CULTURE AS A CRITICAL ASPECT OF GENDER IDENTITY

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Abstract:

The development of sex and gender is influenced by biological variables that are interconnected with culture. However, gender differences in roles and behaviours—which may be minor but are nevertheless significant culturally—are critically influenced by sociocultural factors. Gender-related behaviour, beliefs, identities, roles, and how they are perceived in diverse social circumstances are all profoundly influenced by culture. Children are socialised, given chores, grownup men and women accept roles, and women and men's behaviours and mindsets are regulated by cultural norms. The frameworks, in which gender roles, gender identities, and prejudices develop, as well as guidelines for sexual conduct, are supplied by culture. Differences in gender-related practises within cultural groups as well as among social groups are also influenced by culture. Gender disparities in social behaviours and cognitive processes can be increased, decreased, or even completely eliminated by culture. Gender and culture cannot be separated, in fact.

Keywords: **Gender roles, Gender differences, Socio-cultural, Gender-related Behaviour, Beliefs, Identities, Socialised, framework, Prejudices, disparities, cognitive**

I.INTRODUCTION:

"Culture is...the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group; it includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

Numerous theories have been proposed to explain how people automatically integrate cultural and social norms and how these values have an impact on their attitudes, mentalities, perceptions, and habits. This observation is known as cultural determinism. There are many different levels of culture, and each of them has some effect.

The national culture is typically seen to have the most effect, although there are cultural accounts for that have their roots in ethnic origin, faith, socioeconomic status, age, gender, level of education, and training, among other things. We assert "in general" because there are many events that occur today that aren't linked to

or aren't inevitably connected to the national culture, even though they point out how important it is for the people who make up a group (including a virtual one) to share a common cultural background.

Different tiers of culture or amalgams of principles establish their foundation and interactions, one of which is influenced by a person's gender identity. In a backdrop of economic and socio-cultural developments (based mostly on an extraordinary evolution of IT), issues underpinning political decisions, especially those pertaining to prejudice on numerous grounds, become of importance. Discrimination based on gender and the place of women in society is discussed in the same perspective.

II. CULTURE AND ROLE DIFFERRENCES BETWEEN SEXES:

Gender roles refer to the role or behaviours learned by a person as appropriate to their gender and are determined by the dominant cultural norms. Many of our gender stereotypes are strong because we emphasize gender so much in culture (Bigler & Liben, 2007).

According to cross-cultural research, kids can categorise others' genders, classify items into gendered groups, and are aware of gender roles by the time they are two or three years old. Most kids are well established in culturally acceptable gender roles by the time they are four or five years old (Kane, 1996). Children that don't fit the gender role expected in their society may have negative consequences including ridicule, bullying, marginalisation, or rejection from their peers.

By the time we reach adulthood, our gender roles have become a permanent part of which we are, and we frequently maintain gender preconceptions. In fields like politics, the military, and law enforcement, men predominate over women. In vocations that include providing care, such as child care, health care, and social work. These professional jobs are instances of normal male and female conduct that is developed from the customs of our society.

Thinking, language, and human conduct are all influenced by culture. People's attitudes, emotions, and behavioural responses, as well as their views of the world around them, are shaped by the social milieu in which they are born and raised. The same holds true for positions that are given or taken on in society depending on gender. Numerous academics have emphasised cultural aspects that reflect disparities in gender roles as well as components connected to the legitimacy of sexual difference.

Williams and Best (1982)-used the Adjective Check List where subjects characterized adjectives as male or female characteristics.,

Men are typically seen as being critical, assertive, energetic, and adult-like, with requirements for domination, autonomy, aggressiveness, display, accomplishment, and endurance. Women are perceived as being weak, submissive, maternal, adaptable, and having requirements for connection, respect, abasement, and heterosexuality. These academics contend that a "psychological universal" about gender stereotypes is supported by their study. However, further research discovered significant cultural variations linked to gender.

According to these results, gender stereotype divergence appeared to be more pronounced in conservative, authoritarian nations with poor socioeconomic growth, Christian loyalty, and female university enrolment rates.

The concept of gender is a social construct that has been debated for years. While some argue that gender is determined by genetics and biology, others contend that it is produced or reproduced by society. Sex, on the other hand, is considered a permanent individual property. However, gender varies over time and across cultures. Companies play a significant role in shaping gender meanings through their structures and cultural practices. Gender is not just an individual quality but also a social and relational one that influences how people interact with each other. It affects everything from job opportunities to personal relationships. The way companies create and communicate gender meanings can have far-reaching consequences for individuals and society as a whole. It is important to recognize the impact of these meanings and work towards creating more inclusive environments where everyone can thrive regardless of their gender identity or expression.

