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Founder, Human Rights and Global Justice Initiative  
Senior Scholar, Center for the Advancement of Well-being  
Faculty Fellow, Institute for a Sustainable Earth  
George Mason University  
United States of America

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## The Right to Education of Ethnic Minority Girls in Vietnam: Situation and Challenge

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Nguyen Thi Hong Yen, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Nguyen Van Hoi

<sup>1</sup>Senior Lecturer & Researcher, Head of Public International Law Division, Hanoi Law University (HLU), Vietnam

<sup>2</sup>Senior Lecturer & Researcher, Deputy Head of Civil Law Division, Hanoi Law University (HLU), Vietnam

### Abstract

*Despite important achievements in ensuring and promoting basic human rights in general, with the characteristics of being one of the most vulnerable in society, ethnic minority girls still face discrimination and double inequality in benefiting their rights, including the right to education. To clarify the legal and practical issues related to the right to education of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam today, the following article focuses on clarifying the following issues: (i) Analysing the Vietnamese legal framework in recognising and ensuring the right to education for ethnic minority girls; (ii) Showing the difficulties and challenges in ensuring the right to education for ethnic minority girls in Vietnam; (iii) Giving necessary recommendations for Government to improve enjoying the right to education of Vietnamese ethnic minority girls coming time.*

**Keywords:** Right to education, Human rights, Ethnic Minority girls, Vietnam.

### 1. Introduction

Similar to other basic human rights, the right to education has been recognized very early in international human rights conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) or the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Article 26 (1) of the UDHR 1948 stipulates: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit”. Inheriting the spirit of the UDHR, Article 11 (1) ICESCR continues to affirm: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent”. Concerning children, CRC 1989 also specifies the right to education in Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention, whereby: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and to achieve this right progressively and based on an equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;...”; “States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;...”.

As a developing country with many challenges in the process of socio-economic development, Vietnam always identifies “Education and training is the top national policy” and this is the key to opening opportunities for development and prosperity of the nation. Therefore, early on, Vietnam issued many policies and legal documents to recognize, respect and protect the right to education in general and the right

to education of ethnic girls. In fact, for children in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas, education is the most effective way to give them equal development opportunities and change their future. Therefore, over the years, with ethnic policies built and implemented based on the principle of "equality, solidarity, respect, mutual help for progress", the Party and Government have focused on interest in education work in ethnic minority areas, thereby achieving important results, creating a foundation for equality among ethnic groups (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, General Statistics Office, 2020).

However, the results of the survey to collect information on the socio-economic status of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019 by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, shows that, although there have been significant achievements in promoting education for children, however, ethnic minority children in Vietnam still face many difficulties in accessing education, causing illiteracy among children has not been eliminated. The lack of facilities, difficulties in transportation, family circumstances, poverty and the burdens of making a living from a young age are the major reasons preventing children from access to education in ethnic minority and mountainous areas are aimed areas eradicating illiteracy (Hien, 2020). According to the above survey results, there is almost no difference between socio-economic regions in Vietnam in the level of primary education universalization, but there is a difference at the lower and upper secondary levels. The rate of children going to school at the correct primary school age of the 53 ethnic minorities reaches 96.9%, however, there are still a few ethnic groups whose primary school age enrollment rate has not yet reached the target like the Gia Rai ethnic group (90.8%), Ba Na (93.6%), Raglay (93.1%), Xtieng (91.2%), Brau (93.9%). In particular, the rate of schooling at the correct age for ethnic minority girls is higher than that of ethnic minority boys; the higher the education level, the more pronounced the gender disparity (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, General Statistics Office, 2020)

**Rate of school attendance at the correct age of ethnic minority children by school level** (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, General Statistics Office, 2020)

*Unit: %*

	Primary school		Secondary school		High school	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>53 ethnic minorities</b>	<b>96,8</b>	<b>97,0</b>	<b>80,0</b>	<b>83,3</b>	<b>43,4</b>	<b>50,9</b>
<b>Urban, Rural</b>						
Urban	97,0	97,4	85,1	89,5	61,3	72,0
Rural	96,7	96,9	79,3	82,3	40,4	46,7
<b>Socio-economic region</b>						
Northern Midlands and Mountains	97,9	97,4	87,9	86,4	52,0	55,2
Red river delta	98,4	98,3	90,7	92,1	60,7	63,5
North Central and Central Coast	97,3	97,8	81,9	88,0	43,6	55,9
Highlands	93,8	95,6	62,4	75,7	21,2	37,2
South East	95,6	96,1	74,9	78,0	43,2	49,9
Mekong Delta	95,1	95,8	67,9	74,5	33,8	43,3



This fact shows a lot of responsibility on the Government, state agencies, families and society that how to ensure and promote the access to education for girls in ethnic minority areas? How can they actively understand and exercise this right? Because without access to the written word, education not only reduces their potential but also inhibits their educational attainment and reduces equal opportunities and increases cycles of poverty and disadvantage for all generations and the whole nation. To clarify legal and practical issues related to the recognition and assurance of equal rights in access to education for ethnic minority girls in Vietnam, the article focuses on solving the following issues: (i) Vietnamese legal framework to ensure and recognize the right to education of ethnic minority girls; (ii) difficulties and challenges for ethnic minority girls in enjoying the right to education; (iii) some proposals for enforcing the right to education for ethnic minority girls and raising their awareness in enjoying this right.

## **2. Vietnamese legal framework in recognising and ensuring gender equality in access to education for ethnic minority girls**

### ***2.1. Ensuring equal rights in access to education of ethnic minority girls by the provisions of the Constitution***

Since the first Constitution promulgated in 1946, Vietnam has recognized provisions to ensure equal rights in access to education for ethnic minority girls. Specifically, Articles 6 and 7 of this Constitution record in the direction that *“All citizens are equal before the law and have equal rights in all aspects: politics, economy, culture”*. In addition, the issue of ensuring equal rights in access to education for ethnic minority women is concretized through regulations such as: *“In addition to equality of rights, ethnic minorities are supported in all aspects to quickly progress to the common level”* (The National Assembly, 1946, Art. 8); or *“compulsory and tuition-free elementary education. In local primary schools, national minorities have the right to learn in their language. Poor pupils get help from the Government”* (The National Assembly, 1946, Art. 15).

The later promulgated Constitutions have more inheritance and development than the previous ones. In particular, the issue of education has always been the top concern of the State in the socio-economic development strategy at different stages. Even, “educational development is also identified as the top national policy” of Vietnam (The National Assembly, 2001, Art. 35). At the same time, the issue of equality in access to education is still the top concern of Vietnam in its human development strategy in general and human resource development in particular. Up to now, the Constitution promulgated in 2013 is the one in effect. In addition to inheriting the values of the previous Constitutions, the guarantee of equal rights in access to education in general and equal rights in access to education of ethnic minority girls, in particular, have been more concretized.

The approach to equality in Vietnam's 2013 Constitution remains the same as in previous constitutions: *“Everyone is equal before the law. No one shall be discriminated against in political, civil, economic, cultural or social life”* (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 16). According to this provision, equality covers all areas of social life, including equality in access to education.

Another aspect of equality that is also paid special attention to by the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam is gender equality. It is emphasized that *“Male and female citizens are equal in all aspects. The State has policies to ensure rights and opportunities for equal gender”* (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 26(1)). Even to cover up the ideology of male contempt for women that still exists in people's minds, the 2013 Constitution also emphasizes that *“The State, society and family create conditions for women to develop comprehensively to promote their role in society”* (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 26(2)). In particular, acts of gender discrimination are prohibited acts (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 26(3)). These records have eliminated all gender stereotypes and gender discrimination that have existed for a long time. To concretize these rights, especially towards ensuring equal rights in access to education of ethnic minority women, the 2013 Constitution concretized by stipulating: *“The State gives priority to investment and attract*

*other investment sources for education; take care of preschool education; to ensure that primary education is compulsory, the State does not collect tuition fees; step by step universalize secondary education”* (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 61(2)); *“The State gives priority to the development of education in mountainous areas, islands, ethnic minority areas and areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions”* (The National Assembly, 2013, Art. 61(3)). Thus, in addition to recognizing the right to equal access to education, prioritizing education development in ethnic minority areas is the clearest evidence for the guarantee of equal rights in access to education for ethnic minority girls.

## **2.2. Ensuring equal rights in access to education of ethnic minority girls by provisions in legal documents**

The recognition of gender equality in access to education is shown in detail in the Law on Gender Equality in 2006. This is the law that prescribes the principle of gender equality in all areas of social and family life, measures to ensure gender equality, and the responsibilities of agencies, organizations, families and individuals in realizing gender equality (The National Assembly, 2006, Art. 1). Regarding the issue of equality in access to education for ethnic minority girls, this law has recorded specific provisions such as men and women are equal in terms of age at school, training and retraining; Men and women are equal in choosing majors and occupations for study and training; Men and women are equal in accessing and enjoying policies on education, training and professional development (The National Assembly, 2006, Art. 14). At the same time, it stipulates measures to promote gender equality in the field of education and training such as: regulating the proportion of men and women participating in study and training; female workers in rural areas are supported in vocational training according to the provisions of law (The National Assembly, 2006, Art. 14). In addition, this law also stipulates the responsibilities of agencies, units and individuals in implementing and ensuring gender equality, including gender equality in access to education (The National Assembly, 2006, Arts. 25-33). In particular, this law provides for violations of the law on gender equality in the field of education and training, including regulations on training age, different enrolment ages between men and women; mobilizing or forcing others to drop out of school for gender reasons; refuse to enrol qualified persons to training courses for reasons of gender or due to pregnancy, childbirth or child-rearing; vocational education, compilation and dissemination of gender-biased textbooks (The National Assembly, 2006, Art. 40(4)). Persons who commit acts of violating the law on gender equality in general and gender equality in education, in particular, may be disciplined, administratively handled or examined for penal liability depending on the nature of the law, and the seriousness of the violation. At the same time must compensate for damage according to the provisions of law (The National Assembly, 2006, Art. 42).

Records of equal rights among individuals of different ethnicities in accessing education are reflected in many different legal documents. Collectively, however, these documents recognize that *“all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, creed, sex, personal characteristics, family origin, social status, economic situations are equal in terms of educational opportunities”* (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 13). According to this provision, ethnic minority women are not only equal to men of ethnic minorities but also equal to men and women of the majority in accessing education. This is the concretization of the Constitution's provisions on equal rights in access to education in general and equality in access to education for ethnic minority girls in particular.

Currently too realising the issue of equality in access to education for girls of ethnic minorities, Vietnamese legislators have recognized regulations to ensure that ethnic minority girls will have enough opportunities and conditions to access education. As follows:

*Firstly*, to be able to access education, ethnic minority girls must know Vietnamese - the main language in education in Vietnam. Therefore, the Education Law 2019 stipulates that children who are ethnic minorities can learn Vietnamese before entering first grade (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 28(4)). This provision can be considered the first and most important guarantee for ethnic minority girls to

access national education. In addition, the State encourages and creates conditions for ethnic minorities to learn their languages and scripts according to the Government's regulations (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 28(4)).

*Second*, to ensure that all citizens have access to education, Vietnamese legislators stipulate that “*Primary education is compulsory education, and at the same time the State implements universal preschool education for all 5 years old children and universalization of lower secondary education*” (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 14). Although this provision is mandatory, it is a provision that opens up opportunities for all ethnic minority girls to have access to education. Because, if education is voluntary, it will be difficult to promote the self-discipline of ethnic minority girls to attend classes when they are still worried about food, children and family.

*Third*, investment in education development in ethnic minority areas is recognized as one of the prioritized activities in Vietnam's education investment policy (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 17). This includes policies on investment and development of preschool education in ethnic minority areas (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 27).

*Fourth*, in principle, children must go to school according to the prescribed age. However, to ensure the educational accessibility of ethnic minorities in general and ethnic minority girls in particular, the Government of Vietnam has a separate regulation on the learning age of students who are ethnic minorities. Accordingly, “*students who are ethnic minorities in the group of students are allowed to study at an age higher than the prescribed age for each level of study*” (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 28(2)). According to Thao Lan, there are 14 ethnic groups where the percentage of students of upper secondary school age who are attending the right level is 30-40%. Only 14 ethnic groups have a rate in the range of 20 - 30%. Especially, there are 19 ethnic groups with a rate below 20%, of which there are 3 ethnic groups where only 8% to 9% of children go to school at the correct age at this level. Of the 53 ethnic minorities, 49 have a school attendance rate of less than 50%. There are 3 ethnic groups where the percentage of girls attending upper secondary school is less than 10% and there are 16 ethnic groups with a rate below 20%. Some ethnic groups have a very low percentage of girls going to school such as Chut, Mang, Xtieng, Hmong, Dao, La Ha, etc. (Lan, 2021).

*Fifth*, ethnic minorities often live in high mountainous areas, or remote areas, so traffic is very difficult. Therefore, to overcome this situation, the State established boarding schools for ethnic minorities, semi-boarding schools for ethnic minorities, and university preparatory schools for ethnic minority learners (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 61(1)).

*Sixth*, the State conducts enrolment in intermediate schools, colleges and universities according to the selection system for pupils from ethnic minorities; students who are ethnic minorities in areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions have no or very few ethnic minority cadres, civil servants and public employees; adopt policies to create recruitment sources, create favourable conditions for these subjects to enter boarding schools for ethnic minorities and increase the time of university preparatory studies (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 87).

*Seventh*, the State ensures the budget for the implementation of education universalization and educational development in ethnic minority areas (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 96).

*Eighth*, in terms of tuition fee policy, primary school students in public educational institutions do not have to pay tuition, and 5-year-old preschool children in extremely difficult villages and communes, and ethnic minority areas are exempt from tuition (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 99).

*Neither* to create the best conditions for ethnic minorities in general and ethnic minority girls in particular to have funds to pay for their studies, Vietnamese legislators have regulated the granting of policy

scholarships for undergraduate students, pre-university students, and boarding high schools for ethnic minorities. In addition, the State has a policy of subsidizing and exempting and reducing tuition fees for ethnic minority learners (The National Assembly, 2019, Art. 85; The National Assembly, 2014, Art. 62).

Thus, in general, the above regulations clearly show Vietnam's position in ensuring equal rights in accessing education of ethnic minorities in general and ethnic minority girls in particular. If viewed more broadly, these regulations are the clearest evidence of the recognition and guarantee of human rights in Vietnam since its establishment until now

### **3. Difficulties and challenges in ensuring the right to education for ethnic minority girls in Vietnam**

*Firstly, the inequality in economic development, the gap between rich and poor between regions.* Economic barriers are one of the biggest challenges in accessing education for the people in general, and ethnic minority girls in particular. There is a huge disparity in economic development between the plains and the mountainous areas. Low living standards due to low income and poverty are always the direct causes that hinder children's access to education, especially ethnic minority children (Hang, 2018, p. 303). Although there has been a priority allocation of capital to the northern mountainous provinces to promote more equal development, there is still a significant difference in the development speed between regions.

*Second, limited facilities for learning:* Although the network of schools, facilities, and teaching equipment has been increased, investment has not yet met the requirements of development. Difficulty going to school leads to an increase in dropouts, becoming a difficult problem in many localities. The mobilization rate of young people in mountainous ethnic minority areas to go to school in the 2011-2019 period was only 56.2% (the whole country reached 88.5%); the mobilization rate of kindergarten children only reached 11.8% (the whole country reached 25.8%).

*Third, language barrier:* According to Vietnamese law, the language used in the education system is Vietnamese, so to be able to access education, ethnic minority girls must know the Vietnamese language. Vietnamese. However, ethnic minority girls are already familiar with the communication environment in their "mother tongue". In the condition of communicating mainly in ethnic languages, living in ethnic communities quite isolated from the outside, ethnic minority girls have less opportunity to communicate with Vietnamese and they become more isolated from the world outside of their community. Also, because they can't read, write and don't know the common language, all information that reaches many ethnic minority women must go through men. Because of this, ethnic minority women are increasingly dependent on men's roles in their personal and family lives (Lan, 2021). According to a survey, there are 12 ethnic groups with the percentage of households that can listen to mass media such as television, and central and local voice stations at 30-40%. There are 7 ethnic groups (Bru Van Kieu, La Ha, La Hu, Khang, Khomú, Mang, Odu) and only 20% of women listen to the mass media (Lan, 2021).

*Fourth, the barrier of gender stereotypes:* Traditional stereotypes about male-female roles make ethnic minority girls face many difficulties. In the culture of many ethnic minorities, people make women spend most of their time doing production labour, doing housework, and taking care of children, but have little opportunity to communicate in the community. Ethnic minority women's perceptions are heavily influenced by gender stereotypes about the division of work in the family; imposing housework; taking care of children, the elderly, and sick people in the family. Family is the responsibility and obligation of women (Vietnam Women's Union and Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2019, p. 10). Research by Oxfam et al. (2010) clearly shows that labour in ethnic minorities is still divided according to "men's work" and "women's work". The role of women in Vietnam's highland societies is limited and almost entirely confined to the family. When a woman is a daughter in the family, she must follow the instructions of her parents and try to help and take care of her parents. When they are in the position of wives, they have the same obligations to the husband and take care of the husband's parents...

*Fifth, the barrier from the existence of outdated customs and traditions:* The ideology of respecting men and disrespecting women in some ethnic groups (Cham, Dao, etc) or gender division of labour, the custom of child marriage in the H'Mong, Dao, and Ra Glai ethnic groups is the biggest obstacle to girls' access to education (Lan & Xuyen, 2015). The custom of early marriage and the need to have children in many ethnic minorities make it difficult for ethnic minority women to access education. The rate of children getting married before the age of 18 is several times higher among ethnic minorities than among Kinh people (23.1% compared to 9.2% among Kinh people). According to the 2019 Census, the Lo Lo, Mong, Kho Mu, Xinh Mun, Hre, Gia Rai, and Brau ethnic groups are the ethnic minorities with the highest proportion of women aged 20-24 years getting married early.

#### **4. Recommendations & Conclusions**

*Firstly,* the State needs to ensure the effective implementation of policies on hunger eradication and poverty reduction, especially in areas with large numbers of ethnic minorities. Although Vietnam's Government has had many policies and spent a lot of resources on hunger eradication and poverty alleviation for people in remote areas and areas where ethnic minorities live such as Program 135/1998/QD-TTg, Chapter 135/1998/QD-TTg, 134/2004/QD-TTg, etc. but not yet achieved high efficiency. Therefore, the competent authorities need to continue to study to promptly issue documents guiding the implementation of State programs and projects specifically for ethnic minority areas.

*Second,* it is necessary to continue to increase investment in education, especially investment in education development in areas where ethnic minorities live, in remote and isolated areas. Which, it is necessary to focus on building a road system to ensure easy movement from residence to school, and at the same time it is necessary to build school sites near the areas where ethnic minorities live. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the teaching and learning activities of the common language for ethnic minorities. To implement this solution well, it is necessary to combine it with other solutions such as investment in facilities, attracting qualified teachers, financial support, and living expenses for both learners and teachers.

*Third,* continue to take measures to combat gender discrimination and discrimination, toward the complete eradication of gender stereotypes in society in general and among ethnic minorities in particular. To implement this solution, it is necessary to have the cooperation of agencies, departments and mass organizations, especially the role of the Women's Union. In addition, it is also necessary to strengthen propaganda activities on the role of women in socio-economic development and strengthen training courses for ethnic minority women to raise awareness about their role themselves in the family and society.

*Fourth,* continue to implement solutions to raise awareness among ethnic minorities and mountainous communities about illiteracy prevention and re-illiteracy in the following forms: propaganda in the media mass about the importance of literacy for the development of individuals, families and communities; Propaganda on literacy work associated with building a learning society and local emulation movements.

In addition, it is necessary to increase the priority of human resource training for ethnic minorities and mountainous areas and areas with special difficulties in many suitable forms; fostering ethnic minority languages, culture, customs and habits of ethnic minorities for teachers and officials working on illiteracy eradication and re-illiteracy prevention for people, especially ethnic minority children number. Encourage and create favourable conditions to attract teachers to follow villages and hamlets in remote and difficult areas; adopt support policies for people participating in teaching literacy in areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions.

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## **Discriminatory Expressions Against Women in Turkish Proverbs and Idioms**

Ömer ANLATAN<sup>1</sup> (he/him); Deniz ALBAYRAK-KAYMAK<sup>2</sup> (she/her); Müge KURT<sup>3</sup>  
(she/her)

<sup>1</sup>Research Assistant, Department of Educational Sciences, Bogazici University, Turkey.

<sup>2</sup>Assoc. Prof., Department of Educational Sciences, Bogazici University, Turkey.

