

REDEFINING GENDER ROLES WITHIN CONTEMPORARY RURAL FAMILY

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Abstract

The social construction of gender (male and female) is crucial in analyzing gender roles in rural family. Social interpretation of biological sex leads to identifying a set of gender related behaviors observable in both private and public life of an individual. The aim of this research is to identify the opinion of students at University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, regarding gender perception, gender characteristics, and gender equality in both private and public life. The conclusion of this survey disclose the existence of a patriarchal traditional model; concerning gender equality, however, there are noticeable modern tendencies within the patriarchal traditional model.

Key words: rural family, gender perception, redefining gender roles

introduction

Family is the most ancient and stable form of community, and it provides support for its members during their lifetime.[10] In this context, the subject of gender is a topic of tremendous interest in our modern society[2]. Gender equality supports the idea that responsibilities, rights, and overall development of individuals should be subject not to the fact of being born man or female, but rather the focus will be towards reaching an individual's full potential regardless their gender. [4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is to identify the opinion of students at University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, regarding gender perception, gender characteristics, and redefining gender in the sense of gender equality in both private and public life of an individual. The results of this quantitative research are representative for the above-mentioned student population. [3] The sample size for this study is of 375 students. Data was

gathered between June 1st and July 31st, 2014. The main research instrument was a standard written questionnaire, with pre coded questions and answers. [9]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The perception of gender translates into specific(male or female) gender roles, and involves a set of gender norms. Through socialization process, an individual becomes accustomed with family and society expectations regarding a set of appropriate (gender) behaviors [6].The gender equality concept involves the acceptance of gender differences and highlights the variety of roles played in contemporary society by both man and women.”[1]. Regarding gender perception, students had to evaluate a set of items describing gender-specific roles and not gender specific roles. [8].

Respondents consider that situation of men is better than women's in Romanian society (positive opinion 33.6%). Asked to evaluate the equality between women and men, respondents believe that both genders are in a winning situation as a result of gender equality (positive opinion 35.73%). Men, as

well as women, have to contribute to family income.

Table 1. Items describing gender roles

Do you agree with the following statements:	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Dis-agree %	Strongly Dis-agree %	NS/ NR
In Romanian society, situation of men is better than women's	5.33	28.27	37.87	23.20	4.27	1.07
Men are winning too, as a result of gender equality	6.93	28.80	35.47	21.60	5.60	1.60
Men, as well as women, have to contribute to family income	53.33	38.40	5.33	2.13	0.27	0.53
Man's responsibility is to earn an income, woman's is to take care of family members and household	5.07	15.20	22.40	36.00	21.33	0
It is not customary for a man to stay home and take care of children and for a woman to earn an income	18.40	23.47	22.93	22.13	11.47	1.60

Regarding traditional gender roles- "Man's responsibility is to earn an income, woman's is to take care of family members and household", students participating in the study have a negative opinion (57.33%). Moreover, respondents have a negative opinion(41.87%) towards redefining gender roles in the sense of assuming gender roles traditionally performed by the other gender.("It is not customary for a man to stay home and take care of children and for a woman to earn an income").

Concerning professional discrimination, the study found that the female students believe they are discriminated against professionally at a greater extend than their male counterparts (6.22%).(Fig. 1).

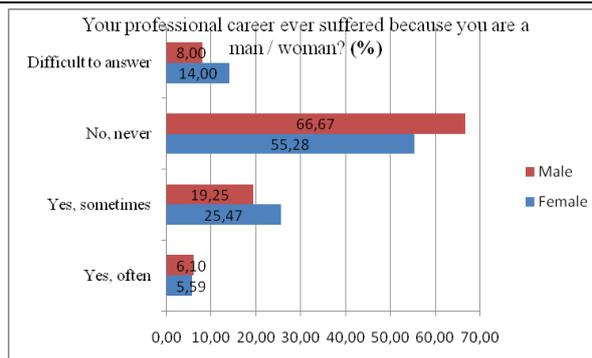


Fig.1. Respondents' perception concerning professional discrimination

Regarding gender characteristics, the students participating in the study consider that female students are as smart as their male counterparts (66.67%), but more sensitive and emotional (75.7%), more empathetic (66.9%), and less interested in affairs concerning the locality or the country(48.3%).(Table 2)

Table 2. Gender characteristics

Generally, in comparison with their male counterparts, do you think that females are: more, the same, or less	More %	The same %	Less %	Ns/ Nr
Smart	18.13	66.67	9.87	5.33
Empathetic	66.9	25.1	3.7	4.3
Interested in affairs concerning the locality or the country	10.9	34.9	48.3	5.9
Violent	6.9	21.3	64.3	7.5
Pragmatic	25.9	49.9	19.5	4.7
sensitive/emotional	75.7	15.5	3.5	5.3