III. EXPRESSION (COMMUNICATION) OF ROLE DIFFERENCES:

Hall's work on intercultural communication emphasizes the role of communication in shaping cultural norms and values, including gender roles. Gender roles are learned through communication and socialization processes that occur within families, schools, media, and other institutions. These roles are not fixed or natural but are socially constructed and vary across cultures and historical periods. Communication also plays a crucial role in challenging or reinforcing gender stereotypes and inequalities. For instance, feminist movements have used various forms of communication to raise awareness about women's rights and advocate for gender equality.

However, communication can also perpetuate harmful gender norms and stereotypes, such as the objectification of women in media or the normalization of violence against women in popular culture. Therefore, it is essential to critically examine the ways in which communication shapes our understanding of gender roles and to promote more inclusive and equitable forms of communication that challenge rather than reinforce gender inequalities.

"Culture is communication and communication is culture".

In essence, communication is a two-way street. It not only reflects the attitudes and mentalities of individuals but also has the power to shape them. Through communication, people exchange ideas, opinions, and solutions that can influence human behaviour and have moral consequences. As such, it is important to recognize the moral responsibility that comes with effective communication. This means being mindful of the messages we convey and how they may impact others. It also means being open to feedback and willing to adjust our communication style when necessary.

Ultimately, effective communication requires a commitment to empathy, respect, and integrity. By recognizing the moral implications of our words and actions, we can create a more inclusive and compassionate society where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

The fact that expression, whether verbal or nonverbal, implicit or explicit, teaches us to behave according to our gender is a deeply ingrained aspect of our culture. From a young age, we are taught different linguistic practices that are culturally associated with gender behaviours. These practices include everything from the way we speak and dress to the activities we engage in and the toys we play with. As a result, we learn to associate certain behaviours and traits with masculinity or femininity.

Gender-based permissions and prohibitions have been a part of our social fabric for centuries. Men are often granted more freedom and autonomy than women, who are expected to adhere to certain norms and behaviours. For instance, men can typically go out alone at night without fear of harassment or assault, while women are often cautioned against such activities.

Similarly, men are often allowed to express their opinions forcefully and assertively, while women may be expected to be more deferential and accommodating. There are also certain communication behaviours that are deemed acceptable for boys and men but completely inappropriate for girls and women.

For example, boys may be encouraged to speak up in class or interrupt others during discussions, while girls may be taught to listen more attentively and avoid interrupting others. This double standard can have long-lasting effects on how individuals perceive themselves and their abilities. It is important to recognise that these gender-based permissions and prohibitions are not innate or natural but rather socially constructed.

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, and it serves various purposes. One of the most important functions of communication is to exercise control. People use language and other communication strategies to influence others' behaviour and decisions. Communication also helps individuals to keep or demonstrate their independence by expressing their opinions, thoughts, and feelings.

Moreover, effective communication can improve one's status in society by conveying competence, knowledge, and authority. However, communication models vary between sexes due to differences in conversational style, linguistic strategies, conversational ritual, nonverbal behaviour, manner of use of space and time. Men tend to use more assertive language and nonverbal cues such as direct eye contact and expansive gestures. Women, on the other hand, tend to use more indirect language and nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and body posture to convey their messages.

Understanding these differences can help individuals communicate more effectively across genders and improve their overall communication skills.

IV. ROLE DISTINCTIONS AND PREJUDICES:

Discrimination is a harmful practice that should never be associated with differences in biological or cultural normality. While it is true that there are natural differences at the biological level, it is important to recognize that these differences do not dictate one's abilities or worth as a person. Similarly, cultural norms should not be used as an excuse for discrimination. Instead, we should strive to create inclusive environments where individuals of all genders and cultures feel valued and respected. This includes recognizing and challenging gender roles that may be assigned based on cultural norms, and promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of life

Basically, gender discrimination reflects "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on gender [...] which has as purpose or effect the restriction and exclusion of recognition, usage or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms or rights recognized by law, in equality conditions, in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (Law no. 324/2006).

The masculinity-femininity dimension is a reflection of the degree to which gender roles are interchangeable in society. This dimension is linked to differences in the socialization of children with regard to aggression. In feminine countries, children learn to avoid aggression, while in masculine countries, they learn how to defend themselves. These differences are also linguistically manifested.

For example, in masculine societies, language tends to be more direct and assertive, while in feminine societies, it is more indirect and cooperative. However, it is important to note that these differences are not absolute and that there is variation within each society. Moreover, the degree of interchangeability of gender roles can change over time as societal norms evolve. Ultimately, understanding the masculinity-femininity dimension can provide insight into how different cultures approach gender roles and aggression.

Thus, "a society is considered a masculine one if the gender emotional roles differ clearly: men should be authoritarian, harsh and focused on material success, while women should be modest, gentle and concerned with quality of life. A society is considered a feminine one if the gender emotional roles overlap: both men and women must prove modesty, gentleness and concern for quality of life" (Hofstede et al., 2012, p. 141). The assignment of social roles based on gender is a result of cultural and religious interpretations as well as historical and environmental factors.