<sup>3</sup>Clinical Psychologist, Öz Psikoloji, Private Practice, Turkey

### **Abstract**

*As counselors who value the rights of all beings, we are disturbed by alarmingly high rates of violence against women in Turkey. As languages reflect and transfer the values of a society, we wondered whether expressions in the Turkish language are supportive of this violence and investigated gender-discriminatory proverbs and idioms by use of four major Turkish dictionaries. We chose 26 different keywords (e.g., woman, mother, wife, aunt, lady, female, girl, etc.) indicative of women and electronically searched for their use. We found a total of 430 expressions (303 idioms and 127 proverbs) that include the keywords and then eliminated the redundancies that occurred by repeated expressions. Our final list contained 143 idioms and 90 proverbs (233 expressions). Then, we independently analyzed these expressions in search of themes that could depict cultural attributions and attitudes regarding women. Finally, we compared our themes to reach a consensual set of patterns, identified 10 themes, and named them as manipulative/greedy, property/labor, inferior, insult/curse and deserving violence, sacred motherhood/fertility, equal and valuable, purity/needing protection, obedient, pretty and young, and overtalkative. We analyzed the frequencies of the keywords as well as the expressions that fall under each theme and discussed their meanings to reach an understanding of the underlying ideologies regarding gender roles and the counselor's responsibilities while working with women.*

**Keywords:** *Discriminatory expressions against women, Turkish proverbs and idioms, counseling women.*

### **Introduction**

This is an initial report of a larger study that aims to capture gender-discriminatory expressions in the Turkish language with an ultimate aim of reaching an understanding of what underlies the prevalence of violence against women in Turkey. Although women always had an equal position to men and maintained a significant place in society and social life throughout the history of Turkish culture (Yılmaz 2004), the cultural context in Turkey is generally considered patriarchal, traditional, and authoritarian (Fişek 1982) and girls are expected to become good housewives, good mothers, and good wives while boys are assigned to be moneymakers, successful at work-life (Günindi Ersöz 2010) and complete their compulsory military service.

Despite the authoritarian and gendered structure of the family, violence against women has risen within the last decade. Thirty-eight percent of women in Turkey stated that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, and this ratio is the second-highest ratio after with 42 percent among 27 OECD member countries (OECD 2019). “We Will Stop Femicide Platform” (2021) reported that 280 women were killed by men and 217 women were found suspiciously dead. The same platform’s report for the first four months of this year (2022) showed that 97 women were killed and 84 of them were found suspiciously dead. Moreover, a digital monument (Anıt Savaş n.d.) that was established to commemorate



and count women who were killed due to domestic violence indicates more than 2000 femicides within the last five years.

Violence against women has multiple origins in Turkey. First, particularly in rural settings, intergenerational “blood cases” are committed where young women who lose their virginity out of wedlock are killed by the men (mostly brothers or fathers) in their families, even if it happened through rape. The same men also kill the men who disgraced the family and face similar consequences in return as a payback or they spend most of their lives in prison (Hamzaoğlu & Konuralp 2019; Ünübol, et al. 2007). Second, young women in their teens (child brides) are forced to marry older men through family arrangements in return for some financial means (Kaynak 2014; UNICEF 2019). The legality of these marriages does not change the true nature of the arrangement as child abuse, because these girls are not only denied living their childhood and to continue schooling, but they are also put into premature roles of housewife and mother. Child brides are not exceptional cases as the first-time marriages of the 16-19 aged females constitute 15.9 percent of the total number of marriages in 2019 (Turkish Statistical Institute-TÜİK 2020). And almost 3 percent of all marriages in Turkey are still made with female children (TÜİK 2021). We should note that there are also unofficial arranged marriages (formed by religious authorities) that are not formally recorded by government statistics and these marriages deny women from any right to inheritance.

The third and more recent concern is that Turkey recently withdrew from the İstanbul Convention by the order of the president (T.C. Resmi Gazete [Legal Gazette] 2020), despite the fact that we were the first country that signed and ratified the convention. This convention was meant to provide legal protection, prevention, and prosecution of women from violence (Council of Europe n.d., 2022). This decline adds to men’s liberties to apply violence against women. Indeed, the United Nations (2008) reported that violence against women is the least punished crime. Over 2 million women in Turkey have faced violence by men and requested protection orders between 2006 and 2020, but 13 percent of these requests were declined by civil courts because they did not seem “credible.” And over the last 8 years, 7 out of 10 male suspects who were claimed as perpetrators of physical, social, and economic violence against women were released by prosecutors with the justification of “no need for prosecution” (Akkuş İlgezdi 2020). During the pandemic in 2020, protection requests increased by 20 percent compared to the previous year (Akkuş İlgezdi 2021).

Disturbed by the increasing violence against women in our society, we wanted to uncover the ideologies that are hidden in the language that can be perceived as an allowance of discrimination and violence against women. As counselors’ main tool is language and counselors’ work is to deal with client narratives, we decided to start examining our language as we knew of no scrutiny of the Turkish language in the counseling literature. Language has a significant role to pass the cultural accumulations and the use of these stereotypic expressions, especially those that relate to gender issues, leads to negative psychological consequences (Aleke 2021; Roya 2012). Language is both the creator and the carrier of a given culture and thus, using these problematic, discriminative, and sexist expressions results in approval, reproduction, and transfer of these stereotypes as valid and unchangeable positions (Doğrucan & Yıldırım 2020)

After examining Turkish idioms Şahin (2006) concluded that women are expected to give birth, raise, feed and nurture children in order to provide a decent family life. Batur (2011) identified several Turkish idioms and proverbs which reflect negative attitudes towards women, appreciate the motherhood role of women, and underline the dependency of women on men. Günindi Ersöz (2010) presented idioms and proverbs about motherhood and wifeness as primary roles of women, the expectation of being diligent and self-sacrificing, women’s obedience to men’s authority, and even confirmative expressions of violence towards women. Akbalık (2013) examined the Turkish idioms in terms of husband-and-wife roles and expectations, family structures, marriage and partner selection, parenting, expected roles for boys and girls, and relations among relatives, and concluded that women and girls are placed in the center of the family yet put in a lower position compared to men. Ejder Apay and Uzun Özer (2020) provided clear evidence

for discrimination and negative attitudes towards women in Turkish idioms and proverbs. Çer and Şahin (2016) conducted a content analysis on Turkish idioms and proverbs and indicated that women are considered to be dependent, sexual objects, passive, and physically attractive. Moreover, Okray (2015) found several sexist idioms and proverbs that are used to swear, mostly targeting the mothers of those who were to be insulted.

The unique contribution of this study is twofold: First, as the related literature comes from language or gender (or feminist) studies, we hope to bring our counselor lenses to understand gender stereotypes that exist in our language. Second, we carry out a broader examination by using four different dictionaries than the existing studies that tended to use one or at most two dictionaries.

## **Method and Materials**

We used consensual content analysis to identify and evaluate the discriminatory expressions in Turkish idioms and proverbs against women. The data for this research were obtained from four major Turkish dictionaries on idioms and proverbs (Aksoy 2013, 2019; Özdemir 2000, 2001). First, we identified 26 words that are indicative of womanhood, as the inclusive criteria, such as woman, girl, wife, mother, female, etc., and electronically scanned the above-mentioned dictionaries. A total of 430 expressions (303 idioms and 127 proverbs) were found. Some keywords did not capture any gendered expression, some were the stems of the keywords but were unrelated to gender, and some that were repeated in the dictionaries leading to redundancy. All these were dropped, and our final list contained 143 idioms and 90 proverbs (233 expressions).

## **Results and Discussion**

First, we read through the expressions to roughly evaluate their meaning as negative, positive, or neutral in regard to womanhood and then discussed to reach a consensus. Accordingly, 110 (47,2%) expressions were flagged as negative, 36 (15,5%) of them were positive, and 87 (37,3%) were neutral. Then, we reread the expressions to form themes independently, came together to discuss and finalize our themes and completed coding on a consensual basis. Some expressions (32 out of 233) fit into more than a single theme (at most two themes) and were coded so (265 codes in total).

We identified 10 themes of gendered expressions and most (eight) of the themes (nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of expressions) had negative meanings for women. When we first roughly (generically) categorized all the expressions as negative, positive, or neutral, however, the proportion of negatives was smaller (nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$ ). Positive expressions fell under two categories and explained a smaller proportion (nearly  $\frac{1}{5}$ ), but when they were roughly categorized, they were more ( $\frac{2}{5}$ ). And finally, proportions of neutral expressions examined by theme versus generic meanings were rather different (13.6 vs 37.3) indicating that seemingly neutral expressions did have a direction when closely examined (e.g., “Where is her status if your mom was pretty, where is his house if your father was rich” fell under “pretty and young”). Nearly all the changes from generic to theme-based analyses were in an unfavorable direction for women.

Only one of the authors (Aksoy 2013, 2019) provided the total number of expressions in his dictionaries, and we were able to calculate the proportions of gendered idioms and proverbs as 7.16 % and 1.06 % respectively (2.46 % for expressions). Although proverbs were more in number, they were less gendered than idioms indicating that not all gendered language is transferred to next generations. We also found that the prevalence of gendered expressions was more limited than we expected. This could be because the Turkish language is gender-neutral (no gendered articles and no attribution of gender to words or numbers). Instead, some adjectives and most names of people are used exclusively for women or men.

These two findings gave us reason to be optimistic that gendered components of our language can be modified to be freed from gender discrimination.

We identified 10 themes, and the first four most frequent ones were: “manipulative/greedy” (16.2%), “property/labor” (15.8%), “inferior” (14.7%), and “insult/curse and deserving violence” (11.7%) and all were negative in their meaning. The remaining four negative themes were: “purity/needling protection” (3.8%), “obedient” (3%), “pretty and young” (2.6%), and “overtalkative” (0.8%). Thus, all the themes that had negative meanings added up to 68.6%. Only two themes with positive meanings were identified: “sacred motherhood/fertility” (11.7%) and “equal and valuable” (6.4%), adding up to 18.1% appearing at the fifth and sixth orders of frequency. And last, we excluded 36 expressions (13.6%) that were considered gender-neutral not fitting into any of the identified themes (e.g., “Like mother like daughter”) as their meanings change depending on the context.

**Manipulative/Greedy.** This most frequent theme describes women as manipulative, sneaky, selfish, greedy, battle-ax, and bad-tempered: “It is always the female who provokes the male,” “Women are the devil of men” and “Enough to furnish a full house, but not enough to satisfy a girl.”

**Property/Labor.** This theme identifies that the core role of women is domestic labor (farming in rural settings) and childbearing and childcare: “As a bride comes into the house, she gives a boy to the cradle” indicates, women are mainly expected to give birth to male children (girl child does not even count). Girls are to learn gender roles from their mothers and to adapt to “proper” women roles, e.g., “Look at her mom, to take a girl; look at its edgework, to take a cloth” as if they are things to be purchased after scrutiny. Expressions like “getting/taking/giving a girl” and “giving to husband or attaining husband” put women in a passive position, again as if they are properties and give the right to divorce to only men. These expressions also belittle the free will, wishes, and desires of women, objectify their image and authorize men as the sole power holders and decision-makers.

**Inferior.** This theme considers women as worthless, less intelligent, and less capable than men, and useless without men: “Even if a woman has a golden candelabra, it is the man who puts a candle in it,” implies that a woman has no value without the help of a man. Similarly, “Messing with the job of men with hands in dough” underrates women's work and disqualifies them from more important things that are accepted as men's work.

**Insult/Curse and Deserving Violence.** This theme implies approval of violence against women, and even indicates that it is men's right to do so: “If you do not beat your daughter, you beat your knees” suggests that if girls are not severely disciplined, they would put the family in a position of disgrace and regret. “Dogs have loyalty, women don't” accuses women of being unfaithful and inferior to men (as dogs are to obey their masters). Some expressions are literal curse words that mostly target the mothers of men who were to be insulted: “swearing at one's mother and wife,” “f.ing one's mother” and “selling one's mother.”

**Sacred Motherhood/Fertility.** This theme tends to sacralize the motherhood role of women, expressions: “the heart of a mother” and “the lap of a mother” point out to aspired characteristics like compassion and tenderness and link motherhood to self-sacrifice, unconditional love and acceptance, warmth, kindness, and sensibility. Women's fertility is perceived as a superpower: “A woman who bears a child beats the angel of death.” and mothers' strength is admired: “The daughter would set a swing onto a branch where her mother perches” also indicating their nesting roles. Although nearly all expressions in this theme are positive, some still characterize mothers as manipulative: “Mom seems to eat stone but actually eats a full five, getting in half amounts.”

**Equal and Valuable.** Though this theme had fewer expressions, it indicates equal evaluations between the images of men and women: “whether you raise a son or a daughter, make sure to take your own sieve.” Although they are still gendered, this theme attaches important value especially to the homemaking roles of women: “It is the female bird that builds the nest,” indicates the power of women: “It is women who can destroy or gather the home,” and qualifies women as strong and brave as men: “Female or male, a lion is a lion.”

**Purity/Need for Protection.** This theme highlights the importance of protection of virginity and disapproves acting on sexual desire and love. “It is best to take a flat field, and a virgin woman” implies that women are lands to gather and to plant seeds to raise plants and suggests that a man would be trouble free if marries a virgin. “A girl at 15 is either at a man (i.e., married), or at the floor (i.e., dead or degraded as if dead) advises marrying girls as early as they reach puberty. Men in the family, first father and brother and then husband and son, are to protect women’s honor (not having sex out of wedlock) as it is equated to family honor.

**Obedient.** This theme highlights the expectations from women to be easy-going, quiet, and obedient in the presence of their husbands: “Night comes down, day brightens up, makes a proper year; man speaks out, woman quietens down, makes a proper home” meaning that keeping the family in peace depends on woman’s keeping quiet and not speaking up or against man.

**Pretty and Young.** Although this theme’s label sounds positive, the expectation of women to be young and pretty also means to serve men's desire and qualifies her as an object to be taken: “Mold the iron when hot, love the beauty when young,” “Get vineyard with stones, women with long hair.”

**Overtalkative.** This theme came last in frequency, although women are often criticized for gossiping and chit-chatting, and not worthwhile to listen to: “A blunt knife is only good at cutting the hand that holds it, and an unskillful wife is only good at making a fuss.”

We noticed that many daily gendered expressions were not included in the dictionaries and even the word proverb (atasözü) means sayings of men's ancestors in Turkish. An Instagram account (Turkish Dictionary, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c) displays the corrected use of gendered expressions, e.g., “Boast if you bear a son, bewail if you bear a daughter.” While comparing men and women, man (erkek) is used to refer to men but “miss” (bayan) to refer to women, to avoid calling women as the word woman (kadın) indicates loss of virgin status. The keyword of “girl” was used nearly twice as much as the keyword of “woman,” and this may be a way of avoiding calling women as women (impure). The point is that the actual frequency of discriminatory expressions is not only more when closely examined, but also more than the dictionaries represented.

## **Conclusions**

Women were primarily described by four negative themes as “manipulative/greedy,” as objects (“property/labor”), “inferior” and as targets of “insult/curse and deserving violence” as in line with previous literature (Akbalık 2013; Batur 2011; Çer & Şahin 2016; Ejder Apay & Uzun Özer 2020; Günindi Ersöz 2010; Okray 2015; Şahin 2006). Two seemingly positive themes that favor women (sacred motherhood/fertility and equal/valuable) came secondary to the first four negative themes and made up less than 1/5th of all expressions. However, the most frequently used keyword was “mother.” Homeland is called motherland in Turkish, and mothers are depicted as sanctuaries. But one should realize that this is a conditional status for women. Motherhood becomes a forced role to be valuable and fertility is a biological characteristic that not all women have. Nevertheless, not fulfilling this expectation would result in seeing herself as less of a woman and experiencing depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Koca Çavdar &

Coşkun 2018; Zayed & El-Hadidy 2020), facing negative social reactions (Güz et al. 2003) and domestic, economic, emotional, and sexual violence (Akyüz et al. 2013; Yıldızhan et al. 2009). Women as mothers of men force their sons to divorce their wives because of not giving a child (Naab, Lawali, & Donkor 2019). In a public address, the president of Turkey stated that women who reject motherhood are “deficient” and “incomplete” (BBC 2016). Several expressions are indicative of the exclusive value of bearing sons. Men are seen as rightful to divorce women just because they could not bear a son (Dyer et al. 2002) and women to give birth repeatedly until they can bear one (Altındağ 2016; Arnold & Kuo 1984) despite the fact that the biological sex of the child is determined by sperm, not by ovum.

Most expressions that viewed women as equal and valuable originated in the old nomadic Turkish culture when women could be rulers (Acar 2019; Yılmaz 2004) and are no longer common in recent language. Still, although they were not in the dictionaries, several recent expressions depict women as strong as men (e.g., male Fatma, a woman like a horse, and young blooded girl). Yet the actual value of this “equal” status is debatable, because expressions imply that these women could be intimidating men. Especially when men feel inferior to women due to a lessened status like unemployment or a lower level of education, they are more prone to violence to regain their status (Abramsky et al. 2019; Ackerson, et al. 2008; Macmillan & Gartner 1999). Thus “being equal” may not be safe for women just like young and pretty women are more likely to be harassed. In addition, jealousy is seen as a sign of love, especially between young couples, and when a young man's status is challenged, he is more likely to apply means to protect his public image as a true man (Pichon et al. 2020).

Counseling may be viewed as a gendered profession where mostly women enter both as counselors and as clients (Brown 2017; Michalski et al. 2011) and this could be an advantage only if the process is gender sensitive. Counselors’ primary responsibility is to become aware of their own biases, stereotypes, and tendencies of discrimination that could be exhibited in numerous verbal and nonverbal ways. While counseling women, counselors cannot escape facing the aforementioned social challenges of women as they are likely to be the very reasons to bring the women into the counselor’s room. And regardless of their theoretical orientation, counselors are responsible to provide an environment where clients can heal their wounds taken by the external oppressions, rest their internalized injuries, and reconstruct their narratives toward positive conceptions of self. Therefore, the counselor owes two main responsibilities to women clients; advocating for gender equity thus legal assurances to protect women’s human rights and hearing their narratives to identify and help them eliminate gendered pressures that they may be suffering from. Carrying out advocacy responsibilities necessitates not only individual initiatives but also active involvement in professional organizations to contribute to building gender equity in the society.



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## **Feminism in Indian Writings in English with special reference to Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and Mahasweta Devi**

Rajtinder Singh Jhanji

*A.S. College, Khanna, district Ludhiana (Punjab), India*

### **Abstract**

*Feminism in India pertains to the efforts for securing equal political, economic and social rights in a male-commanded culture. In Indian scenario, women are hailed as 'embodiment of Shakti'; source of eternal strength. The women here is worshipped as Goddess but ironically they are overtly discriminated, considered weak and inferior to the male counterparts as gender disparity has become a way of life. The paper discusses the concept of womanhood, femininity and various facets of feminism as depicted in the writings of selected modern Indian English literature writers. The feminist perspectives in the selected works of Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, and Mahasweta Devi have been studied from a social, economic, sexual and psychological viewpoint and an endeavor has been made to show how these writers have projected Indian women in their works and how a woman in the Indian setting continually struggles to cope with the difficult situations at work and home. Certain themes have been identified with the purpose of emphasizing and highlighting the stereotypical images of women and 'their constructed identities'. Patriarchal predominance, commodification of women, and infliction of pain is the recurrent theme of these three writers and their writings reflect the irrationality and backwardness of patriarchal mind-set. Kamala Das, a notable writer in Modern Indian literature speaks out of her personal experience and her poetry offers an expression of sufferings and humiliation women face in a male dominated Indian society. The feminist perspective in Mahapatra's poetry is explored through gripping encounters between men and women and the recurring scenes of poverty, hunger, starvation and commercial exploitation of women imparts a tragic-pessimistic tone to his poetry. Mahasweta Devi, an Indian writer in Bengali and an activist, leads a crusade against exploitation of the Illiterate tribal woman in her stories. As a champion of political, social and economic upliftment of these women, her writings expose how Indian women have been victims of subjugation as she describes them as 'the suffering spectators of India'. These writers disapprove of the customary thought of Indian womanhood.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Indian English literature, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Mahasweta Devi*

### **Introduction**

Women play a pivotal role in the family and their contribution to the development of society is substantial. There are umpteen examples of women across the world making it big with their exceptional skills. They are hard-working, enduring, caring, self-sacrificing and play a fundamentally active role in procreation. That still, women be considered as the 'weaker' sex and subjected to an unequal division of labor and opportunities of growth is perplexing! This disparity, in the words of Virginia Woolf has caused 'an incalculable harm' and given birth to an endless debate.

