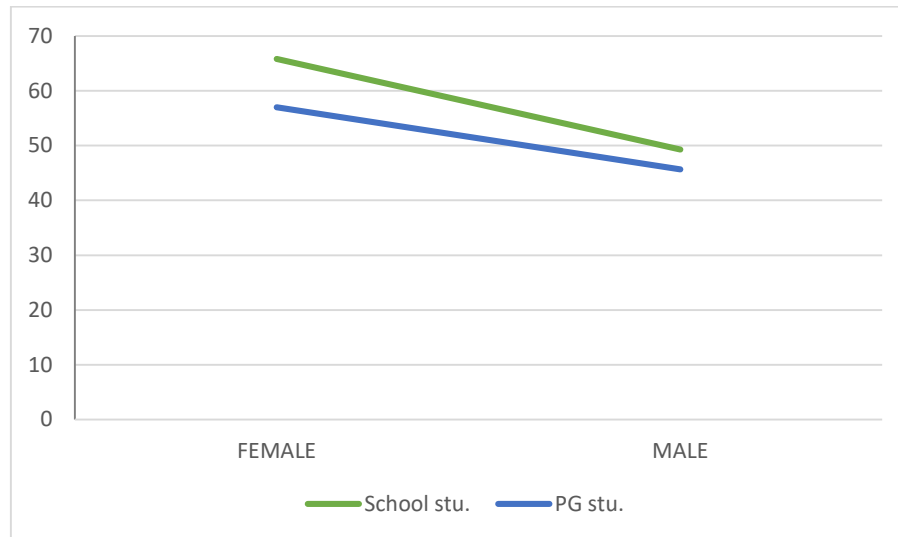


Figure 2**Interaction graph**

The interaction effects of Age and Gender for $F(1,196) = 4.121$ is significant at $p < .05$. The graph shows that the score of the School students ($M = 59.56$ & $SD = 11.483$) are more than the score of PG students ($M = 51.33$ & $SD = 13.731$). The females ($M = 61.42$ & $SD = 7.562$) has more variation in scores whereas males ($M = 47.47$ & $SD = 10.154$) show less variation. This implies that the attitude of school females is more positive towards women in compare to PG females. On the other hand the attitude of males is almost similar towards women. Females of school group ($M = 65.82$ & $SD = 4.711$) has most egalitarian attitude whereas the males of PG group ($M = 45.64$ & $SD = 9.825$) has the least egalitarian attitude. Hence there are 95 out of 100 chances if the study repeated similar results will be obtained.

Discussion

To study the effect of age and gender on attitude towards women. A hypothesis formed i.e., There would be a significant effect of age and gender on attitude towards women. This hypothesis was based on previous studies. This experiment was conducted with the help of Attitude towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich & Stapp, 1978) which contains 25 statements.

The finding of this study demonstrate that there is a significant effect of age and gender on attitude towards women. Gender difference is significant because of “self-reference effect” in women. Hence females are more pro-feminist irrespective of age. The effect of age is also significant as with increases in age decreases the modernity and “status quo bias” is also one of the reason behind this significant difference. Hence the school students has more egalitarian attitude as compare to PG students.

Mostafa (2005) revealed that UAE students have significantly different attitudes towards women managers from those of the older generations ($n = 189$). There are significant differences between males' and females' perceptions of women's roles and participation in society. The study predicts that modernity may diminish patriarchal attitudes towards women managers in the Arab world.

Lynott and McCandless, 2000 concluded that the gender role attitudes of older women are more traditional in orientation. This line of research, however, has often confounded the impact of age and cohort. Consequently, cohort differences in life experiences have not been systematically explored. This study addresses the relationship between age and gender role attitudes, taking into account the potential mediating effects of life experiences and controlling for cohort. The conclusions suggest that the impact of age on gender role attitudes is not as strong as might be expected. Rather, the results show that the life experiences

of different cohorts are better predictors of gender role attitudes among older women, though such experiences do not have the same impact on all women.

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Appendix

GENDER	SCHOOL STU.	GENDER	PG STU.
MALE	59	MALE	46
MALE	50	MALE	54
MALE	40	MALE	58
MALE	44	MALE	46
MALE	26	MALE	33
MALE	46	MALE	40
MALE	48	MALE	32
MALE	60	MALE	37
MALE	41	MALE	39
MALE	60	MALE	34
MALE	37	MALE	31
MALE	54	MALE	37
MALE	54	MALE	59
MALE	30	MALE	40
MALE	61	MALE	53
MALE	53	MALE	54
MALE	55	MALE	47
MALE	40	MALE	61
MALE	50	MALE	34
MALE	50	MALE	41
MALE	17	MALE	49
MALE	68	MALE	31
MALE	44	MALE	50
MALE	53	MALE	36
MALE	43	MALE	54
MALE	40	MALE	35
MALE	45	MALE	54
MALE	59	MALE	38
MALE	57	MALE	50
MALE	49	MALE	37
MALE	59	MALE	53
MALE	59	MALE	39
MALE	65	MALE	43
MALE	27	MALE	37
MALE	48	MALE	62
MALE	45	MALE	41
MALE	51	MALE	57
MALE	54	MALE	50
MALE	49	MALE	34
MALE	53	MALE	68
MALE	49	MALE	54
MALE	49	MALE	44
MALE	49	MALE	60
MALE	34	MALE	38
MALE	65	MALE	42
MALE	52	MALE	41
MALE	61	MALE	37
MALE	52	MALE	59
MALE	51	MALE	57
MALE	60	MALE	56

FEMALE	64	FEMALE	44
FEMALE	71	FEMALE	62
FEMALE	70	FEMALE	64
FEMALE	72	FEMALE	46
FEMALE	68	FEMALE	49
FEMALE	70	FEMALE	51
FEMALE	64	FEMALE	40
FEMALE	64	FEMALE	55
FEMALE	49	FEMALE	69
FEMALE	59	FEMALE	42
FEMALE	59	FEMALE	52
FEMALE	68	FEMALE	63
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	52
FEMALE	70	FEMALE	67
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	67
FEMALE	67	FEMALE	57
FEMALE	68	FEMALE	42
FEMALE	67	FEMALE	67
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	42
FEMALE	64	FEMALE	64
FEMALE	65	FEMALE	64
FEMALE	69	FEMALE	65
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	48
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	63
FEMALE	71	FEMALE	48
FEMALE	67	FEMALE	52
FEMALE	69	FEMALE	54
FEMALE	61	FEMALE	57
FEMALE	68	FEMALE	61
FEMALE	63	FEMALE	62
FEMALE	64	FEMALE	61
FEMALE	61	FEMALE	66
FEMALE	62	FEMALE	62
FEMALE	65	FEMALE	55
FEMALE	64	FEMALE	50
FEMALE	71	FEMALE	56
FEMALE	65	FEMALE	48
FEMALE	65	FEMALE	36
FEMALE	65	FEMALE	59
FEMALE	58	FEMALE	54
FEMALE	70	FEMALE	45
FEMALE	71	FEMALE	43
FEMALE	72	FEMALE	66
FEMALE	71	FEMALE	70
FEMALE	67	FEMALE	68
FEMALE	57	FEMALE	66
FEMALE	69	FEMALE	71
FEMALE	66	FEMALE	69
FEMALE	74	FEMALE	71
FEMALE	57	FEMALE	66