V. THE ETHICS OF SEXUAL DISTINCTION:

When it comes to determining discrimination based on sexual difference, it's important to consider the ethical implications in a specific context. While cultural differences in gender roles may exist, they don't necessarily indicate inequality or discrimination. However, true discrimination involves the violation of basic human rights and free will. This can manifest in various forms, such as unequal pay or opportunities based on gender, sexual harassment or assault, and systemic barriers to advancement.

It's crucial to address these issues and work towards creating a more equitable society for all individuals, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. This requires not only legal protections but also a cultural shift towards greater acceptance and understanding of diverse identities and experiences. By acknowledging and addressing discrimination where it exists, we can create a more just world for everyone.

Gender roles have been a topic of debate for years. The stability and rigidity of these roles have been questioned by many, as they often limit the freedom of individuals. Regardless of the will of the individual and the situation, gender roles tend to dictate how people should behave and what they should wear. However, it is important to note that different cultures view the same situation differently. For instance, some westerners view Oriental practices relating to women's behaviour and traditional clothing as discriminatory. However, in these cultures, such practices are seen as a way of preserving their traditions and values. It is crucial to understand that what may be acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another. Therefore, it is essential to respect cultural differences and avoid imposing one's beliefs on others.

Gender roles have also been shaped by a variety of factors, including economic, demographic, and political ones. As societies change and evolve, so do the expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. For example, as more women enter the workforce and gain economic independence, traditional gender roles that place women in the home are being challenged. Similarly, demographic shifts such as aging populations or increased migration can also impact gender roles by altering the composition of households and communities.

Political changes can also play a role in shaping gender roles by enacting laws or policies that promote gender equality or by perpetuating discriminatory practices. It is important to recognize that while these changes may challenge traditional gender roles, they do not necessarily imply inadaptability. Rather, they offer opportunities for individuals to explore new possibilities and redefine what it means to be a man or woman in their respective societies. However, if these changes are met with resistance and discrimination based on outdated notions of what is "established for centuries," then they can perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

The concept of women's empowerment is rooted in the idea of freedom from subordination or dominant masculine models. It aims to enhance female identity, revealing her genuine core. However, this pursuit has brought to light numerous problems, including the inequality of power between sexes and the subordinate position of women in family and society. The undervaluation of women's role in social stratification and employment has also been highlighted.

To address these issues, it is crucial to create a more inclusive society that recognizes the value of women's contributions and provides equal opportunities for their growth and development. This can be achieved through policies that promote gender equality, education that challenges gender stereotypes, and cultural shifts that embrace diversity and inclusivity.

Turning to religion, the exclusion of women from priesthood in many Christian denominations is rooted in the belief that only men can serve as spiritual leaders. This belief is often supported by citing passages from the Bible that were written by men and reflect a patriarchal society. In fact, women use only 1.1% of the total number of words in the Christian Bible, which highlights the low representation of women's contributions. Furthermore, some passages in the Bible suggest that women should obey men and remain silent in church, perpetuating gender inequality and limiting women's agency.

However, it is important to recognize that these beliefs are not universal among all Christians and there are many individuals and denominations who advocate for gender equality within their faith. As society continues to evolve, it is important for religious institutions to re-examine their beliefs and practices to ensure that they are inclusive and equitable for all members.

In order to re-settle the culture and promote a more inclusive society, it is important to close the gap between "the One" and "the Other One" without reducing one to the other. This means recognizing and valuing specific characteristics that have been historically marginalized, such as the ability to give birth, a deep relationship with nature, diffuse sexuality, and pacifism. By acknowledging and celebrating these traits, we can create a more diverse and accepting society that embraces all individuals regardless of their differences. It is crucial that we move away from rigid binary thinking and embrace the complexity of human identity

VI. CONCLUSION:

The impact of cultural dimensions on gender roles and relationships cannot be understated. These dimensions are reflected through communication patterns, social norms, and expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. While it is important to recognize the complementarily of the two genders, it is equally important to acknowledge that binary thinking perpetuates negative perceptions and unequal relationships between men and women. This model of social evolution often places men in positions of power and authority while women are relegated to subservient roles. This inequality can be seen in various aspects of society, from the workplace to the home. It is crucial that we work towards breaking down these cultural barriers and promoting equality between genders.

The issues of ethics surrounding sexual difference are complex and multifaceted. While creating and strengthening a legal framework is an important step towards addressing these issues, it is not enough on its own. A mentality change is also necessary, as attitudes towards gender and sexuality are deeply ingrained in society. However, achieving both a legal framework and a mentality change depends on the socio-political context in which they are implemented. Cultural features play an important role in shaping attitudes towards gender and sexuality, which may or may not be conducive to this approach.

Therefore, it is crucial to engage with cultural norms and values in order to effectively address the ethical concerns surrounding sexual difference. This requires a nuanced approach that takes into account the complexities of different cultures and contexts, while also prioritizing the rights and dignity of all individuals regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. Ultimately, only by working together can we create a world where everyone is treated with respect and equality.

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