Inequality has been the hallmark of this discrimination between the sexes. Due to their anatomy and physiology, women are considered 'weak'. Beauvoir (1953a, p.16) puts it beautifully in the 'Second Sex': "Woman is weaker than man, she has less muscular strength, fewer red blood corpuscles, less lung capacity, she runs more slowly, can compete with men in hardly any sport; she cannot stand up to him in a fight." Beauvoir (1953b, p.20) looks into history to understand the suppressed condition of women and exclaims: "Woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave. The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. "Woman was condemned to hold only uncertain power; it was never she who chose her

lot. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands - more firmly than they are to other women (Beauvoir 1953c, p. 18).

It is interesting to note that womanhood, especially in Indian society, has not only been defined in paradoxical terms but also continues to be redefined and reconstructed (Thapan 1997, p. 11). In the Hindu culture, the female is worshiped in the form of Goddess on one hand, and on the other, she is devalued as a woman. According to Wadley (1977), the concept of the female in Hinduism presents an important duality: "on one hand, the woman is fertile, benevolent - the bestower; on the other, she is aggressive, malevolent - the destroyer."

The entity of a woman is so predefined and predetermined that any attempt to alter and deviate from that rigid framework meets with a lot of resistance from society. Women have been victimized in the name of various 'constructions' and 'identities'. Women's identity as 'self-denying mother', 'chaste wife', 'repositories of tradition' are just some of them. Indian women have been victims of various constructions and stereotypes, and these have been created knowingly to serve the patriarchal ends. These constructions lead to strict regulations on movement and behavior of women. Viswanath (1997, p. 325) asserts that from her childhood itself, a woman is taught to sit, talk and behave in a particular manner as per the decorum considered 'appropriate' for woman. They have been seen to directly affect the personal and family honor of men. The slightest possibility of 'misconduct' is seen to bring dishonor and shame to her family.

Feminism as a term emerged long after women started questioning their inferior position and demanding an equitable social status. Feminism is not a unitary concept but a combination of diverse thoughts, aimed at removing this discrimination or any inequalities against women. The long line of pro-woman writers from Christine de Pisan to Wallstonecraft (1792) and her 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' defines an outlook with which ideas develop a theory in the original sense of the term.

In a study, 'Women, History and Theory' Kelly (1984) brilliantly demonstrates a solid four-hundred-year-old tradition of woman thinking about woman and sexual politics in European society before the French revolution. Feminism is generally thought of as a phenomenon of the 19th and 20th century, but the contemporary feminist movement differs significantly from the earlier feminist perspectives. The feminist of the 19th century was convinced that woman's biological inheritance and natural instincts suited them primarily for homemaking and childcare. They, however, argued that the difference does not justify the unfair treatment meted out to women. For contemporary feminist, different processes of socialization are responsible for the difference in men's and women's behavior while biology plays only a minor role. Today, feminist protest against the way the social institutions, supported by cultural values, force women into unreasonably narrow roles and they staunchly believe that the pernicious effects of socialization make women suppress the greater part of their potential.

Daly (1978) believes that women are no less than their male counterparts. She has very frankly portrayed men as 'necrophiliacs', draining off the energy from the woman - they have frozen into a living death. Only by throwing off this male power will women be able to develop their essential creativity, passion and powers of love.

## **Methods and Materials**

An attempt has been made to understand and discuss the feminist perspective in the writings of Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and Mahasweta Devi. The selected works by these writers have been studied from the social, economic, sexual and psychological viewpoints. An endeavor has been made to show how these writers have projected women in their work and how women struggle to cope with the

difficult situations in the male dominated world. Certain themes have been identified with the purpose of emphasizing and highlighting the stereotypical images of women, their constructed identities. The selected works of Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and Mahasweta Devi have been analyzed singularly.

The poetry of Kamala Das in which recurrent themes of love and lust prevail, are expressions of her sufferings and humiliation. She borrows nothing from other sources but offers to the reader what she had experienced personally in her life. In her poems, she strives to raise women from their dejected situation. She speaks of love, failures of love, frustration and disappointment with an unusual candidness. Her poems articulate her fierce desire to get liberated from the clutches of male dominance.

The feminist perspective in Mahapatra's poetry explores gripping encounters between men and women. However, the recurring scenes of poverty, hunger, starvation, and sexual exploitation of women imparts a tragic-pessimistic tone to his poetry. Commercial exploitation of women in 'Hunger' and 'The Whorehouse in Calcutta Street', etc. portray the plight of women.

The selected stories of Mahasweta Devi and her crusade against the exploitation of the oppressed communities in India, especially the illiterate, tribal woman reveal how women choose to suffer silently. As a champion of the political, social and economic development of Dalit and tribal communities, she strives hard to ameliorate their lot and describes them as "the suffering spectators of the India travelling towards the twenty-first century (Devi 1995).

## **Discussion**

### **Kamala Das: An untiring struggle against male domination.**

Kamala Das is one of the few women poets who enjoy immense popularity in the Commonwealth world. She experiments with feminine sensibility, strongly demands equality with men, and examines love and life from a woman's point of view. Her cultural, social, mythical, and familial past and that of her country find reflection in her prose and poetry. Her poetry is not merrily Indian, but a passionate expression of the universal experience of love, despair, anguish and failure apprehended through a feminine Indian sensibility.

'Self' is the nucleus from where all her poetry originates but she feels that women experience the same plight; they are the same emotional, silently suffering creatures. In the poem titled 'Composition', Das says:

"We are all alike.  
We women,  
In our wrapping of hairless skin.  
All skeletons are alike,  
Only the souls vary  
That hide somewhere between the flesh  
And the bone." (Das 1967a, p. 31)

She describes the world as seen through a woman's eyes, as wife, lover, mother and granddaughter, each having a different perspective of the people around her. Her revolt against the male dominated world gives her an individuality, a gusto, a courage and above all poetry, but deep down there are whispers of mortality and intimations of truth that "our loneliness is eternal and we are born with great hollows that need to be filled for us to be complete".

She boldly registers her sense of suffocation at the loss of liberty after marriage and frankly reveals the inner pangs stemming from her marriage. She tends to escape from this prison into a world of new love and ecstasy:

“As the convict studies  
His prison’s Geography  
I study the trappings  
of your body, dear love,  
for I must some day find  
an escape from its snare” (Das 2009)

Das (1967b) in ‘The Descendants’ talks of liberation of those women who are often hurt by their husbands though no scars or bruises appear on their faces. Kamala Das, was not at all happy with the established orders and desired power as she emotes in this poem that in all her daydreams, she saw herself as so powerful to be controlling the destinies of a country, some kind of a ‘Noor Jehan’

Her experiment with feminine sensibility demands equality with man and examines love in life from a woman’s point of view. But the utter indifference breeds frustration and leaves her ‘cold and half-dead woman’ who ‘withdrew into the cave I had made for myself’. She aspires for the freedom of a bird. In disgust, she yearns for a world, where man’s infinite might be not worshiped, and women’s freedom is not sacrificed.

“I shall some day leave, leave the cocoon  
You built around me with morning tea,  
Love – words flung from doorways and of course,  
Your tired lust, I should someday take  
wings, fly around,  
as often petals,  
Do when free in air.....” (Das 1973a)

Das (1965) feels strongly for the woman who is a victim of feminine servitude but is not able to avoid her fate on parallel lines, as documented in ‘The Summer in Calcutta’, her first published anthology of fifty poems. In ‘The Freaks’, Das (1976b) presents a pitiable situation when the man is passive and the woman burns with a desire for intercourse and feels helpless. ‘In Love’ Das (1976a) is faced with the question whether her sexual act deserves to be called ‘love’. ‘The Old Playhouse’ is addressed to her husband whom she accuses of hurting her mind (Das 1973b). In the poems like ‘Vrindavan’ and ‘Radha Krishna’ she falls back to the mythical past of India to search for her eternal lover, Krishna.

The search for identity forms the central theme of her later poetry. In this process of self-search, she sways between a nostalgic past and cruel present. The past symbolizes ‘love’, ‘security’ and ‘freedom’ whereas the present stands for ‘insecurity’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘bondage of the society’.

Emotions rather than ideas dominate her poetry. Recalls, recovery and rediscovery are the means of recording the past. The work of memory, conservation and reanimation becomes the mood of perception in her poetry (Kaur 1995).

She may be said to have assured a new kind of morality according to which the time honored virtues of submissiveness, timidity, chastity and dependence on men ought to be thrown overboard. She may be described as a feminist and a forceful and vehement feminist. Particularly, in Indian society where female feticide, infanticide, dowry deaths and rape are not rare phenomena, and the birth of a girl is most unwelcome, it is natural for every woman to cry out for articulation.

### **Jayanta Mahapatra: A somber vision of human relationships**

Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry depicts many aspects of Indian life and Indian sensibilities. The Indian scene has been presented in all its objective reality and concreteness. His poetry depicts human relationships which revolve around sexual exploitation of woman. The encounter between man and woman is gripping and these encounters are often depicted as temporary and fragile, mechanical, devoid of any sentimentality or depth of passions and these relationships often turn out to be problematic. In 'The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street', we come across a man who wants to know more about women but turns into a statue, once in her company.

"You fall back against her in the dumb light  
trying to learn something more about woman  
while she does what she thinks proper to please you." (Mahapatra 1974)

Tragic consciousness operates in all his poems more than in the work of any other Indo-Anglian poet. The tragic and gloomy vision is particularly conveyed by the recurring portraits of the exploited woman in his poetry. Daruwala (1993, p. 66) aptly comments: Mahapatra is a melancholic, ruminating, modern day dervish dancing almost in a slow motion, his eyes taking in every somber tint, his mind focused on memory.

Mahapatra, in his poetry, portrays several shades of relationships between man and woman as lovers. In 'A Kind of Happiness', the man enjoys a fleeting proximity with the opposite sex (Mahapatra 1978). In 'Of that Love', the lover had a thrilling experience of walking a whole mile in rain with his lady love. The lover in 'The Moon Moments' is offered the first taste of physical union by a woman in his fancy (Mahapatra 1975).

In certain poems, he shifts his attention to the sex trading between men and women. 'Hunger' and 'The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street' are two such poems dealing with the theme of prostitution. He, poignantly, describes the compulsion of a woman who resorts to prostitution due to grim poverty. 'Hunger' of the belly compels her to sell her body. The poem 'The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street' portrays dismal conditions prevailing in our country. Many families are forced to 'sell their women, many parents even sell their daughters just to keep the wolf away from the door.' When the fishermen in 'Hunger' offers his daughter, saying that she has just turned fifteen, the customer feels that 'the sky fell on him.' He notices 'a father's exhausted wile' (Mahapatra 1976b).

'A Missing Person' symbolizes the same tragic glue that surrounds the women who are victims of exploitation, both sexual and economic since times immemorial. She does not speak, and her condition is expressed through her silence which is more eloquent than speech. In 'A Missing Person', the protagonist is one helpless woman whose internal sufferings and frustration are never externalized' (Mahapatra 1976a). 'I watch your body ease of seasons stretched out on the stone of the breath going nowhere.' In yet another poem, Mahapatra explores the range of male sexuality and the business-like attitude of the harlot.

Mahapatra (1987b, p. 24) he has also written poems in which he idealizes women as in 'The Indian Way'. The poem 'Lost' is one of the finest love poems where something seems to have gone wrong with a man's love for a woman. The poems like 'Orissa Landscape', 'Evening in an Orissa Village', 'Dawn at Puri' etc. express his Oriya and Indian sensibility. In 'Dawn at Puri', Mahapatra (1987a, p. 14) depicts a large number of widows scantily dressed in white saris waiting for their turn to enter the great temple to offer their prayers. All these women are elderly, victims of poverty, misery and cruelty. They are victims of traditional patriarchal society.

Mohapatra's second long poem 'Temple' mentions a twelve-year-old girl who is gang raped and murdered in Khagaria district which also reported as many as 11 cases of rape and murder of women over two months (Mahapatra 1989). The poems like 'A Whiteness of Bone' and 'Shadow Space' Step out onto the streets into a remote village and express the poet's anguish about contemporary Indian society.

### **Mahasweta Devi: A Saga of Emancipation of the Disadvantaged Woman**

Mahasweta Devi, one of the foremost literary personalities, a prolific author of Bengali short fiction and novels. Her narratives highlight the exploitation of poor, marginalized women and her powerful haunting tales of struggle of woman have been seen as typical examples of feminist discourse. She dwells at length on the multifarious problems faced by women of landless farmers, peasants, laborers, marginalized segments of society and depicts their innocence, the multitudinous customs, constant exploitation and silent suffering explicitly in her writings.

The story 'Draupadi' is about a tribal Naxal activist who is gang raped by the police as a punishment for her affiliation to a 'terrorist' group. The story shows how a poor woman's body becomes a site and a sign of constructing identities, negating her existence as an individual. 'Draupadi' is a tale of oppression and exploitation of the tribal woman at the hands of men in authority (Devi 2007).

In 'Breast Stories', Devi (1997) portrays 'Jashoda' as a victim of motherhood ideology. She becomes a nurse to feed the landlord's children. Resultantly, Jashoda owns money and respect from the society and is hailed as 'mother of the world'. In fact, she herself gets so intoxicated by her newly found role and status that she does not consider herself to be a servant. After having fed scores of these children, she contracts breast cancer and is left alone to die.

Krishnaraj (1995) asserts that motherhood has always been a committed and privileged status for women specially in the Indian context. However, what is important to note is that the glorification of motherhood remains in the ideological domain only and may not be necessarily seen as empowering women.

'Douloti-The Bountiful' questions the ideals of 'Freedom' and 'Nationhood'. The protagonist, 'Douloti', the bond slave is taken away as repayment of loan. The unsuspecting girl find herself in a brothel by becoming a bonded prostitute. A couple of years go by and Douloti eventually contracts venereal disease and is shown the door. She had earned her master a sum of forty thousand rupees against the original debt of rupees three hundred for which she was brought there. She dies in a deplorable state, her body found spread over the map of India, bleeding and wasted, mocking at the very idea of freedom. (Devi 1995).

In 'Bedanbala-Her Life, Her Times', 'kamini' keeps on hunting for pretty girls. The girls are bought and sold like commodities. They are kept away from their parents and pushed into flesh trade, "The mother won't be daughterless without this one. She has got two more" (Devi 2005). Here, Mahasweta has depicted the pitiable life of poor women who take to prostitution due to the poverty. Throughout their life, they entertain thousands of men and if they contract some disease, they are thrown out mercilessly.

### **Conclusion**

Feminism as a discourse aims not only at amelioration of the sufferings of woman in general but is also directed at the complete acceptance of the constructive role of women in any society, in any culture, in any nation, or for that matter at any given point of time of human existence. The Indian scriptures are full of examples where women have been depicted as purer half, the source of strength, and embodiment of self-sacrifice, humility, faith and knowledge. The 'Raamcharitmanas' portrays 'Sita' as 'Aadisakthi'

;infinite power, an idol of purity, righteousness and absolute devotion. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "That country and that nation which doesn't respect women have never become great nor will ever be in future. The principal reason why your race is so much degraded is that you have no respect for these living images of *Shakti*. If you don't raise the woman who are living embodiment of the Divine Mother, you have no other way to rise."

Kamala Das's poetry is essentially the poetry of a woman. Her poetry revolves around woman as a wife, as a sexual partner, and as a mother. Her feminine sensibility is the motivation and governing force behind all her poems and it is this sensibility which has given a distinctive place to her poetry. Mahapatra's tragic vision emanates from his consciousness that detests love making as a commercial transaction, which is the direct product of chronic poverty, hunger and starvation. Mahapatra sympathizes with the poor Indian women who work hard like animals, sacrifice throughout their life but get no respect in society.

In her narratives, Devi exposes how Indian women have been victims of 'the constructed identities'. The imposition of these constructions leads to control and discipline of their body so much that they lose right over their own bodies! 'Motherhood' is one such construction which imposes the onerous responsibility of childbearing and rearing upon them and expect them to be absolutely self-sacrificing as in 'Breast Stories', 'Draupadi' and 'Douloti-The Bountiful' which present a critique of the concepts of democracy, freedom, citizenship and nationhood, wherein Devi exposes the bitter fact of labor bondage in an independent nation.

Thus, the word 'feminism' needs to be understood in its broadest sense as referring to an intense awareness of identity as a woman, strongly resenting the subjugation of women which is a central fact of history, a key to most of her social and psychological disorders.

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## **Gender, project management, and aid-effectiveness: Does representation matter?**

Jasleen Kaur

*Lyndon B Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, United States of America*

### **Abstract**

*Gender is becoming substantially important in aid development programs over the past 40 years. However, the management in aid-development programs is not gender equal. Using the representational bureaucracy literature and the rich set of data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), I study how gender inequalities at the decision-making and implementation roles in aid organizations can impact gender-aid project outcomes. Do women take on an advocacy role based on their shared identity, shared values, and experiences? Specifically, I aim to answer the following research question – does having female project staff lead to better outcomes relative to male staff on gender-aid projects? Data for this analysis were collected by delving into 1738 completed gender projects at ADB from the year 2000 to 2021 and manually coding relevant information into pre-created Qualtrics forms. I used robust multinomial logistic regressions to test the associations between the gender of the project leaders and implementers to project success. The outcome variable is project success which is determined by the project's relevance to the current development scenario, the timeliness of the project, the efficiency with which it was carried out, whether gender goals were met, and its sustainability in the long run. The independent variables are the gender of project leader, and ratio of female to male staff members. I control for project characteristics. I use country, sector, and year fixed effects. I find a non-significant association of female leaders with project success. These results are puzzling and point towards a need for broader discussion of how active representation is measured in literature and the need for an in-depth qualitative work to solve the puzzle.*

**Keywords:** *Gender equality, aid-effectiveness, development*

### **Introduction**

Women everywhere have been historically marginalized. This marginalization is compounded when gender intersects with race, ethnicity, poverty, and other complex inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991; Walby, 2005). This compounded marginalization is often severe and leads directly to significant gender gaps in political, social and economic representation, labor market opportunities, education, and legal rights (Duflo, 2012). Inequality manifests itself in nearly every sphere of women's lives (Nussbaum, 2003).

A lot of attention has been paid to inequalities where women are on the receiving end of benefits. For example, the US distributes \$1.3 billion in aid for women around the world (Ser, 2016). The aid is targeted to programs that improve women's education, aim to reduce domestic and other forms of violence, increase women's participation in the economic and political process, etc. There has been a realization, especially in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, that crises impact men and women differently. Therefore, governments and organizations over the last decade have also started including gender-specific information in the budget process to allocate budget based on differential needs (Zrinski et al., 2021). The Sustainable Development goal (SDG) 5 of Gender Equality has been a push for the national and international organizations to work towards achieving equality for all. Along with the increased traction towards spending on policies and programs, there has also been a push towards better measurement of gender equality and empowerment. To fill these gaps, organizations like UN Women, Data2x, and Equal Measures

2030 have committed to collecting sex-disaggregated data—data that is separately collected and analyzed based on the male and female categories.

What is missing when so much is being done to reduce these gender inequalities? A missing element in reducing gender equality is the representation of women in these policies, programs, managerial roles in governmental and non-governmental, national, and international organizations leading to inequalities at the staff level of programs which work on gender equality. I study how these inequalities at the decision-making and implementation roles in aid organizations can impact *gender-aid project* outcomes. This paper empirically tries to understand the relationship between gender of project staff and project outcomes using the representational bureaucracy literature.

## **Literature Review**

Does staff's gender identity matter for gender-based outcomes? The representative bureaucracy literature, largely applied until recently to domestic organizations, delves into dimensions of staff identity to figure out whether passive representation of key identity attributes – such as gender, race, or nationality - can lead to active representation and the conditions that facilitate this transformation. Passive representation is when people with certain demographic features get increased access to positions of power. Active representation occurs when bureaucratic or organizational staff act upon their identities to advocate for, or implement, policies to improve lives of other people of the same identity inside and outside of the organization. For example, (Keiser et al., 2002) in a study of Texas schools find that female math teachers are positively associated with girl's math scores in grade 8 and on the exit exam.

The representative bureaucracy literature recently has appeared in studies of international organizations (IOs) like the International Monetary Fund, United Nations, European Union, and international aid organizations like the World Bank. These studies have investigated socio-demographic characteristics of the staff in IOs to understand the conditions that can lead to active representation in an organization. For example, Christensen (2020) found that when bureaucrats take on a representative role based on their socio-demographic characteristics such as race, geography, language and/or gender and push for the interest of their socio-demographic group, passive representation converts into active representation. Specifically, he shows that when there is a diverse staff (passive representation) who have the autonomy to take action, staff have the chance to actively shape the policies affecting people of their identity and advocate for them (active representation). Similarly, other papers find that the following conditions can lead to active representation: shared sets of values and preferences (Reinalda, 2013), prior life experiences of European Union top officials (Hooghe, 1999), information knowledge (culture, history, politics) and relational knowledge (how people interact) about their own diverse group (Eckhard, 2020), the capacity to transform preferences into actions (Ege, 2017), and self-perception of a bureaucrat as an authority in the particular field based on belonging to a particular identity (Ege, 2020).