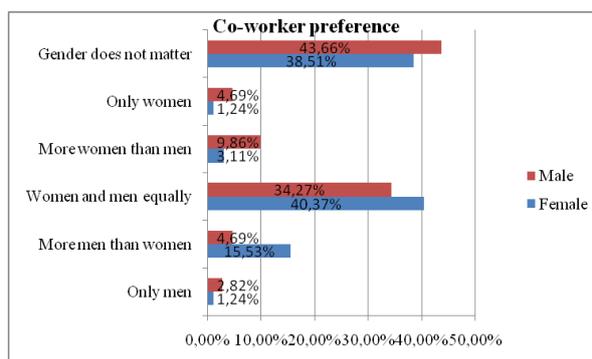


Fig. 2 Project structure colleagues preferences by gender

Concerning co-worker preference, the tendency to choose people to work with based on their gender, respondents believe that the gender is not the main criteria when choosing their team mates (82.17%) and that they

prefer to work with men and women, equally (74.64%).

A small percentage, 7.51% for male students and 4.35% for female students, would prefer to work only with people of the same gender. (Fig. 2).

Also, this study is to evaluate students's opinion regarding authority distribution within the family structure, using the following set of items:

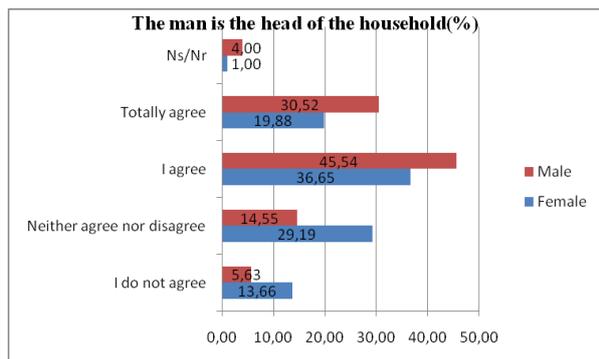


Fig. 3. Family authority structure

Both female students (56.52%), as well as their male counterparts (76.06%) agree that "The man is the head of the household", indicating the existence within the family structure of a patriarchal traditional model regarding authority distribution and decision making. The patriarchal traditional model prevails symbolically within Romanian society. (Fig. 3)

Female students consider at a lesser extent (44.10%) in comparison with their male counterparts (50.70%), that taking care of children is a female specific role. (Fig. 4)

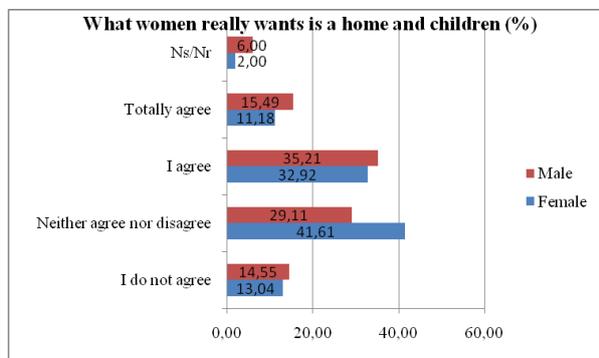


Fig. 4. Structure prescription by gender role

Upbringing and taking care of children is perceived as a traditional female role by

respondents residing in urban area (46.84%) as well as participants in the study residing in rural area (48.65%).

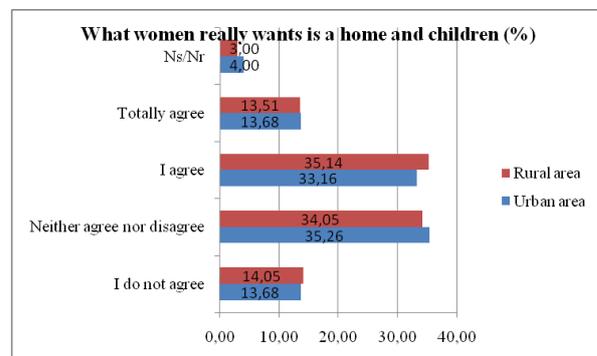


Fig. 5. Structure prescription by residency

The first step in redefining gender roles is defining parental couple model, and after that, through secondary socialization "people become male or female polarized personalities", people express themselves socially through their specific gender roles. Thereafter, people are looking for their significant other, inspired by male-female archetype structure, and attempting to achieve complementarity and personal development. [7]

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents consider that situation of men is better than women's in Romanian society although the participants to the study also believe that both genders are in a winning situation as a result of gender equality. Men, as well as women, have to contribute to family income. Moreover, respondents have a negative opinion towards redefining gender roles in the sense of assuming gender roles traditionally performed by the other gender. Female students believe they are discriminated against professionally at a greater extend than their male counterparts. Regarding gender characteristics, the students participating in the study consider that female students are as smart as their male counterparts, but more sensitive and emotional, more empathetic, and less interested in affairs concerning the locality or the country .

Regarding family structure, there is a patriarchal traditional model; concerning gender equality, however, there are noticeable modern tendencies within the patriarchal traditional model. [5]

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