Gender has gained increased attention in the past few years. There has been a call for more diverse staff in international organizations. The gender-based projects at the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have almost doubled over the past decade. It has been shown that increase in aid spending, cash and kind transfers, and increase in development projects that target women do improve outcomes for women (Angelucci et al., 2015; Brody et al., 2015; Karlan et al., 2017; Karlan & Valdivia, 2011; J. Kim et al., 2009; J. C. Kim et al., 2007; Urbina, 2020). However, what is missing in the broader development and IO literature is how these outcomes can be further improved by considering the who and how of the manager of these projects. While representational bureaucracy in international aid organizations has been researched (for example, Badache, 2020; Chwioroth, 2013), the empirical evidence about the who and how is very limited and disheartening.

This paper aims to theoretically and empirically highlight the role of the identity of the decision-maker and the implementer of international aid projects on projects that are categorized as gender equity and mainstreaming. This study hypothesizes that women who work on gender-based projects as opposed to men would improve gender-aid project outcomes. This is an extremely important question to answer as it has implications to increase output legitimacy of the organization (Christensen, 2020), achieve the SDG goals of gender equality more effectively and efficiently, make faster progress towards policy and development goals of the organizations via effective and efficient use of aid money and most importantly, because the representation of marginalized identities (in this case women) is an intrinsically important and just thing to do.

Specifically, this paper asks the two main questions. Firstly, are female project officers associated with improved outcomes on gender-aid projects relative to male project officers? Secondly, are the combination of female project officer and a higher ratio of female team members associated with improved outcomes on gender-aid projects relative to other combinations based on gender identity?

## **Data Sources**

Because of gaps in the literature and data availability I choose ADB as the case for this paper. There are 1738 closed ADB projects that have gender elements. All projects have a project datasheet that provides basic project information. Before the start of each project, the project officer and team prepare concept notes or reports and recommendations to the President. These documents provide detailed information on the project staff at the beginning of the project, project funding activities, partners, timelines etc. At the end of these projects, there is a completion report that has information on project outcomes, and project staff at the end of the project. Only 898 of these projects have a completion report that has any information on outcomes of the project. These documents were read in detail to enter start and end project information into a pre-made Qualtrics form. To determine gender, I use an application called genderize.io that is 97% accurate in predicting the male and female gender based on how people identify themselves on social media accounts. Unknown genders with genderize.io were hand searched.

## **Data**

The main dependent variable is the Overall Project success – which is a rating. A project is rated highly successful, successful, less than successful and unsuccessful based on 4 criteria – was the project relevant? Did it meet the planned targets? Were there project delays and why? What is the likelihood that the project would sustain itself in the long run? Each project on its completion is rated on its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability on a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 is the lowest score, and 3 is the highest score. These are then combined by the Asian Development Bank to rate the project on its. The Overall Project success is also a rating from 0-3 with 0 as unsuccessful, 1 as less than successful, 2 as successful and 3 as highly successful.<sup>1</sup> There are also other ratings like – rating on the gender action plan, development impact, performance of the borrower, performance of ADB etc. These ratings are separate from the ratings on overall project success but are calculated in the same way i.e., on a scale of 0 to 3. All the project's ratings are in no way perfect – but some of the bias is removed because they are evaluated by an independent evaluation group.<sup>2</sup> These data are merged with data provided by ADB, data scraped from datasheets of each project, and the data entered by manually coding information from project reports. Summary characteristics by gender of the project leader are in the table 1. I use a subset of these data to

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<sup>1</sup> More information on how ratings are calculated can be found in appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> The Independent Evaluation Department (IED) independently and systematically evaluates ADB policies, strategies, operations, and special concerns that relate to organizational and operational effectiveness. To be credible and to provide an objective performance assessment, the evaluation function is independent from project or program design and implementation.

include only those projects which have some gender elements and are termed gender equity or effective gender mainstreaming<sup>3</sup>. Projects with no gender elements are dropped<sup>4</sup>. From table 1 we can see that females are significantly associated with less project delays (pointing towards more efficiency), but lower funding as compared to their male counterparts. There is also a significant difference in percentage of men and women leading projects with gender elements. One would expect that a higher proportion of women would be leading projects with gender elements but that is not the case. In projects with and without gender elements, a higher percentage of males are in positions of power relative to women.

**Table 1: Summary Project Characteristics by Gender of Project Officer**

<b>Project Characteristics</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Mean Diff</b>	<b>Total Projects</b>
Project Delays (in weeks)	72.6	84.8	-12.2*	
Project Funding (in millions)	45.2	56.7	11.5**	
4 countries with most projects				
People's Republic of China (%)	32.3	67.7	-35.4	672
India (%)	19.9	80.1	-60.2	453
Pakistan (%)	20	80	-60	255
Bangladesh (%)	22.4	77.6	-55.2	246
Gender Elements				
Gender Equity (%)	42.4	57.6	-15.2	356
Effective Gender Mainstreaming (%)	28.8	71.2	-42.4	572
Some Gender Elements (%)	26.9	73.1	-46.2	699
No Gender Elements (%)	27.3	72.7	-45.4	1405

*Source - These findings have been drawn from the Asian Development Bank datasheet. These suggest that gender of the project leaders is significantly associated with project characteristics that are known in the literature to impact project outcomes.*

## **Limitations of Data**

There are three limitations of the dataset -

### *Gender as binary*

The dataset is built to only extract names of the project staff at the Asian Development Bank. Their gender is not specified. I use the application genderize.io that predicts gender based on names. However, the gender prediction and hence the study is only limited to the binary biological sex of male and female. Even the gender of gender equality in the World Bank only refers to equality between men and women. (World Bank 2011) . Given that people can identify themselves as non-binary, these data might not be totally accurate. This limitation is unfair, especially as it devoids us of the important links on how projects perform with staff who identify themselves as non-binary. However, for the internal validity of the study this does not pose a huge threat given that this study is limited to the binary gender and the sample size has power.

<sup>3</sup> Projects at Asian Development Bank as categorized as “No Gender Elements”, “Some Gender Elements”, “Effective gender Mainstreaming”, and “Gender Equity”.

<sup>4</sup> More information on how the dataset was processed in Appendix 2.

### *Associations and not Causations*

The dataset that was extracted and manually collected from the Bank's project documents is rich but does not allow for a causal research design. Therefore, all findings are associations and not impact of gender identity on project outcomes. While this might be a limitation, this study does create space for a new area of research that has not been previously well-researched and hence it's contribution to the field of development and aid-effectiveness research is paramount.

### *Missing Data*

This dataset is missing approximately 50% of the information. There is no correlation of missingness with the gender of staff members. Therefore, I assume for the purpose of this analysis that missing values are missing at random<sup>5</sup>.

### **Research Methodology**

I run a multinomial logistic regression to find the association between gender of the project officer and gender aid project outcomes. The full model is as follows –

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Genderaid Project Success}_{jc} &= \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Gender Of project officer}_{jc} \\ &+ \beta_2 \text{Ratio of female staff to total staff}_{jc} \\ &+ \beta_3 (\text{Gender of project officer}_{jc} * \text{Ratio of female staff to total staff}_{jc}) \\ &+ \beta_4 X_{jc} + \mu_c + \sigma_t + \varepsilon_{jct} \end{aligned}$$

The dependent variable is success of gender project j in country c. The independent variables are gender of project officer in project j and country c and the ratio of female staff to total staff. The interaction term helps understand the dynamics between project staff and project leader based on their gender identity. I control for project level characteristics like funding, project delays (which are calculated by subtracting planned closing date to actual closing date), gender elements of the project, project type, project agenda, etc. I include country, sector, and year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the country level.

### **Results**

Table 2 presents the main results of this paper. The odds ratio of 0.847 means that having a female team leader controlling for project delays, funding etc. is associated with a reduction in overall performance by 16%. However, these estimates are not significant. In column 2, when gender of the team staff is added to the regression equation, I see that while female leaders have no significant impact on the overall performance, a higher ratio of female to male staff is associated with a reduction in the probability of overall success of the project by 71.7% as seen by the odds ratio of 0.284, and these results are significant at the 95% CI.

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<sup>5</sup> More information on how missing values were handled are explained in appendix 2.

**Table 2 : Main Results**

Dependent Vars:	Overall Performance	Overall Performance	Relevance	Efficiency	Effectiveness
Independent Vars:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>female leader</b>	<b>0.847</b> (0.197)	<b>0.907</b> (0.356)	<b>1.317</b> (0.526)	<b>0.84</b> (0.337)	<b>1.624</b> (0.696)*
<b>female/total staff</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>0.283</b> (0.142)***	<b>1.162</b> (1.217)	<b>1.218</b> (1.616)	<b>0.303</b> (0.188)***
<b>staff dynamics</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>0.897</b> (0.998)	<b>0.87</b> (1.013)	<b>1.197</b> (1.305)	<b>1.2</b> (1.39)
<b>project delays</b>	<b>0.993</b> (0.002)***	<b>0.992</b> (0.002)***	<b>0.998</b> (0.001)***	<b>0.995</b> (0.002)***	<b>0.996</b> (0.002)***
<b>funding</b>	<b>1.00E+00</b> (0)	<b>1.00E+00</b> (0)	<b>1</b> (0)	<b>1</b> (0)	<b>1</b> (0)***
<b>Controls</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>N</b>	808	808	808	808	808

*Note: results are presented as Odds ratios. Standard errors are clustered at the country level.*

*\*\*\* indicates level of significance at 99% CI. \*\* indicates level of significance at 95% CI.*

*\* Indicates level of significance at 90% CI*

In column 3, the odds ratio of having a female leader on project relevance is 1.317 meaning that having a female leader is associated with an increase in probability of project relevance by 32%. However, these results are not significant at the 95% CI. Similarly, project effectiveness and efficiency are not impacted by project leader/officer's gender. A higher ratio of female staff to total staff is negatively associated with overall performance as well as effectiveness of the project but improves efficiency and relevance of the project. All the coefficients for staff dynamics are insignificant at the 95% CI. Therefore, we may not be able to talk much about how female leaders interact with their staff based on their gender identity. The only variable that is consistently significant across all outcomes is project delays. I see that *ceteris paribus*, delays in project by 1 week is associated with a reduction in performance by 1%.

## Conclusion and Discussion

These results were not expected and refute the theory of representative bureaucracy. One important reason for observing these results is that the dataset is comprised of about 50% missing values. Therefore, it is possible that we see non-significant results when they are in fact significant.

If passive representation does not convert into active as shown by the results, it is quite puzzling. To solve this puzzle, a few questions need to be answered. Is there something counteracting the passive representation of women. Are women's actions supported in the organization? Are women's goals of prioritizing women in line with how projects are carried out? Do women rate themselves more harshly as compared to their male counterparts? Further work needs to be done to understand whether these results are caused not because women don't take an active part in representing women, but the system is stacked against women such that their actions counteract with the organization's functioning. Another important

question is - Can project success be equated to active representation? The measure of overall performance of a project is a combination of its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. These concepts are subjective and can be maneuvered to maximize strategic success while hiding important information about how gender plays a role in project success. These results point towards the need for a broader discussion of how active representation is measured in the literature as well as how project success is measured at Asian Development Bank. These preliminary results require an in-depth analysis of how ADB works an organization, and, how and who measures project success.

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## Appendix 1 – Overall Assessment Methodology of project success/failure

Overall Assessment Methodology				
Criterion	Weight (%)	Definition	Rating Description	Rating Value
1. Relevance	25	Relevance is the consistency of a project's impact and outcome with the government's development strategy, the Asian Development Bank's lending strategy for the country, and the Asian Development Bank's strategic objectives at the time of approval and evaluation and the adequacy of the design.	Highly relevant Relevant Less than relevant Irrelevant	3 2 1 0
2. Effectiveness	25	Effectiveness describes the extent to which the outcome, as specified in the design and monitoring framework, either as agreed at approval or as subsequently modified, has been achieved.	Highly effective Effective Less than effective Ineffective	3 2 1 0
3. Efficiency	25	Efficiency describes, ex post, how economically resources have been converted to results, using the economic internal rate of return, or cost-effectiveness, of the investment or other indicators as a measure and the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.	Highly efficient Efficient Less than efficient Inefficient	3 2 1 0
4. Sustainability	25	Sustainability considers the likelihood that human, institutional, financial, and other resources are sufficient to maintain the outcome over its economic life.	Most likely Likely Less than likely Unlikely	3 2 1 0
Overall Assessment (weighted average of above criteria)		Highly Successful: Overall weighted average is greater than or equal to 2.7. Successful: Overall weighted average is greater than or equal to 1.6 and less than 2.7. Less than Successful: Overall weighted average is greater than or equal to 0.8 and less than 1.6. Unsuccessful: Overall weighted average is less than 0.8.		

Note: This table presented in the 2006 guidelines has been amended to reflect two changes: (i) equal weights of 25% are now given to the 4 rating criteria used to determine the success rating, and (ii) the replacement of ratings preceded by 'partly' to 'less than'. These changes apply from 25 March 2013 and will continue until IED issues new guidelines in 2015.

## Appendix 2: Data Processing and Missing Value Imputation

I begin with 2144 unique projects and 115 variables. Projects with no gender elements and the projects where there was no information on gender element of the project are dropped. All variables where there was no information. Therefore, I work with a total of 808 observation/unique projects with gender elements and 86 variables for the analysis. Within the 808 observations there are quite a few important variables that have missing information. For example, overall performance has 350 observations that are missing. Similarly, funding and project delays have 122 and 420 observations respectively that are missing. Using listwise deletion could lead to losing relevant information. Therefore, missing value imputation is used to impute missing values of all the variables presented in table 3. The performance rating on sustainability had more than 80% missing values and hence was deleted from the analysis.

An important assumption for missing value imputation is that missing values are missing at random. Therefore, values that are observed can be used as good predictors of information that is unobserved. Since all the variables might not have a multivariate normal distribution, I use the mice package in stata to estimate missing values, assuming conditional distribution. I use chained imputations to estimate missing values of all performance variables, funding, project delays and ratio of female staff to total staff.

**Table 3 : Missing Values**

Variables	Obs=.	Obs<.	Unique Values	Min	Max
Relevance	409	399	4	0	3
Efficiency	424	384	4	0	3
Effectiveness	425	383	3	1	3
Overall performance	350	458	3	1	3
Sustainability	785	23	1	2	2
ADB performance	421	387	4	0	3
Consultant performance	475	333	4	0	3
Executive performance	432	376	4	0	3
Borrower performance	490	318	4	0	3
Project Delays	420	388	203	-217	393
Funding	122	686	261	50000	1.25E+09
Ratio of female staff to total staff	594	214	29	0	1

## **International Gender Integrative Entrepreneurship in the Digital Era**

Shuji Kong<sup>1</sup>, Xiaoyuan Yu<sup>1</sup>, Rosemary Uzzo<sup>2</sup>, Dandan Chen<sup>2</sup>, Xueying Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Hengyu Chen<sup>3</sup>,  
Leting Chen<sup>4</sup>, Yuanyan Zhang<sup>2</sup>, Jia Yu<sup>2</sup>, Xiuli Chen<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. *College of Global Talents, Beijing Institute of Technology Zhuhai, China*

<sup>2</sup>. *Committee for International Specialists, Shenzhen International Finance Research Association, Shenzhen, China*

<sup>3</sup>. *Graduate School of International Studies, Hanyang University, Seoul, South Korea*

<sup>4</sup>. *School of Environment, Education and Development Department, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK*

### **Abstract**

*The economic market today has offered large opportunities to women. There is no doubt that the number of female entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses is increasing. In Asia, there has been an emphasis on crucial prerequisites to change and encourage gender integrative entrepreneurship for maintainable economic advance. This study aims to recognize the international gender integrative entrepreneurship in the digital era and discusses the role of entrepreneurship education for better releasing the global transformative power of innovative entrepreneurship. The evolving features of the entrepreneurship ecosystem such as academics becoming entrepreneurs and digital entrepreneurship are discussed to emphasize the possible trends of international entrepreneurship. Statistics analysis of field data collected by surveys investigates the awareness of entrepreneurship determinants and gender equity among people who study abroad or have international work experience in digital entrepreneurship. We highlight the importance of entrepreneurship education and knowledge of the entrepreneurial competency framework for women's access to relational support in the entrepreneurial field. In addition, the role of entrepreneurship education and knowledge of the entrepreneurial competency framework in terms of entrepreneurial intentions is also highlighted through path analysis and finally we also discuss the role of knowing that women are at a disadvantage in the entrepreneurial market in facilitating perceived entrepreneurial behavior.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial competency framework, entrepreneurial education, relationship support*

### **I. Introduction**

The international labor organization (2014) reports that more than 42% of enterprises are owned by women in the formal economic market. This is a huge leap from the early 80s when most studies concluded that, "Women ran, on average, smaller, less profitable, and more slowly growing businesses than men (Brush, 1992)." Today, Chinese Embassy Statistics report that female entrepreneurs account for 20% of the entrepreneurs of China (Deng *et al.*, 2011). Obviously, female entrepreneurship has advantages greater than money. It promotes gender equality by increasing women's welfare and providing independence (Pettersson *et al.*, 2017). In this paper, we examine international entrepreneurship from a feminist perspective. Specifically, we examine whether technology, entrepreneurial support, a focus on gender issues, and innovative entrepreneurship education are the best strategies to overcome the entrepreneurial barriers for women in East Asia.

This study aims to recognize the international gender integrative entrepreneurship in the digital era and discusses the role of feminism in entrepreneurship for better releasing the global transformative power of innovative entrepreneurship. The evolving features of entrepreneurship ecosystem such as academics becoming entrepreneurs and digital entrepreneurship are discussed to emphasize the possible trends of international entrepreneurship.

## **II. Method**

This research uses a survey to analyze the relationship between the independent variables of personal characteristics including nationality, family background, gender, age, and social identity. and the dependent variables of international gender-integrated entrepreneurship education, understanding the entrepreneurship framework that was taught as part of participants' course work, women's status in the field of entrepreneurship and relational support. The mediating variable of perceived behavioural control was also assessed.

Our target group mainly focus on people from South Korea and China with an international background, including international students and people with international work experience. We collected a total of 267 questionnaires, with 228 (85.39%) in the language of Chinese, 34 in Korean. There were 182 questionnaires from women (68.16%), 81 from men (30.34%). Regarding social status, 49.8% of the questionnaires were focused on "undergraduate students and within two years of graduation", and most of the sample family structures are concentrated in nuclear families (referring to a family composed of two generations of married couples and unmarried children or adopted children).

The questionnaire mainly consists of two parts, personal information, and scale questions (from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). Scale questions are grouped into the following modules: Entrepreneurial Intent (EI), Entrepreneurial Competency Framework (EF), International Gender Inclusive Entrepreneurship Education (IEE), Gender Bias in Entrepreneurship (GS), and Relationship Support (RS)

We separated the Entrepreneurial Competency Framework (EF) into three categories: ideas and opportunities, resources, and action (Bacigalupo, *et al.*, 2016).

In designing the International Gender Inclusive Entrepreneurship Education (IEE) questions, we targeted those who had participated in entrepreneurship education (99 individuals) and measured entrepreneurship education along two dimensions: the skills and knowledge acquired after participating in entrepreneurship education (E1), and the perceived degree of improved behavioral control (E2).

Entrepreneurial Gender Bias (GS) was utilized to analyze opinions of potential reasons for women's disadvantage in the entrepreneurial market, which we described as gender stereotypes (R1), value disparities (R2), and social business networks (R3).

In the first study, we used stratified regression to analyze the relationship between International Gender Inclusive Entrepreneurship Education (IEE), the Entrepreneurship Competency Framework (EF), and relational support (RS) for women in entrepreneurship, controlling for a range of individual characteristic variables.

In Study 2, we use path analysis to examine the relationship between the skills and knowledge acquired after entrepreneurship education participation, the perceived degree of improved behavioral control, and the degree of knowledge of the entrepreneurial competency structure and entrepreneurial intentions. The impacts of women's perceived disadvantage in the entrepreneurial marketplace and relationship support on the perceived degree of behavioral control over entrepreneurship are also examined.

## **III. Results**

### *Reliability analysis*

Reliability analysis was used to examine the reliability of responses to the attitude scale questions. The reliability coefficients of all variables were greater than 0.6, and the test was passed. CITC tested the

relationship between each subscale at the same latitude, and the items with CITC values less than 0.2 (intention3, control2, values1) were deleted.

#### *Validating factor analysis*

The validation factor analysis was used to measure whether the correspondence between the dimensions and the scale question items remained consistent with expectations.

For the measurement relationships: control11, stereotype1-3, and values1-4 had standardized loading coefficients with absolute values of less than 0.6, implying a weak measurement relationship, and were therefore removed.

#### *Linear Regression Analysis of Relational Support for Female Entrepreneurs*

**Figure 1: Understanding the Relational Support for Female Entrepreneurs**

Stratified regression analysis results				
dependent variable	relationship support	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
control variables	constant	3.284** (4.603)	1.322 (1.522)	0.087 (0.107)
	gender	-0.092 (-0.461)	-0.164 (-0.869)	-0.075 (-0.440)
	age	0.404** (2.877)	0.349* (2.620)	0.333** (2.788)
	nationality	0.062 (0.555)	0.078 (0.744)	0.179 (1.848)
	social identity	-0.217** (-3.189)	-0.204** (-3.173)	-0.226** (-3.914)
	family structure	-0.078 (-1.535)	-0.072 (-1.496)	-0.046 (-1.076)
EF			0.467** (3.563)	0.309 (1.013)
IEE	E1			0.094 (0.339)
	E2			0.393** (4.866)
	sample size	99	99	99
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.124	0.23	0.414
	F	F (5,93)=2.636,p=0.028	F (6,92)=4.589,p=0.000	F (9,89)=6.973,p=0.000
	△R <sup>2</sup>	0.124	0.106	0.183
	△F	F (5,93)=2.636,p=0.028	F (1,92)=12.697,p=0.001	F (3,89)=9.267,p=0.000

EF:Entrepreneurial Competency Framework \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01  
 IEE:International Gender Inclusive Entrepreneurship Education  
 E2:Skills and knowledge acquired after participating in entrepreneurship education  
 E1:Perceived degree of improved behavioral control

The core of hierarchical regression is regression analysis; the difference is that hierarchical regression can be divided into multiple layers. The significance of stratification is determined by adding independent variables one by one or stratum by stratum, and determining whether the independent variables have a statistically significant change to the regression model; in other words, it is analyzing whether the new variables have a unique contribution to the regression equation by excluding the contribution of other variables.

Figure 3 (Model 1) includes personal characteristics variables (age, gender, social status, family structure, and nationality) as independent variables. The results show that the model passes the F-test (F=2.636, p<0.05) and both age and social identity pass the t-test (p<0.01), where age has a significant positive effect relationship on the dependent variable and social identity has a significant negative effect relationship on the dependent variable. A new variable (Entrepreneurial Competency Framework) was added to model 2. Specifically, the regression coefficient of the newly added variable is greater than 0 and significant, implying a significant positive relationship of the new variable on the dependent variable. Model 3 added E1 and E2 to model 2, adding explanatory significance to the model. In addition, the regression coefficient value of skills and knowledge acquired after participating in entrepreneurship education is 0.393, and its significant value (t=4.866, p=0.000<0.01) shows that skills and knowledge acquired after attending entrepreneurship education have a positive impact on the dependent variable.

The summary analysis shows that people who have a strong intention to start a business after entrepreneurship education and who understand the entrepreneurial Capability framework are more likely

to get support from friends, family members and other related structures. At the same time, compared with younger groups, groups with certain social and work experience are more likely to receive relational support for female entrepreneurship. Finally, based on the negative relationship between social status and relational support, it is clear that current graduate students and PhDs are more likely to receive relational support than higher education workers and researchers.

### Linear Regression Analysis on the Effect of Entrepreneurship Education

**Figure 2: Path Analysis**

Model regression coefficient summary table							Model Fit Metrics
X	path →	Y	Unnormalized path coefficients	SE	z (CR value)	p	normalized path coefficients $\chi^2/df$
E1	1→	EI	0.378	0.084	4.477	0	0.375
E2	2→	EI	0.384	0.086	4.459	0	0.374
RS	3→	E2	0.441	0.121	3.632	0	0.352
GS	4→	E2	0.26	0.098	2.663	0.008	0.244
EF	5→	E2	-0.252	0.16	-1.579	0.114	-0.153

E1: Skills and knowledge acquired after participating in entrepreneurship education  
EI: entrepreneurial intention  
EF: Entrepreneurship Framework  
E2: Perceived degree of improved behavioral control  
GS: Entrepreneurship Gender bias  
RS: Relationship Support

The above table shows that the standardized path coefficient values for paths 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all greater than 0 and all are significant at the 1% or 5% level. The standardized path coefficients for paths 1 and 2 were 0.375 and 0.374, respectively. This shows that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial intentions (EI) and skills and knowledge learned after entrepreneurship education (E1) and perceived behavioral control after entrepreneurship education (E2).

When studying the influence of relationship support and the reasons why women are in a disadvantaged position in the entrepreneurial market on perceived behavioral control through path analysis (Figure 4), it is found that the standardized path coefficients of these two paths are greater than 0 and are significant at the level of 1% and 5%, respectively. Therefore, relational support and understanding of the reasons why women are disadvantaged on the entrepreneurial market are significantly positively related to perceived behavioral control. Finally, when studying the influence of understanding the entrepreneurial ability structure on perceived behavior control, this path did not show significant value ( $z=-1.579$ ,  $p=0.114>0.05$ ). Therefore, understanding the entrepreneurial ability structure does not affect the perceived behavior control.

## V. Discussion and Conclusion

The connection between university education and industry is very important to improve the quality and relevance of entrepreneurship education. Through broader and aimed application of academic ideologies in municipal scopes, underlining gender construction and acting, especially societal action to the gradation motivating institutional modification is necessary (Nelson, 2019).

### *Academics Become Entrepreneurs*

Despite the current growing interest in academic entrepreneurship in academia, little effort has been made on the explicit individual motives that might encourage academic experts to launch corporations (Blair and Shaver, 2020). While monetary characteristics transformed less important after time, time, knowledge, and financial advantages still motivate academic entrepreneurs. The growth of such incentives in the background of digitalization allows them to foster academic entrepreneurship (Galati et al., 2020).



Since universities are now viewed as significant economic performers within areas and are vital actors in determining and manipulating entrepreneurial ecosystems, two types of academics, both the entrepreneurial academic and academic entrepreneur are recognized as a necessity for contributing to the achievement of the entrepreneurial university (Miller *et al.*, 2018). Academic participants taking on business roles or making identity shifts are influenced by a variety of factors, with personal, social, and institutional relational support heavily influencing the identity shift process. Pathway analysis also reveals that entrepreneurial intentions are facilitated through relational support by influencing people's behavioral perceptions. (Vural, 2019). However, as overlooked entrepreneurs, it is factual that the atmosphere for academic women, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, fails to motivate and include female scientists and engineers in corporations at the institutional level (Howe *et al.*, 2014).

### *Digital Entrepreneurship*

The prevailing literature on digital entrepreneurship focuses on the systemic level such as digital entrepreneurship ecosystems and the digital platform economy including digital business models, the digital entrepreneurship process, and the construction of digital start-ups. These highlight the innovative cooperative and societal subtleties empowered by digital functions to assist knowledge allocation and to enhance the opportunity recognition (Sahut *et al.*, 2021). Regionally, because of evolving economic methods such as e-commerce, the innovative economic mediators (including digital government and digital enterprises) are influencing the digital entrepreneurial ecosystem. Individually, high-skilled staff in information and communications technology (ICT) professions facing critical digitalization have an increased possibility of becoming entrepreneurs with independent businesses due to their strengths in artificial intelligence (AI), generating chances for achievement-oriented entrepreneurship (Fossen and Sorgner, 2021). However, little is recognized regarding the contribution added by digital technologies in creating changes in female entrepreneurship (Ughetto *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurship functioning within an innovative ecosystem the development of the company from lower to higher levels of digitalization, acquiring the human and other obligatory commercial resources (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2020). While theoretical investigations explore the role that digital technologies play in entrepreneurial ecosystems, the gender viewpoint remains unknown since the challenges that females experience in developing and operating a business mainly highlight the approaches to data, investment, and networks.

In conclusion, based on this research, the skills and knowledge acquired after participating in entrepreneurship education and the increased perception of behavioral control can increase people's entrepreneurial intentions, while relational support and perceptions that women are disadvantaged in the entrepreneurial market can increase people's entrepreneurial behavioral control and degrees of perception. Digital entrepreneurship for women in East Asia is necessary for investigating how information technology or other technologies such as VR, blockchains, and the meta-verse empower women for entrepreneurship in diverse industries.

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## Appendix

question item	Q	
Relationship Support (RS)	If I start a business and become an entrepreneur, my friends will support me	relation1
	My family will support me if I start a business and become an entrepreneur	relation2
	If I start a business, as an entrepreneur I can be inspired by structures including private, public and NGOs	relation3
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	My career goal is to be an entrepreneur	intention1
	I've seriously considered starting a business	intention2
	Entrepreneurship is totally unattractive to me	intention3
	If there are opportunities and resources, I am willing to start a business	intention4
	Of all the options, I would rather do anything than become an entrepreneur	intention5
International Gender Inclusive Entrepreneurship Education (IEE)	It's easy to start a business and keep it alive	control1
	I can't start a business at all	control2
	There are very few things outside my control that can stop me from starting a business	control3
	Coming up with a business idea is easy	control4
	Knowledge and skills learned can be applied in practice	education1
	Entrepreneurship education developed my entrepreneurial skills and abilities	education2
	Entrepreneurship education provides necessary entrepreneurial knowledge	education3
	Entrepreneurship education helps me come up with creative ideas	education4
Gender Bias in Entrepreneurship (GS)	Perceptions of gender stereotypes are responsible for the gender gap in entrepreneurship	Stereotype1
	The typical entrepreneur is seen as having masculinity and personality; these characteristics are male stereotypes	Stereotype2
	Female Stereotypes Negatively Affect Female Entrepreneurship	Stereotype3
	Men seem to care more about economic goals than women	Values1
	Women place more importance on internal factors such as self-actualization and personal enjoyment	Values2
	Women are more risk averse than men	Values3
	Men are more likely than women to show intent to become entrepreneurs	Values4
	Women do not have the same opportunities as men to receive formal education and accumulate explicit knowledge	network1
	Compared with men, women's entrepreneurship lacks family, friends and other relationship support	network2
	Female entrepreneurs have lower levels of social networking (quality and diversity of personal, business/professional and community) compared to males	network3
	In a male-dominated entrepreneurial environment, female entrepreneurs face difficulties in building effective business networks	network4
Entrepreneurial Competency Framework (EF)	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to identify, seize and create opportunities	idea1
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to develop creative and purposeful ideas	idea2
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to make the most of ideas and opportunities	idea3
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to assess the consequences and impacts of ideas, opportunities and actions	idea4
	Entrepreneurship requires belief in yourself and continuous development	resource1
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to collect and manage the required resources	resource2
	Entrepreneurship requires financial and economic knowledge	resource3
	Entrepreneurship requires demonstrating effective communication, persuasion, negotiation and leadership skills	resource4
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to mobilize and inspire others	motion1
	Entrepreneurship requires risk tolerance	motion2
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to plan and manage	motion3
	Entrepreneurship requires a good spirit of cooperation	motion4
	Entrepreneurship requires the ability to learn through experience	motion5

## **The Perception, Influence and Construction of Masculinity for Generation Z in China: 12 Interview Cases of Male University Students**

Xueshan ZHAO, Mingyuan HUANG, Yu HU

*Faculty of International Media Communication, Communication University of China, China*

### **Abstract**

*The traditional discourse of gender temperament has been challenged in China's contemporary media scene in recent years, at the same time when Chinese Generation Z has been exposed to the intergenerational differences in gender identities. Based on Cornell's masculinity models, this qualitative study utilized in-depth interviews with 12 male university students, aged 20-25 years from different regions. The study found that young Chinese men of Generation Z no longer promote the "feminine" versus "masculine" dichotomy; they would like to use keywords such as "responsible", "attractive", "good academic performance", and "optimistic" to portray their ideal image of masculinity, which are not strongly gender specific. The gender interactions generated in school and family education largely influenced the shaping of respondents' gender temperament, but mainly led to a hegemonic orientation, while gender equality topics were not explored in depth. The media exposure on social platforms also developed the respondents' more complex understandings of men's identity, which makes them prefer to pursue softer masculinity. Reform of masculinity education shouldn't be taken without a clear demarcation of "healthier masculinity".*

**Keyword:** *masculinity, gender consciousness, Generation Z*

### **Introduction**

Widespread anxiety about the loss of "masculinity" has repeatedly dominated Chinese public opinion since the 21st century. From 2018 to 2021, several male talent shows have been favored by the audience, while the male images in the shows tend to be "feminine" and contrast with the traditional image of male in China. Some people even describe the current male image as "excessive femininity causing 'Yanggang' (manly) deficiency".

In May 2020, Si Zefu, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), said in a proposal titled *Paying attention to and Preventing the Trend of Feminization of Male Teenagers* that weakness, inferiority and shyness often occur among Chinese teenagers, which he called the "feminization" of boys. People believe that this phenomenon will certainly harm the survival and development of Chinese society if it is not effectively controlled. On January 28, 2021, China's Ministry of Education responded to the proposal that they will pay attention to cultivating students' masculinity by strengthening physical education and the system of mental health education<sup>6</sup>. On September 2 of the same year, the National Radio and Television Administration issued a notice calling for a prohibition of "Niangpao" (a disparaging term for feminized men) and other abnormal male images in media<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Official Website of China's Ministry of Education  
[http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xxgk/xxgk\\_jyta/jyta\\_jiaoshisi/202101/t20210128\\_511584.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/xxgk_jyta/jyta_jiaoshisi/202101/t20210128_511584.html)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Policy database of China's State Council  
[http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-09/02/content\\_5635019.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-09/02/content_5635019.htm)

This is not the first time that masculinity has sparked controversy in China. As early as around 2010, "fake women" triggered hot discussions in Chinese society and even aroused an Anti Fake Women League under the banner of "Real Chinese Men"(Zheng, 2015).

Under patriarchal and androcentric power contexts, male experience, imagination, and mindset were equivalent to the most reasonable human thought. As Richard Dyer put it, masculinity, not male sexuality, "is a bit like air," in that people breathe it in all the time but aren't conscious of it(Shu, 2011).

The growth of industrial capitalism and the women's liberation movement impacted early studies on gender sociology and gender role framework. However, instead of thinking outside the cage of androcentric theory, academics were establishing a set of stereotypes about masculinity. Gender binary(Terman and Miles, 1936) and sex-role theory(Parsons, 1964) were born at that time, which not only neglected individual's subjective initiative in the sex marking but concealed the inequality of power between two sexes(Carrigan et al., 1985). Following that, a succession of masculinity studies emphasized post-structuralism, which claimed that masculinity is formed through the identity and discourse of roles in society, rather than a simple dichotomy.

Australian researcher R.W. Connell observed four groups of Australian men's social life and theorized four masculinity models basically in her book *Masculinities*. She believed that gender is constructed in practice, and masculinity can be understood through the relationships of the following categories: hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, subordinate masculinity, and marginalized masculinity(Connell, 1995).

So far, masculine constructivism has mostly been established. The statement that social norm imposed on actions leads to human socialization was well-recognized. Males gradually form a gender identity when growing up, which is recognized as a process of masculinity understanding, integration and internalization(Harris, 1995). Connell claimed in her later research that gender is constructed within institutional and cultural contexts that produce multiple forms of masculinity, and schools are active players in the formation of masculinity(Connell, 1996). Besides, the traditional image of hegemonic masculinity is more often presented in the mass media, and the prolonged exposure to the media reinforces the ideological tendency of young men to cater to hegemonic masculinity (Giaccardi et al., 2016). In addition to being constructed by schools and media, the public-private binary theory in modern times tended to form a hegemonic gender bias (public=male / private=female), and this traditional family division of labor also deepened gender stereotypes (Ding, 2012); while boys are censored and correct themselves ceaselessly, to be a part of the "standard male" community(Pollack, 2006).

Masculinity sometimes can be toxic. However, there has been little attention to masculinity in Chinese education, and the factors influencing the generation's gender perceptions among young men of school age have not been well analyzed academically in China. Thus this study selects Generation Z college students, whose gender perceptions are at the stage of perfection and maturity, as the target population to discuss the following research questions.

Q1: Do the men of Generation Z still abide by the perception of hegemonic masculinity? If not, what perceptions of masculinity have they developed?

Q2: What are the gender perceptions promoted by educational settings such as schools and families, and to what extent are the men of Gen Z influenced by them?

Q3: How do they perceive the media images of masculinity that rebel against tradition? To what extent do these images influence the construction of their masculinity?

## Theoretical framework

Based on masculinity research discussed above, the study begins with education (including family and school education), self-reflection and media influence, which are important sources of influence in the socialization process of masculinity. The study leads interviewees to retrospect and narrate in four aspects of Cornell's masculinity classification framework, as shown in below.

Table 1 Theoretical framework of masculinity construction

	Education		Self-reflection	Media influence
	Family	School		
<b>Personal character and hobbies shaping</b> (strength or gentleness, to meet the masculinity people expect)				
<b>Need for hegemony</b> (aggressiveness, initiative, competitiveness, etc)				
<b>Resistance of subordination</b> (cater to mainstream, refuse the loss, etc )				
<b>Systematic dominance over women</b> (matrimony, family, etc)				

In *The End Of Masculinity*, MacInnes used Benedict Anderson's notion of Imagined Communities, pointing out that masculinity can be understood as the last ideological defense of male supremacy, and used to confirm similar identities (MacInnes, 1998). Identification, an important issue in masculinity study, is separated into three parts: the gender identity of the boy at a young age, social identity in shaping masculinity, and multicultural identity (Jiang and Lv, 2012). According to the sources of influence above, the research estimates masculinity to be influenced by three primary elements during male growing, as seen in below.

Table 2 Classification table of masculinity estimation

<b>Factor</b>	Consciousness enlightenment	Social cognition/ Self-recognition	Media influence
<b>Category</b>	Ideal masculinity	Masculinity in real life/ Self-masculinity	Masculinity presented by media

## Method and Materials

The research mainly adopts qualitative research methods, using a questionnaire to collect basic information about the interviewees in advance, then conducts in-depth interviews with the interviewees within 25-40 minutes online.

Research takes 12 male students from different universities and different grades as a sample. Before the in-depth interview, a questionnaire about basic information, as well as four basic questions about the in-depth interview for interviewees, are provided to the interviewees. This questionnaire can establish interviewees' understanding of the research structure in advance. The researchers can also ask questions according to their answers.

Table 3 Basic information of the interviewees

No.	Name Initials	Grade	Masculine degree	The pursuit for power and status	How well the interviewees fit into the mainstream male image	The level of introspection gender issues
01	CJT	Junior	Manly	A little	Fit basically	Sometimes
02	CPP	Juniors	Neutral	Strong	Fit basically	Often
03	GDL	Freshman	Neutral	Some	Fit basically	Sometimes
04	HZ	Senior	Neutral	A little	A slight correlation	Seldom
05	LZM	Sophomore	Neutral	Some	Some correlations	Seldom
06	WWT	Junior	Neutral	Some	Fit basically	Often
07	WZH	Freshman	Neutral	A little	Some correlations	Often
08	WZY	Sophomore	Neutral	Some	Fit basically	Often
09	YHK	Sophomore	Neutral	Some	Fit basically	Often
10	YZF	Junior	Neutral	Some	Some correlations	Always
11	ZSQ	Senior	Manly	Strong	Some correlations	Seldom
12	ZZ	Freshman	Neutral	A little	A slight correlation	Sometimes

The interview was recorded in strict accordance with the academic confidentiality agreement and informed by the interviewee. The recordings were transcribed by the researchers and analyzed by Nvivo11.0 qualitative analysis software. The coding researchers had gone through strict coding training in advance. Based on the two core nodes of masculinity shaping and perception, the meaningful statements in each interview are coded according to the above framework. Through continuous adjustment and integration, the sub-nodes are connected to the corresponding tree nodes, and 279 reference nodes are formed.

## Results and Discussion

- The perception of masculinity: a new interpretation abandoning hegemony

Through Nvivo analysis, we extract the interviewees' keywords of their ideal masculinity. In order of frequency, these words are: conscientious (11), physically attractive (7), good-looking (3), academically excellent (3), up-and-coming (2), which are gender-neutral. During Gen Z's cognitive progress, they abandon the stereotype of gender and focus on becoming fully-developed people.

During the preliminary interviews of twelve interviewees, ten chose "neutral" when they rated their masculine. On the one hand, it reflects that the interviewees show conservative and moderate tendencies in self-assessment. On the other hand, it reflects that Gen Z, represented by the interviewees, gets more comprehensive information in forming a mature gender cognition.

*HZ: "Education is diverse. Sometimes pursue "Yanggang", such as self-sacrificing and giving, but it also combines cautious and caring for life. Two different kinds can balance in one person, and that person is likely to be neutral and won't go extreme."*

"Yanggang" is not always regarded as a commendation but is sometimes used as a synonym for toughness and recklessness. The meaning of "Yinrou", once being negative when describing a man, has also been extended to refer to good characteristics such as flexibility, sensitivity and love, which are more needed in society. The two words are not opposite.

*YZF: "On matters that hit my bottom line, I will show a tougher attitude and criticize them sharply; but in some interpersonal relationships, even if there is a conflict, I still hope to solve it as peacefully as possible."*

The hegemonic masculinity associated with the traditional male image of "Yanggang" is manifested as taking positions of responsibility and holding power in life. The interviewees express they don't care about the power and won't pursue it on purpose. However, if there is something they are good at and willing to do, or if others allow them to be in a higher position, they will not reject power and will gladly accept it and work as well as possible.

Abandoning hegemony does not mean limiting masculinity. After getting rid of the stereotypical masculinity, Gen Z represents more mature and well-developed people. Conscientiousness is the trait most often mentioned when describing the ideal male image. Power and responsibility are generally regarded as dialectical things. Abandoning hegemony does not mean giving up responsibility, but a choice based on reality and one's own sober thinking and assessment.

The interviewees also have a different understanding of power. Some of them enjoy exercising and propose matching strength and shape in the fitness process, while some interviewees suggest that strength can also be equated with knowledge, which is the power they are more willing to pursue.

*ZSQ: "In English, the word power also refers to 'knowledge'. I will go after knowledge, hoping to get in touch with more wisdom accumulated by human beings."*

The interviewees also have different perceptions of gender issues. Some interviewees are aware of sexism, including the motherhood penalty, employment discrimination, slut-shaming, marriage system and other issues.

*ZZ: "Sex equivalence will always be an important issue, and the inequality is hard to notice. My mother is hard-working when taking the initiative to do all the chores, but she has not ever realized that the work should be shared. I have noticed that, but it is difficult to solve."*

- The construction of masculinity: peer pressure and the absence of systematic education

Interviewees often mention their own experiences of spending time with their parents and siblings, observing them in family life when it comes to family's influence on shaping gender perceptions. The characteristics and ways of doing things of their parents, parents' different attitudes and expectations



towards different children, and the behavioral trait represented by these interactions will be major factors affecting the masculinity of the interviewees.

*ZZ: "The softer part of my personality is influenced by my parents, who are peaceful and gentle. I am similar to them when communicating with others. "*

*YHK: "I also have a sister, so my parents hope I am brave and responsible. "*

Parents' education mode also plays a great role as children's participation in the family is not limited to observation. Some mentioned the impact of domestic violence on personal development:

*GDL: "My dad is filial, so do I, and I am influenced by him. I was naughty when I was a child, so I was hit by my dad very often. I know he loves me, but his behavior is a little extreme, which has affected my personality to a great extent. I feel inferior and timid. "*

Interviewees seldom mention family education with explicit information, and they also mention more education without gender differences, such as conscientiousness and caring for others. It is consistent with their ideal masculinity.

*CJT: "My mom told me not to be sloppy and unshaven, but to be a tidy man. She also taught me to respect women. I think it was the most important influence on me. "*

The family also indirectly shapes their perspectives of gender equality. The interviewees with less preference for boys in their families are insensitive to gender issues; others who can feel the injustice of marriage to women in their family life are more sensitive to gender issues and have a stronger sense of introspection.

*WWT: "I have an elder brother. When my parents decided to have a second child, they wanted me to be a girl. I don't think there is any sexism in our family. "*

*YZF: "My mother is actually a victim of marriage, but she often says some unbelievable proverbs like 'faithful to husband no matter what his lot is', and I can't accept it. She can be regarded as a negative example to let me think about how to prevent women from being treated unfairly or poisoned. "*

Many interviewees mention the influence of books and films on their values, which is a kind of self-socialization.

*LZM: "Reading and watching TV programs have a great impact on me. My first extracurricular book was about ancient Chinese history, and the binary values of "gentleman" and "villain" had a great influence on me when I was a child. In addition, my primary school loves to watch the Lecture Room (a television lecture room column popular in China ), which also talks about a lot of Confucian ideas. Although the current values are not as simple and extreme as they used to be, these things still have a long-term impact on some of my personality traits, such as compassion and humility. "*

School education is similar to family education. On the one hand, the characteristics of subjects and the ways of communication with teachers and classmates in learning greatly affect the self-development of interviewees.

*WZY: "Learning science requires me to calm down, and I gradually become mature. "*

*WZH: "My teachers have changed me a lot, especially the ways they handle things affect me about how to get along with others, such as how to treat their students and adjust their mentality. "*

But on the other hand, many interviewees think that current exam-oriented education leads to the hegemonic value orientation.

*CPP: "Education leads to competition. Scores are used to measure what kind of status a person can achieve and what he can get. "*

There is also a lack of a broader, systematic communication and education model to discuss gender issues.

*CJT: "School education does not pay attention to gender issues, even reverse guidance will be carried out, that is, not asking children to think about gender equality, but let boys and girls do the so-called 'what they should do'."*

While the consciousness of "hegemony" no longer occupies a place in Generation Z's self-consciousness, education still presents a collusive move toward hegemonic masculinity. Most interviewees say their education did not place too much emphasis on power, but some recalled the need to "go for the top."

*YZF: "My mother is relatively aggressive. She believes that if a person wants to stand out, he must be in a high position. But my father is easy-going. The only thing he asks me to do is to take the initiative to show myself. Personally, if there is something I particularly want to express, I will take the initiative to express it."*

- The influence of the masculinity: the rupture between media environment and reality cognition

Even after the rebellion and reinterpretation of hegemonic masculinity, the need to fit in can still cause pressure on young men. Some interviewees admit that they will make changes within their comfort zone to cater to society's demands.

*WZY: "I have some anxiety about whether I can be accepted by the mainstream. Living in such a context, maverick will bring some unnecessary troubles to life. I don't think it is meaningful for someone to make himself tired to let others accept him. I'd like to make some small changes to myself within my reach. "*

Mainstream society puts many expectations on men, which is a massive pressure. Interviewees who have experienced this pressure believe that they are affected and even changed by it. However, through the interviews, we can also find that many of the mainstream requirements they mentioned change with time. For example, boys in primary school would fight with classmates to show their strength and integrate into the group.

*WZH: "I went to school in the suburb when I was a child. My classmates liked to fight. I didn't dare to get into trouble, but I had to follow them to get along with them. If I didn't do so, I would be alone, which would make me very uncomfortable. "*

However, if define "mainstream" as "gaining the most attention on mass media", twelve interviewees invariably refer to "mainstream image" as the celebrities who gain the most attention namely "Little Fresh Meat" (hunky young boys) on the internet. Most interviewees show a clear negative or even abhorrent attitude towards "Little Fresh Meat".

*HZ: " In front of the screen, they are more like commodities. Their charm and life value cannot be fully understood by others, and cannot reflect their real personal image in their own life. "*

Talking about reasons, many interviewees suggest that "Little Fresh Meat" is just commodities in the media industry. The real personality is hidden behind the screen, and the "perfect image" shown to the public is just a tool of the company to get people's attention and make profits. In the long run, it will harm the media environment and economic environment.

*WZY: "The audience of these male idols is mostly female. For the operating companies behind them, revenue is the most important. These companies will not make good TV dramas or music because their purpose is to make money. "*

The aversion to the image of "Little Fresh Meat" is more about examining a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of media criticism, while some interviewees express their love and preference for this image.

*YHK: "Such people are more in line with my expectations for masculinity. I like their image, and I will be closer to this image when I dress up. "*

Some interviewees say that different male images coexist in the media environment. Besides idols, there are also male images with strong and healthy bodies, tough guys and positive energy groups (such as volunteers, medical staff and scholars). If their understanding of media images is more comprehensive, they will have higher acceptance of different male images and are more likely to have a deeper understanding and cognition of these. They will not be easily affected by the "pseudo environment" created by media.

*ZZ: "One is the image of a tough man, such as a soldier. The other is the image of the idol in the talent show. Now more and more images appear and are accepted. I think it is a good thing. If there are only similar images, stereotypes will be built easily. "*

In addition, Generation Z is also more likely to construct their perceptions of gender issues from the Internet. They also believe that gender discrimination does not exist in their own lives, or they tend to ignore these phenomena. Their cognition of gender inequality mostly comes from hot events on the Internet, such as speeches by KOL (key opinion leader), and verbal battles. To a large extent, these events affect their cognition of gender equality movements. However, because they are bystanders of the movements, so the movements don't have a real impact on them. Therefore, they favor neither side and are more willing to take a neutral attitude. But they are resistant to the current fierce voice for women's rights. Most of their thoughts are from the perspective of onlookers. Due to the lack of consideration of such issues, there is often logical and conceptual confusion in their expressions.

*WWT: "I read them online, and my attitude is relatively objective. It would be foolish to provoke confrontation between the sexes directly on the Internet."*

In general, because family, school and society ignore gender issues, Generation Z males lack correct guidance in cognizing gender issues. Their recognition of gender issues depends on their personal experience and information on the Internet. The space of "vacuum" about gender issues, in reality, makes the network become the largest influence in shaping gender recognition.

### **Conclusion: The complexity of masculinity construction**

Education was once blamed for the decline of masculinity. In 2010, Sun Yunxiao, the former deputy director of China Youth and Children Research Center, said in his book *Saving Boys* that boys have four kinds of crisis: academic, physical, psychological and social, and the exam-oriented education centered on entrance examination is the primary cause of severely distorting boys' characteristic.

However, after the rapid development of social media, the growth of Generation Z is influenced by multiple environmental factors. In such an environment where media and reality are intertwined, Gen Z men describe themselves more as "neutral" people; they have a more comprehensive understanding of power and strength and abandoned the traditional concept of "hegemony"; in terms of their perception of themselves, they do not conform gender stereotypes as mainstream, but focus more on overall development; they rethink gender discrimination and maintain a neutral attitude in affirmative action movements. Generation Z's understanding of masculinity is currently demonstrating a trend of de-gendering. With a vague definition of gender, it is irresponsible for today's education to blindly pursue "Yanggang" and interfere with the physical and mental growth of youth.

There is a gap between the mainstream male image presented in the media and the male image people glorify in reality. Without putting themselves in their position, public opinion has a significant impact on their perceptions of gender discrimination.

Family, school, self-direction, and the media environment all play a key role in the construction of gender consciousness among Generation Z. On the one hand, campus educators must promote the expression of masculinity so that peer pressure will not become a burden on students' gender perceptions and constructions, as well as build a healthy and inclusive community with psychological counseling help for them when needed. On the other hand, to prevent the existing fragmented perception of masculinity among mainstream voices, youth groups and the media, society should be more open to more abundant gender identification.

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## **An intersectional approach to understanding military members' experience of microaggressions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Jennifer M. Peach<sup>1</sup>, Manon Mireille LeBlanc<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, Department of National Defence, Canada,

<sup>2</sup>. Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, Department of National Defence, Canada,

### **Abstract**

*Using an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989) this paper examines the microaggression experiences of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members by examining the experiences of women and men within racial groups. We define microaggressions as common verbal or behavioural indignities that are often based on a stereotype about, or a bias against, members of a group (Sue et al., 2007). We predicted that members who are from historically disadvantaged racial groups within Canada (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and racialized members who are not Black or Indigenous) would experience more microaggressions than white members. We also expected that women, a group underrepresented in the CAF, would experience more microaggressions than men. From an intersectional perspective, we predicted that racialized women (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and racialized women who are not black or Indigenous) would experience the most microaggressions. Members of the Regular Force (n = 4,715) completed the CAF Harassment and Discrimination Survey between October and December 2020. As part of the survey, members completed a one-item measure that asked if they had experienced microaggressions while working in the past 12 months. They also completed two scales about their experiences of microaggressions in the six months prior to COVID-19 restrictions and during the first six months of COVID-19 restrictions. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a chi-square analysis and ANOVAs. In total, 14% of members reported experiencing at least one incident of microaggression in the past 12 months. Members reported more microaggression experiences pre-pandemic than during the pandemic. As hypothesized, women who were Black, Indigenous, and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) experienced more microaggressions than white women, and the same was true for men. Indigenous women experienced more microaggressions than Indigenous men, and white women experienced more microaggressions than white men. On the microaggression scales (both pre and during the pandemic), Black members experienced the most microaggressions, and white members experienced the least. These findings suggest it is important to consider multiple facets of military members' identity when understanding their experience of microaggression.*

(Word count: 329/350)

**Keywords:** military, gender, microaggressions, race

### **Introduction**

Intersectionality acknowledges that people have multiple identities and reference groups, and that individuals' unique identities shape their experiences (Lee et al., 2022). The term intersectionality was first used by Crenshaw (1989) who described the unique discrimination that Black women experience based on their gender and race. She argued that this discrimination was not reflected in either a feminist perspective or an anti-racist perspective but required an intersectional approach that acknowledged the impact of multiple types of oppression on marginalized members of society.

Qualitative research conducted with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members suggests that military members' intersectional identities shape their experiences of oppression. Brown (2020) conducted interviews and focus groups with CAF members undergoing senior officer professional training and found that military culture privileges masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality, and combat warrior identities. George (2020) conducted interviews with racialized women who were either current or retired CAF members and found that Black and racialized women experienced racism and sexism that was rooted in their intersectional identities. Her work suggests that different stereotypes about Black, Indigenous, and racialized women can manifest in different experiences for members of these groups. George argues the military warrior is socially constructed as stereotypically male, and thus excludes those outside of the masculine warrior norm (e.g., women). She describes the "white settler" mythology, which suggests white European settlers are entitled to Canadian land and power and excludes Indigenous peoples and racialized Canadians. She argues that, much like Canadian society, the CAF has a culture of colour blindness that denies the existence of racism.

Based on the qualitative research findings of Brown (2020) and George (2020), we believe that military members' marginalized status can be communicated to them through everyday microaggressions. Microaggressions are "commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 278). They are rooted in historical marginalization of groups and serve to remind members of their second-class citizenship (Sue et al., 2019). Since microaggressions are rooted in the historical injustices faced by members of marginalized groups, we use an intersectional approach to examine CAF members' experiences of microaggressions.

First, we hypothesized that women would experience more microaggressions than men, because their gender defines them as falling outside of the masculine warrior stereotype. Second, based on the "white settler" mythology, we hypothesized that Black, Indigenous, and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) military members will experience more microaggressions than white military members. Third, based on Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, we hypothesize that Black, Indigenous, and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) women will experience the most microaggressions. Fourth, since microaggressions often contain a non-verbal component, and are thus likely more difficult to communicate in a virtual environment, we hypothesized that CAF members would report experiencing more microaggressions before COVID-19 restrictions were in place than during the first six months of COVID-19 restrictions (when many members worked remotely). We also examined survey comments that mentioned microaggressions to provide context for these results.

## **Method**

This paper includes secondary analyses of the Canadian Armed Forces Harassment and Discrimination Survey (CAFHDS; LeBlanc & Peach, under review), which included measures that are not reported here. Participants were 4,715 Regular Force members who completed the CAFHDS online between 21 October and 15 December 2020 (36.2% response rate). In terms of age, 16.1% of participants were under 30, 36.2% were 30-39, 30.5% were 40-49, and 16.4% were 50 years and older. In terms of years of service, 15.9% of participants had 0-5 years of service, 17.7% had 6-10, 22.3% had 11-15, 17.0% had 16-20, 11.3% had 21-25, and 15.1% had 26 or more years of service. The sample included roughly even numbers of women and men (56.9% men, 40.6% women), which over-represents women compared to the Regular Force population (15.8% women; CAF Employment Equity (EE) statistics, 2021). Although participants were provided with the opportunity to indicate they were gender diverse or two-spirit, there were too few responses (< 1%,  $n = 30$ ) to include gender diverse/two spirit as a gender category in the analyses.

Participants were asked to identify all the racial and ethnic groups that they belonged to. This item was modified from the National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2013). Their responses were recoded into the following categories: Indigenous (response options: *First Nations, Indigenous, Inuit, and Metis*), Black (response option: *Black*), racialized but not Black or Indigenous (response options: *Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Non-White Latin American, South Asian/East Indian, Southeast Asian, Non-White West Asian, North African, Arab, and persons of mixed origin*), and white (response option: *white*). Overall, 5.1% of the sample were Black, 8.3% were Indigenous, 17.8% were racialized (but not Black or Indigenous), 59.3% were white, and 9.5% did not indicate their race. Black, Indigenous, and racialized members were over-represented in this sample compared to their proportions in the Regular Force population (2.9% Indigenous and 8.8% visible minorities [which includes Black]; CAF EE statistics, 2021).

Microaggressions were measured in two ways. First, participants completed a one-item frequency measure (“Did you experience microaggression from a CAF/DND employee or contractor in the past 12 months?”). Responses were recoded to indicate that microaggressions had never occurred in the past 12 months or had occurred (response options: *once in the past 12 months, 2-6 times in the past 12 months, 7-11 times in the past 12 months, once or twice a month, once a week, and once a day*). Second, participants completed the four-item microaggression experience scales twice, on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very frequently*). They completed the same items with reference to the six months prior to the start of COVID-19 restrictions in Canada (labelled *pre-pandemic* in this paper,  $\alpha = .866$ ) and the first six months of COVID-19 restrictions (labelled *during the pandemic* in this paper,  $\alpha = .896$ ). Items were modified from the Microaggressions and Work Scale (Resnick & Galupo, 2019, see the appendix for the items used in this survey). A one-factor model fit these items well with the addition of correlated error terms (*pre-pandemic*,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.163$ ,  $p = .023$ , CFI = .998, TLI = .991, RMSEA = .054 (.016-.103), SRMR = .0083; *during the pandemic*,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.591$ ,  $p = .032$ , CFI = .999, TLI = .994, RMSEA = .050 (.012-.100), SRMR = .0055).

In total, 980 of the 4,715 participants provided open-ended responses, and 47 (5%) contained the term “microaggression.” These comments were examined for emerging themes separately by gender and race.

## **Results and Discussion**

When examining the overall frequency of microaggressions, we weighted responses by designated group membership (persons with disabilities, Indigenous members, visible minorities, and gender [i.e., women and men who did not belong to an aforementioned group]), command organization (Royal Canadian Air Force, Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy, Military Personnel Command, and all other organizations), and rank (junior non-commissioned members (NCMs), senior NCMs, junior officers, and senior officers). In total, 14% of Regular Force members reported experiencing at least one incident of microaggression in the past 12 months. Our population data included visible minority (i.e., all members who identified as not Caucasian/white) but did not include more detailed information about race, which meant we could not accurately weight responses by racial group. Therefore, the rest of the analyses presented in this paper are not weighted.

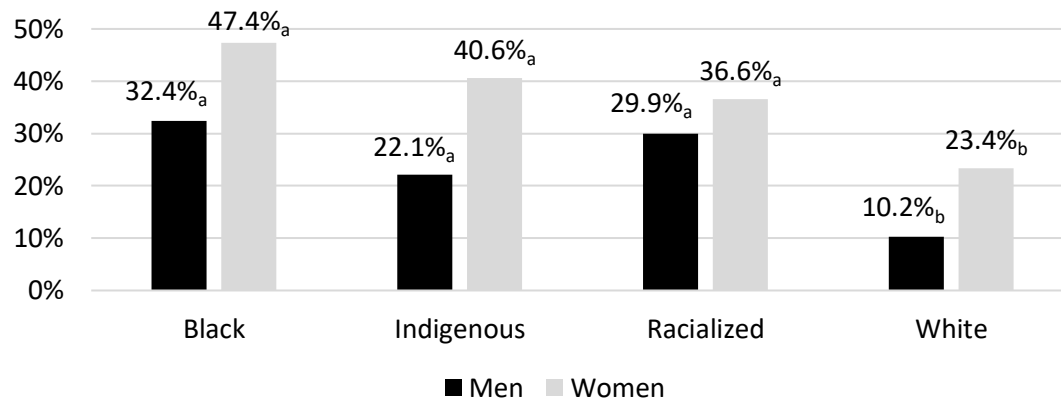
To examine intersectional differences in the one-item measure of microaggression, we conducted a 2 (gender: men and women) X 4 (race: Black, Indigenous, racialized but not Black or Indigenous, white) chi-square analysis. We conducted the analysis twice to compare racial differences within each gender, and gender differences within each racial group. Figure 1 examines race and gender differences in the prevalence of microaggressions in the past 12 months. Hypothesis 1 was supported — there was a gender difference in the prevalence of microaggressions,  $\chi^2(3) = 113.383$ ,  $p = .0001$ , with women ( $M = 26.5\%$ ) reporting more microaggression experiences than men ( $M = 18.2\%$ ). Hypothesis 2 was also supported —



there was a significant racial difference among women,  $\chi^2(3) = 37.553, p = .001$ . Follow-up comparisons (using a Bonferroni correction to the significance level) found that women who were Black ( $M = 47.4\%$ ), Indigenous, ( $M = 40.6\%$ ) and racialized but not Black or Indigenous ( $M = 36.6\%$ ) reported higher rates of microaggressions than white women ( $M = 23.4\%$ ). There was also a significant racial difference among men,  $\chi^2(3) = 141.615, p = .0001$ . Men who were Black ( $M = 32.4\%$ ), Indigenous ( $M = 22.1\%$ ), and racialized but not Black or Indigenous ( $M = 29.9\%$ ) reported higher rates of microaggressions than white men ( $M = 10.2\%$ ).

When we examined intersectional differences in the frequency of microaggressions, hypothesis 3 was supported— there was a significant gender difference among racial groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 42.407, p = .0001$ . Follow-up comparisons (using a Bonferroni correction) found that Indigenous women experienced more microaggression than Indigenous men,  $\chi^2(1) = 13.562, p = .0001$ , and white women experienced more microaggression than white men,  $\chi^2(1) = 84.878, p = .0001$ .

Figure 1: Intersectional (gender by race) analysis of prevalence of microaggression



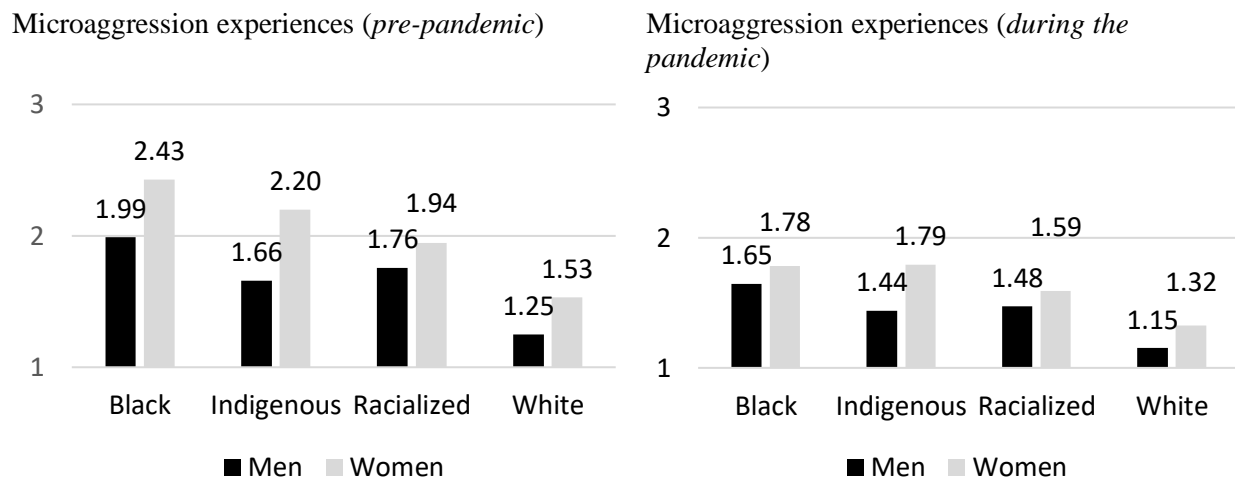
We then examined participants' experiences of microaggressions using a repeated-measures ANOVA (*pre-pandemic* and *during the pandemic* experience of microaggression). We report partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) as a measure of effect size associated with ANOVA (small = .01, medium = .09, large = .25; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Hypothesis 4 was supported — members experienced more microaggressions *pre-pandemic* ( $M = 1.56, SD = 1.09$ ) than *during the pandemic* ( $M = 1.36, SD = .91$ ), Wilk's Lambda = .905,  $F(1, 4144) = 433.329, p < .001$ , and this was a medium effect size, partial  $\eta^2 = .095$ . Since participants reported their experience of microaggression *pre-pandemic* and *during the pandemic* at the same time (i.e., in the same survey), memory biases may have skewed these results.

We found that most respondents reported low levels on all the experiences of microaggression items, and thus the scales (both *pre-pandemic* and *during the pandemic*) were not normally distributed (skewness(*pre-pandemic*) = 2.45, skewness (*during the pandemic*) = 3.44, kurtosis(*pre-pandemic*) = 6.13, kurtosis (*during the pandemic*) = 13.05). The cell sizes were also uneven, so we did not conduct a mixed-measures ANOVA and instead conducted separate 2 (gender: women and men) X 4 (race: Black, Indigenous, racialized but not Black or Indigenous, white) ANOVAs for the scales that measured *pre-pandemic* and *during the pandemic* experiences of microaggression. *Pre-pandemic*, there was a significant effect for gender (supporting hypothesis 1) and race (supporting hypothesis 2), but no significant interaction (a lack of support for hypothesis 3). *Pre-pandemic*, women ( $M = 1.64$ ) experienced more microaggressions than men ( $M = 1.48$ ),  $F(1, 3904) = 35.708, p < .001$ , although the effect size was small, partial  $\eta^2 = .009$ . There were also race differences in experience of microaggressions,  $F(3, 3904) = 64.312, p < .001, \eta^2 = .047$  (a small effect size). A post-hoc test with Bonferroni correction found that Black members ( $M = 2.07$ ) experienced more microaggressions than Indigenous members ( $M = 1.84$ ), racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) members

( $M = 1.80$ ), and white members ( $M = 1.39$ ). Indigenous and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) members also experienced more microaggressions than white members.

Microaggressions experienced *during the pandemic* showed the same pattern of results. Specifically, there was a significant effect for gender and race (supporting hypothesis 1 and 2), but no significant interaction (not supporting hypothesis 3). *During the pandemic*, women ( $M = 1.40$ ) experienced more microaggressions than men ( $M = 1.30$ ),  $F(1, 3792) = 14.336$ ,  $p < .001$ , although it was a small effect size, partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ . There were race differences in experience of microaggressions,  $F(3, 3792) = 37.332$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .029$  (a small effect size). Black members ( $M = 1.67$ ) experienced more microaggressions than racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) members ( $M = 1.50$ ), and white members ( $M = 1.24$ ). Indigenous ( $M = 1.56$ ) and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) members also experienced more microaggressions than white members. Thus, although hypotheses 1 (gender differences) and 2 (race differences) were supported, we did not find support for our intersectional hypothesis (hypothesis 3).

Figure 2: Intersectional differences in microaggression experiences



Although few participants provided open-ended comments that contained the term microaggression, some participants provided examples reflecting their intersectional experiences. One racialized woman couldn't determine if her treatment was a microaggression; "As an Asian junior officer, previously NCM, I am frequently treated like a child or questioned... is this due to me looking young? The stereotype of submission? Because of my rank? Or my supervisors being socially awkward individuals? Hard to say..." One Black woman described how she has adapted her behavior to disprove the stereotype that she is pushy:

*"...as a black woman, I must have attitude or be "stubborn" or whatever. [BS] but these comments and bias have cost me in my career (especially early) and now I consciously act in a way to ensure, to the best of my ability, that others do not have evidence to infer that I have attitude because it will cost me... I honestly go the extra mile here by talking in a certain tone and being EXTRA polite etc."*

One racialized woman described being repeatedly asked to participate in recruitment photos because of her race and gender, decreasing her ability to work, which is consistent with being treated as a visible token by the CAF.

## **Limitations**

First, we conducted multiple comparisons, which could increase the family-wise error rate (i.e., our chance of finding a significant difference when no difference exists in the population). We corrected for this using a Bonferroni correction when conducting both the chi-square analyses and the ANOVAs. Second, although we found a difference between participants' experience of microaggressions in the six months prior to COVID-19 restrictions and during the first six months of COVID-19 restrictions, these reports were collected at the same time. Thus, a memory bias may have influenced these results. Third, experiences of microaggression were skewed, which may impact the statistical significance of the ANOVA test. Fourth, some of our effect sizes were small.

## **Conclusion**

We found that 14% of Regular Force members reported being the target of a microaggression in the past 12 months. Consistent with Brown (2020) and George (2020), who found that the CAF has a masculinized culture, our results showed that women experienced more microaggressions than men. Consistent with George (2020), who found that the CAF culture privileges whiteness, our results showed that Black, Indigenous, and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) CAF members experienced more microaggressions than white CAF members. We found mixed evidence for our intersectional hypothesis that Black, Indigenous, and racialized women would experience the most microaggressions. This pattern was found on the one-item measure of microaggressions but was not significant when assessed with four items measuring their experience of microaggressions before or during the COVID-19 restrictions. It is possible that defining and explicitly mentioning microaggressions in the one-item measure made the construct of microaggressions more salient to participants. It is also possible that the four items chosen did not reflect the types of microaggressions that Black, Indigenous, and racialized (but not Black or Indigenous) women face in the CAF. Consistent with our hypothesis that microaggressions are more likely to occur during in-person interactions, members reported higher rates of microaggressions in the six months prior to the COVID-19 restrictions than the first six months of the COVID-19 restrictions. Overall, these results suggest that CAF members do report experiencing microaggressions, and there is benefit to examining experiences of microaggression from an intersectional perspective.

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## Appendix

### Frequency of microaggression measure

Microaggression is defined as: Subtle comments or actions that communicate offensive or negative messages to individuals based on their group identity. Although anyone can experience a microaggression, individuals who belong to non-dominant groups are more likely to experience them. Microaggressions are often based on a stereotype about, or bias against, members of a group.

Based on the above definition, did you experience microaggression from a CAF member/DND employee or contractor in the past 12 months? Microaggression incidents can occur in-person, on the phone, or virtually (e.g., chat, e-mail, virtual meetings).

Never

Once in the past 12 months

About 2 to 6 times in the past 12 months

About 7 to 11 times in the past 12 months

About once or twice a month

About once a week

About once a day

### Microaggression experience scale

Using the scale provided, please indicate how frequently you experienced the following behaviours from individuals you work with (e.g., supervisors, peers, subordinates) in the **SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC (13 September 2019 to 13 March 2020)**.

Using the scale provided, please indicate how frequently you experienced the following behaviours from individuals you work with (e.g., supervisors, peers, subordinates) **IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS**.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Hardly ever	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Very frequently

1. Told you that you do not conform to traditional stereotypes about your group identity
2. Asked you to provide an opinion on behalf of other members of your group identity
3. Told jokes about your group identity
4. Treated you as a token because of your group identity

## **Tale as Old as Time: A Character and Gender Content Analysis of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Beauty and the Beast* Live Action (2017)**

Hannah G. Scheffer-Wentz

*Independent Scholar*

### **Abstract**

*As a leading conglomerate in media, Disney captures the attention of millions not only with their classic cinema, but with their new releases now available through Disney+. This study is a qualitative character and gender content comparative analysis of Disney's original animated *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and the Live Action *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). The aim of this research is to identify the similarities and differences between Belle and the Beast in their roles, gender depiction, and development between the two films. This study utilizes a mixed method approach to character analysis through comparing roles, motivations, actions, traits, relationships, development, and dialogue, as well as content analysis of traditional male and female gender traits.*

**Key Words:** *Gender, Media, Disney*

### **Introduction**

Disney has stirred nostalgia with the release of the Live Action films, a collection which has reimagined some of Disney's most classic animations. The Disney Princess Line, one of the highest grossing and longest running collections of animated Disney films (England et al., 2011; Xu, 2021), has been the showcase for these new takes on classic narratives. The Live Action releases have prompted scholastic inquiry on the motivations of Disney's branding with the deliberate choices through the consistencies and alterations displayed in the Live Action films (Houwens, 2017; Kunze, 2021; Kusumajanti et al., 2020; Olson, 2013; Sculos, 2017; Zirger, 2020). Due to their long-standing history with animation, Disney faces a unique challenge in revitalizing classic stories while balancing traditional and modern audience expectations (Scheffer-Wentz, 2020). While previous research has been conducted on Disney, the Princess Line, and comparisons of Live Action films (Houwens, 2017; Kunze, 2021), there has yet to be research analyzing the direct parallels of character development and gender representation in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). This study aims to explore the prominent similarities and differences between Belle and the Beast in the 1991 classic animation and the 2017 Live Action remake through character and gender content analysis.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Disney**

Disney has considerable ownership and influence as one of the Big 6 media companies that control over 90% of media output in the United States (McChesney, 2000). With their long running history and profit through children's animation films (England et al., 2011; Xu, 2021), their impact is amplified through the release of Disney+ (Sturgill, 2019). Disney has had their fair share of critiques regarding beauty standards (Sultan, 2016; Tan, 2022), ethnic diversity (Benhamou, 2014; Blankestijn, 2015; Matyas, 2010),

and the negative impacts on young audiences (Arnold et. al, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Little, 2021; Pawłowska, 2021; Sultan, 2016).

### **Live Action Comparative Analyses**

Previous studies have compared the *Beauty and the Beast* Live Action to other Live Action remakes such as *Cinderella* (Houwens, 2017) and *Aladdin* (Zirger, 2020), suggesting that they challenge the social construct of gender, evolution in character development, and progressive representations in effort to appeal to various audiences. Disney's challenge in balancing traditional and modern audiences (Scheffer-Wentz, 2020) was further explored through the lens of Gender and Feminist Theory, indicating more attention is needed regarding LGBTQ+ rights and representations of this generation's evolving ideologies (Kunze, 2021).

### ***Beauty and the Beast* Analyses**

The implications of media representations through Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1992) provides the foundation of concern for representations to young audiences. The plot of *Beauty and the Beast* has presented social concern for some scholars. Olsen (2013) argues this propels the tolerance of intimate partner violence, toxic relationships, and domestic abuse to children. "Disney is not the only community narrator circulating conservative lessons on romanticizing partner violence, but it does tailor these messages to massive inter-generational audiences including children hungry to learn appropriate conventions" (Olsen, 2013). Further, elements of Stockholm Syndrome exemplify unhealthy relationships that are accepted in the plot. Finally, scholars have voiced critique with the implications of toxic masculinity and hegemony, concluding that the Beast showed consistent "bad-tempered, rude, and emotional" behaviors between the two films (Surabaya, 2020). Combined with the continuing narrative of "winning a girl's heart", and "beauty is what makes her the best" scholars continue to question the implicit messages and values that are presented to children (Sculos, 2017).

While previous literature has been conducted on Disney, the Live Action films, and comparisons of the *Beauty and the Beast* films, there is a gap addressing the overall character development and gender representations of Belle and the Beast. This study's mixed method provides a holistic view on the complexities of character and gender traits through the motivations of Disney's modern branding.

**Research Question 1: What similarities and differences of character and gender depictions are presented by Belle in the 1991 and 2017 films?**

**Research Question 2: What similarities and differences of character and gender depictions are presented by the Beast in the 1991 and 2017 films?**

### **Methodology**

To effectively answer the questions driving this study, a mixed method approach is vital. Character analysis, coined by Carl Jung with his work on psychological personality and later adapted to literary and media analysis, looks at multiple elements that contribute to a character's traits and identity. A single trained coder will obtain the transcripts from both films. First, a comparative character analysis will be conducted on Belle and the Beast analyzing Role of Character, Motivation, Actions, Character Traits, Relationships, Development, and Dialogue in the two films. The second method implemented is content analysis. Well-known and used in many media analysis studies, this will be used to measure the level of Traditional Male and Female Traits in Belle and the Beast's verbal communication. Once the data is collected, this will be computed to an overall percentage of Traditional Male and Traditional Female Traits.

**Table 1: Content Analysis Categories and Operational Definitions**

<b>Traditional Female Traits (TFT)</b>	<b>Operational Definition:</b>
Apologetic Language	The excessive use of "I am sorry" or other submissive language when it is a reactionary response instead of a called response.
Dependent	Relying on someone else for safety, finances, or decision making.
Follower	Someone that responds to the direction of a leader, in action or attitude.
Gentle	Having or showing a mild, kind, or tender temperament or character.
Gets Rescued	The act of being rescued in a conflict that would have resulted in verbal or physical harm.
Helpful	Selflessness and readiness to come along someone else's needs for their benefit.
Initiates Physical Contact	The act of initiating physical contact with another, usually for affection or care.
Nurturing	The act of caring for and encouraging the growth or development of another.
Physically Weak	Being physically unable to complete a task set out to accomplish.
Submissive	Ready to conform to the authority or will of others; meekly obedient or passive.
<b>Traditional Male Traits (TMT)</b>	<b>Operational Definition:</b>
Anger	The strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.
Assertive	Having or showing a confident and forceful personality.
Avoids Physical Contact	The act of avoiding physical contact with another, usually in the spirit of affection or care.
Brave	Ready to face and endure danger or pain; showing courage.
Curiousity	A strong desire to know or learn something.
Dominant	To be important, powerful, or influential over another.
Independent	Free from outside control; not depending on another's authority.
Leader	The person who leads or commands a group, organization, or individual.
Physically Strong	Being physically able to complete a task set out to accomplish.
Resolved Conflict	Was able to successfully resolve conflict that was within the plot of the storyline.

## Analysis

### Role of the Character

Belle and the Beast have little difference in their roles as characters between the two films. The Beast is shown as an antagonist-turned-protagonist character. The Beast is cursed by an enchantress due to judging appearances rather than character and intention. A member of the socially elite, the orphan prince was left with the castle staff that raised him. The staff served as a repeated target of the Beast's verbal abuse and domestic violence. One main difference is the 2017 film doesn't show him internalizing as much animalistic behavior (sits down to eat with full spread of silverware, more conscientious of dress, superior vocal articulation and vernacular, etc.).

Belle was consistent as a protagonist, the stereotypical damsel in distress held hostage in the castle. She comes from a small village in France with low social status yet has the desire to emulate upper-class society through reading, traveling, and maintaining posture. She drives the direction of the plot through her involvement in the castle, the staff, her relationship with Maurice, her evolving relationship with the Beast, and eventually her part in breaking the curse. In both films, not only is she seen as the town's beauty, but the outcast of the community. Belle longs to have someone to connect with on a different level than her daily provincial interactions.

### Motivation

The Beast shows consistent motivation with his sole goal to break the curse that he brought upon himself through selfish actions. The curse tore away what mattered most to him, the status and confidence that came with his outward appearance. This curse is twofold; it requires not only the Beast earning another's affection by the merit of their character, but most importantly, it requires him to love someone other than himself. With both films, the Beast is faced with the wilting rose as a constant reminder that the clock is ticking. This is one of the few moments where somberness overcomes the Beast and the gravity of his situation. While breaking the curse, redeeming his physical appearance, and reclaiming status is his leading motivation, these efforts are clouded by his anger, shame and loneliness. This produces a secondary motivation of earning Belle's affection, which is desired and expressed at different points of each film's plot.



Belle wants to see the world and share her experiences with someone that loves her dream as much as she does. She feels trapped in a village that excludes her and doesn't understand her aspirations. She is not interested in the physical attraction of others if their character is faulty, as is shown through her rejection of Gaston. Belle is devoted to Maurice, his safety, and possesses true admiration for him. He is the only one in her social circle that truly understands her until the Beast evolves in his character. A main difference in motivation evident in the 2017 film, was Belle promising Maurice she would escape following multiple pre-meditated attempts despite the agreed exchange with the Beast.

### **Actions**

The Beast's actions are consistent in character between the two films. For example, his rejection of the rose from the traveler due to her appearance, domestic violence, throwing Maurice in jail, saving Belle from the wolves, and laying down his life for Belle in the final battle. However, there are a few notable differences between the films. The first is that the Beast didn't offer Belle a room or food after her imprisonment in the 2017 film. He wasn't considerate of her arrangements like he was in the 1991 film. His neglect is due to the fact he wasn't physically attracted nor saw her as a solution to break the curse initially. When suggested by the staff, he responded sharply "charm the prisoner, what a ridiculous idea!" (Condon, 2017). Instead of the library being a premeditated effort to gain Belle's affection in the 1991 film, the Beast introduced it to prove his point that there were "so much better things to read" (Condon, 2017) than romance in the 2017 film. The Beast held more composure in the 2017 film through his education, childhood, and status. Ultimately, it was vulnerable conversation, a shared love of literature, and their common identity as societal outcasts that brought them together.

Belle displayed strong agency by rejecting Gaston, retrieving Maurice, taking his place at the castle, attempting to escape, saving the Beast from the wolves, formulating a plan to break the curse, and infiltrating the final fight.

### **Character Traits**

In both films, the Beast displayed anger issues and projected it onto others. He had little consideration for those around him, including the staff that raised him and continued to defend his actions. Towards the end of the film, the Beast develops protective instincts toward Belle, specifically in the final battle where Gaston threatens to have Belle forever. The 2017 film showed a different side of the Beast, one that was more educated, proud, well-spoken, and uninterested in initially obtaining Belle's affection. Moreover, later in the film he showed humility by saying it would be "foolish to think a creature like me could earn your affection" (Condon, 2017). Most of their interactions included the Beast showing indifference to Belle's opinion with the desire to prove her wrong through his upbringing and expensive education. Finally, there is a rejection of his previous identity in the final fight stating "I am not a beast"(Condon, 2017).

While Belle's character maintains grace and elegance, Emma Watson shows a stronger side of her character in the 2017 film. While she still maintains her love for books, the outside world, traveling, and Maurice, there is evidence of more androgenous and masculine traits. For example, once she arrives at the castle, she picks up a large stick to protect herself from what she might meet, a classic fight response. This is evident again when Lumiere retrieves her from the tower, which resulted in him complimenting her on her strength shortly after getting a stool broken over his head. She is creative, an inventor, and a problem solver. She shows a self-sufficiency that isn't present in the original animation. Due to this, she leads a stronger role in the conflict resolution of the plot.

## **Relationships**

There is great consistency in the relationship aspect of the films since the plot is so similar. The Beast shows strained relationships not just with the castle staff through acting out, but also with his own intrapersonal communication and handling his anger. As he is isolated from the world due to his appearance, he lost a great deal of time wherein adolescents normally find their identity, fulfill social desires, and develop friendships. The Beast is only accustomed to pushing people away, until he meets Belle. The only notable difference between the films was the immediate attraction to Belle and winning her desire in the 1991 animation, and the slowly growing relationship that wasn't based on physical attraction but shared common interests and activities in the 2017 remake.

Ironically, even though she was not isolated from the world, Belle also had strained relationships in her town since she was so different from everyone else. In both films, she expressed the desire for someone with whom to converse and share her dreams. More pronounced in the 2017 remake was the context provided about her family which showed a deeper connection with family values, thus saving Maurice and imitating the characteristics of her late mother.

## **Development**

The Beast had clear development not just through the course of the plot but the representation of character with the 2017 film. In the new film, the Beast is an intellectual, self-respecting individual that values status and actions of others. He has a sense of morals and reveals disclosure from losing his mother and his abusive father. Most importantly, there is great substance between his and Belle's relationship. While he didn't fling himself to her because of her beauty like Gaston did, he found beauty in Belle through her person and mind. This is a parallel of how Belle saw the Beast, as their relationship grew from the love of literature, common interests, and shared experiences of being an outcast. Finally, the Beast rejected the internalization of the curse not only in how he held himself during interactions with others, but also when he rejected Gaston's accusations.

There was great change in Belle's character as well. Evolving from a more meek, soft-spoken, traditional heroine in the 1991 animation, Emma Watson managed to maintain the grace of the original character while introducing strong attributions like honor, bravery, problem solving, persuasive rhetoric, and decisiveness. She was not afraid to participate in the conflicts of the plot and do what was right based on her moral compass and family values. Not only did Belle like to read, she showed true intellect throughout the film with her laundry invention, memorization of poetry, mending wounds, picking locks, and planning escapes.

## **Dialogue**

Since this analysis includes two films where there is a near identical plot, there is little change in dialogue between characters, albeit there are new scenes that have been added to the 2017 film. For example, there was a substantial turning point in their relationship when Belle and the Beast traveled to her childhood home, the attic of a windmill. The Beast afforded her the opportunity to answer questions of her past, apologized for calling her father a thief, and found the commonality of their mother's passing due to illness. Another example is the Beast reading Guinevere and Lancelot, a story that Belle defined as a romance. This led to disclosure of how they both feel like they don't fit in with their groups and communities. More detail on the dialogue is reflected in the gender content analysis, as shown below:

**Table 2: Gender Content Analysis Results**

<b>Content Gender Analysis Data</b>	<b>1991 Film</b>	<b>1991 Film</b>	<b>2017 Film</b>	<b>2017 Film</b>
	<b>Belle</b>	<b>Beast</b>	<b>Belle</b>	<b>Beast</b>
<b>Traditional Female Traits %</b>	<b>54.55%</b>	<b>31.31%</b>	<b>37.01%</b>	<b>32.14%</b>
<b>Traditional Male Traits %</b>	<b>45.45%</b>	<b>68.69%</b>	<b>62.99%</b>	<b>67.86%</b>

Based on the 1991 animation, there was a clear division of Belle, a female identified character, displaying a majority, 54.55%, of Traditional Female Traits. Similarly, the Beast, a male identified character, displayed a majority, 68.69%, of Traditional Male Traits. However, in the 2017 Live Action, both Belle and the Beast displayed majority Traditional Male Traits, 62.99% and 67.86% respectively.

## **Discussion**

Although the films have an abundance of similarities, which is to be expected for an original film and its remake, there were many differences that changed the very fabric of the characters. With the Beast, the largest difference is in his character development through the work implemented in the 2017 film. Audiences saw the Beast not only as an angry, lonely individual, but also a well-educated, at times proper, intellect. He didn't flock after Belle for her beauty; rather, she earned his respect as an independent intellectual that wanted to gain knowledge and relationships. Their communication, conflicts, disclosure, and vulnerability throughout the 2017 film provided depth in the relationship compared to the historical narrative of Disney's facile 24-hour love story. Finally, the gender content analysis suggested he displayed a majority Traditional Male Trait percentage consistently between both films.

Belle also evolved in her character development between the two films. Still maintaining her sense of grace and gentleness, she brought substantial growth in assertive language, leadership, and initiative for conflict resolution. A critical finding in this study was Belle's 20% increase and majority coding in Traditional Male Traits compared to the 1991 film. Not only was she seen as the town bookworm, but she was actually rather intelligent, curious, inventive, and strong-willed. This is evident not just in a linguistic analysis, but also in strategic costume choices through the 2017 film. By the request of Emma Watson, she did not wear a corset during filming and worked together with designers to reshape Belle's image as a newly defined princess with agency (Bateman, 2016).

Finally, there were overall social items that caught the attention and commentary of audiences. The first is that, compared to the 1991 animation, there was ethnic diversity in the 2017 casting for roles, especially with supporting characters such as Pere Robert and Plumet. Additionally, in the siege scene, both men and women stormed the castle, compared to the "50 French men" in the 1991 animation. Lastly, there were clear scenes and indications of cross-dressing in the final fight scene, as well as suggestive homosexual relationships during the final dance.

## **Limitations**

There are two major limitations to this study. First, there was a single coder that conducted the character and content analysis. Second, while this study provides evidence on the character and gender depictions through *Beauty and the Beast*'s original animation and Live Action remake, this does not warrant the study's results as generalizable to other original animation and Live action film analyses.

## **Conclusion**

Disney has an array of intentional changes yet maintained traditions with the new 2017 film. Further, this appeals to feminist movements through the development of androgynous characters as there are potential themes of female protagonists having more independence and a stronger voice in modern films. While Disney has alluded to other societal topics such as ethnic diversity in casting and introducing homosexual relationships, they have yet to take the plunge: casting a leading ethnically diverse character that was not represented in the original animation, such as Belle or Gaston, or creating development around characters with clear homosexual relationships. This is methodical as Disney must balance nuances in efforts to maintain traditional audience members, yet inclusive enough to appeal to progressive audiences.

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## **Creating Allies for Gender Equality**

Clare Najjemba

*Country Manager; Cotton on Foundation, Uganda.*

### **Abstract**

*The Uganda Ministry of Finance 2006 discussion paper on gender inequality shows that the country has actively joined the global promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality over the last three decades. The current COVID-19 pandemic has taken everyone at least a decade or two back to get back to where we used to be. The goal of promoting equality between men and women has been on the agenda of the international community since the founding of the United Nations. It was well established in the UN Charter and the world leaders assembled at the 2005 World summit at the UN and affirmed that when a woman progresses, all progress. The UN Women Africa report found that violence against women remains a major obstacle to the empowerment of women, with a 2011 survey reporting 56% of women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical violence at least once since age 15. This has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's time to realise the importance of men as key players in creation of gender equality. Cotton On Foundation joins other development partners in the realisation of the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) and we believe as we promote quality education, we must prioritise equity, belonging and wellbeing for all. We hope to integrate culture norms and beliefs in development activities as we ensure men support women in development mainly through community and family dialogues.*

**Key words:** *Equality, Gender, Community dialogue.*

**Theme Session:** *How to build an equal and just society involving different and diversified members of the community.*

### **Introduction.**

Uganda's Vision 2040 statement prioritizes gender equality as a cross-cutting enabler for socio-economic transformation, highlighting the progress made in the legal and policy arena, in political representation, and in lowering gaps in education. The National Development Plan II (NDP II, 2015-2020) prioritizes the empowerment of women and gender equality to create inclusive growth and social development. It makes specific reference to sector-specific gender issues that relate to women's empowerment and access to sexual reproductive health information and services (UNFPA 2017). After the COVID-19-related lockdowns, we have an opportunity to shape a future which is more equal. Although many perceive it as a concept that benefits women only, everyday realities prove that men benefit too from gender equality as we see them facing gender specific issues such as health issues, decreased life expectancy, education level entry points, and a lack of employment opportunities. Some scholars agree that: "Men are not only holders of privileges and perpetrators of violence but are also potential and actual contributors to gender equality" (Ruxton 2004). Across the world, most acts of violence are carried out by men following the stereotypes of masculinity that suggest men are strong and emotionally robust (Emily 2006).

In Uganda, the patriarchal society places women and girls as inferior to men and, unfortunately, this follows them not only in their families but also schools and eventually places of work and worship. This is a practice that has been amplified with the COVID 19 pandemic and it can only be reversed if the

men and boys are a part of the movement for change. Although efforts have been made at the global for example the United Nations Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and at the national levels taking into consideration the Ugandan Constitution Articles 21 and 32<sup>i</sup>. However, there remains increase gender equality disparities between the regional and village levels. I think this could say “Information, policies, and awareness campaigns focus more on women than both men and women. However, the impact of the information shared, policies, and awareness campaigns is more felt in urban areas where individuals with more education can implement these policies. According to the UN women report for Uganda, 243 million women and girls were abused by their intimate partners in the past year of lockdown. Since the pandemic, with lockdown measures, countries around the world have seen an alarming rise in reporting on violence against women especially domestic violence (UN Women 2020). It's therefore imperative that men get fully involved in any gender equality related activities and studies so that they fully understand where their responsibility lies in fighting and advocating for gender equality instead of exacerbating it.

Cotton On Foundation understands that society has not fully supported the representation of men in advocating for gender equality and as such, my research wants to give an opportunity to men to share their understanding of the concept but also raise the required awareness for them to participate in creating a gender equal allies This research wants to raise the bar for men by strategically focusing on gender equality by gaining the insight of both women and men on how men can be instrumental in creating the change we desire. This will inform on the key recommendations that need to be acted on to design practices that are sensitive to gender equality especially post the COVID 19 pandemic.

### **Methods And Materials.**

The study was aimed at understanding how men can be involved in promotion of gender equality after the COVID 19 pandemic. A mixed-methods study was employed in the districts of Masaka and Rakai (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative information was collected) to capture a complete picture of individual's experiences and views. Twenty boys and 10 girls between the age of 12 to 18 were randomly selected from 3 schools in Rakai district. Thirty men and 20 women were also randomly selected from Rakai and Masaka Districts. All the 30 students were from peasant families from Rakai District. Overall, 40% of the men and women were from Masaka working with NGOs, 20% were teachers from 3 schools while 40% were peasant farmers from Rakai District.

### **Questionnaires and Interviews.**

The first activity at the start of research was the development of the data collection tools. These included questionnaires for the students, NGO workers and teachers plus interview guides for the parents. The questionnaires had both open ended and close ended questions while interviews were administered in person. The issues that were discussed during interviews mainly concerned policy implementation, focusing on implementation after the pandemic, what lessons were learned, how can we become more gender sensitive and how can we properly define the role of men.



## **Results.**

Despite the efforts made by the Government of Uganda to encourage gender equity, only 53 % of the respondents, think there is gender equality in their community, 42% said there is none and 5% agreed that there is progress towards gender equality which included women and men working together in a family, Fair treatment for both boys and girls, Equal share of responsibilities, activities, education and culture development and both men and women having equal power and opportunities.

Most respondents especially the men did not feel like gender equality was a concern for men. One community worker said that God created the men before women and gave them authority to rule over the women, so gender equality is totally out. Two educators mentioned that some men fear sharing opportunities with women and culture has also made it harder thus lowering their concern levels. A school chairperson however said that some men are just ignorant of what's required of them otherwise they would have been totally concerned. One boy student however said that men are concerned because they provide basic needs for both boys and girls without discrimination.

When asked whether there was gender equality within their communities, 32% acknowledged that there are now equal rights to education, 21% acknowledged rights to work, 26% acknowledged equality in decision making and responsibilities, 11% acknowledged equality in leadership and 10% acknowledged equity in their community in terms of basic needs like clothing.

On inquiring about the views of the respondents to men's concern about gender equality, 53% stated that men are concerned as heads of families, while 47% answered in negative stating that men would have been more concerned if they were sensitized and helped to understand, they also stated that culture has it that a man is the head of the family and hence the decision maker and provider. One respondent also stated that God made a woman as a helper to Men and hence she must submit to a man.

Two female village leaders said that favoring one side negatively affects children and breeds laziness and complacency. They added that women and girls being confined to domestic work doesn't give them the challenges they need to fit into this world.

A student shared that some families in her village still neglect girl's education because they have grown up, they have similar sentiments to this teacher's statement. 'Women are expected to be housewives in my culture, and they miss so many opportunities while raising children,' said a secondary teacher.

Most respondents related gender inequality to culture which segregates roles for gender, for example, builders should be men. Other respondents believed women to be responsible for the gender differences. 'These women prefer being under the protection of men who are the stronger gender', said Bossa, a Village Health Team (VHT) member. One argument that clearly stands out from this question is the aspect of gender equality as a threat to men in terms of more competition for them in terms of political, social and economic aspects. But when women get power, the men get threatened so we prefer them in the back seat, concluded the VHT.

On the effect of gender roles on equality, 47 % of the respondents recognized the fact that there is a gender stereotype that differentiates the roles of a man as one who is the head of the household, breadwinner, decision maker, and hence must work to provide for the family, while the woman has to remain at home and do the chores and care giving.

However, because of the COVID 19 lockdown and the different challenges that communities were faced with, economically, socially and physically in terms of sickness and death of the family bread winners and the escalating economic challenges, 53% of the respondents stated that they learnt the importance of

having both women and men in the family being able to work so as to complement each other and support the family needs. A male student noted that during COVID, boys in their community were allowed to do what they wanted which wasn't the case for girls. Girls were protected more, and he felt like boy's life didn't matter.

To advocate for gender equality post COVID 19, the 47% of respondents believe there is need for more sensitization and engagement of all stakeholders on gender equality. 12% of the respondents advocate for the boy child involvement and support in fostering gender equality, while 36% say that women need to champion the fight for gender equality by raising their voices, "not to die quietly,". 5% believe that government need to put in place more stringent measures to instil gender equality in the communities. 68% of the respondents believe that men have a role to play in gender equality. Most respondents viewed this responsibility from a family perspective, where girls are given equal opportunities to the boys.

In addition, a social worker stated that current issues have proven to us that we need to start with the young generation, divert them from the cultural beliefs that society brings them up with and support their educational and development efforts equally. One engineer suggested that employers should also be sensitized about the benefits of gender equality. Some employers still hold traditional cultural views and need to change.

The question on the role of men in creation of gender equality in society was the crucial part for the research as it is a guiding factor of what can be done henceforth. Many responses were received from both men and women, girls and boys. For example, 80% of the respondents mentioned that men and women need to share family responsibilities (such as raising children). From the study, a male respondent shared that the same way women are getting involved in employment, men should also be involved in domestic activities and the responsibilities of the family that usually are left to women. For this to happen, culture conversations need to be held so that some barriers are removed,

Two men agreed that men should always talk with their family members before making decisions for the family. It's easy to note that men are usually the sole decision makers in the family and this needs to change to create responsible and responsive fathers. They need to understand the needs of all their family members and plan with them instead of planning for them.

Men should be involved in advocacy for women's rights, said Gloria a quantity surveyor. They should be sensitising the communities around them on the dangers of stereotyping responsibilities based on gender. Furaha, a social worker, suggested that men should become agents of positive change at work and in the community.

## **Discussion.**

Uganda, a signatory to a number of regional and international declarations on gender mainstreaming, notably: The East African Community (EAC) Treaty (2000), The Millennium Declaration (2000), The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), African Union (AU) solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2003), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), has made efforts to implement these commitments in various sectors, but there are still imbalances caused by customs, practices, which leave cause these gaps in equality (OAG Uganda 2013).

From the research it is evident that several issues related to the understanding of gender equality and the role of men as allies came up from the interviews and questionnaires.

Children's experiences dictate their adult attitude. From childhood, children are taught what boys and girls should do. For example, they are given specific toys relating to their gender such as dolls for girls and toy cars for boys, thus boys and girls grow up learning that attitude of inequality. The children are brought up thinking that the harder jobs are for boys and simpler jobs for girls which breeds and promotes the undesired culture.

There is less community involvement in the development of policies and awareness campaigns than there should be. A village chairperson from the study mentioned that policies and awareness campaigns are designed for the elites and are not developed for the understanding of the majority population. Unfortunately, very few rural people watch advocacy programs on TV or even take time to listen to what they refer to as boring programs on radio, thus missing crucial information. In this case, all implementing partners and government need to understand the dynamics of their people so that the services and programs are relayed in a way that will be appreciated by all.

There is witnessed opposition from women. Unfortunately, some women are faithful to culture and believe strongly in the concept of insubordination. They believe that men are their protectors and as some respondents said, this perception has caused some women to fight any gender equality moves.

Both boys and girls were negatively impacted by the pandemic. On the other hand, domestic violence notably increased during the pandemic, with more abuse towards girls and women in the communities. From the study it's clear boys feel left out when girls are favoured, they also have needs that are sometimes overlooked in the process of protecting the girl child.

The need for equal employment opportunities through proper sensitization of employers on gender equality was highlighted in the study. Hearing from an engineer whose profession is mainly male dominated is an indication that the men in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are beginning to understand that all opportunities should be availed equally to both men and women. This also covers the need for women voices to be heard in society which creates the need for equal education and employment opportunities. We continue to see high levels of inequality and gender discrimination portrayed at workstations. For example, women are usually given less pay, offered less challenging jobs and must give sexual favours in some cases. If male leaders can stand against these practices and shift the cultures in organisations to appreciate people for the capabilities, not for their gender, they will be the best role models the society needs to combat gender inequality.

Majority of respondents agreed that men should take centre stage in advocating for gender policies and the education of girls. If the men support the motion, then it stands on a strong ground and will be respected by all in society because that will be the undeniable truth that men are supporting gender equality. We also note that the need for community dialogue and community sensitization emerged as key in breeding and empowered and informed decision from many respondents.

## **Recommendations**

Government policies that support and encourage gender equality must be balanced in such a way that men do not feel alienated but involved and supported to promote and benefit from this equality.

Communities need to appreciate that gender equality does not mean support to the girl child only but support to boys and girls to achieve equality in rights and responsibilities.

The organisations and women advocates need to have a balanced campaign when advocating for gender rights and not have programmes that only empower the girls but also the boys too.

The Uganda government programs should involve those with less power especially in rural communities when designing policies and communications.

### **Conclusion.**

Uganda has established a largely gender-responsive legal and regulatory framework, but effective implementation is lagging, and important gaps remain (AfDG, 2016) one of which is in the involvement of men as partners and allies in fighting for gender equality. From this research, it's clear that there's a need to deal with the prevailing stereotypes that greatly influence the attitudes of men. With these addressed, activities to create a gender equal society need to be designed starting with home to society dialogues and consideration of the needs of the girl and boy child simultaneously. Since gender equality is still considered an issue for women, the most important need here is for awareness creation, therefore engaging both men and women and clearly stating their roles. As major policy makers and influential office holders, men have a responsibility to address gender equality in all decisions that they make and as such must be engaged and involved.

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<sup>i</sup> Women and men are equal in dignity and equal before the law and outlaw any laws, culture, customs or traditions that harm women’s dignity or status. Women and men shall have equal treatment and equal economic, social and political opportunities.