



A Comparative Study Of Gender Stereotyped Beliefs And Practices Among Higher Secondary School Students Of Aizawl And Kolasib Districts

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Abstract:

This study conducted a comparative analysis of gender-stereotyped beliefs and practices among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts. Employing a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 554 students (348 from Aizawl, 206 from Kolasib) using a self-structured questionnaire. Independent samples t-tests were used to analyse the data. All findings were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The study concludes that geographic and socio-cultural contexts play a critical and complex role in shaping adolescents' gender ideologies and behaviors, suggesting that educational interventions aimed at reducing gender stereotypes must be tailored to address these specific local disparities.

Key words: Gender Stereotypes, Stereotyped Beliefs, Stereotyped Practices, Higher Secondary Students, Aizawl District, Kolasib District.

I. Introduction

Gender stereotypes continue to shape social expectations, cultural practices, and individual identities across societies. In the context of education, these stereotypes often influence how students perceive themselves and others, affecting aspirations, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships. Schools, as microcosms of society, play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging such beliefs. Understanding how young learners internalize and practice gendered norms is therefore essential for promoting equity and inclusivity in education.

In Mizoram, the districts of Aizawl and Kolasib provide a unique setting for examining these dynamics. While both districts share cultural and linguistic similarities, they differ in terms of urbanization, exposure to diverse social influences, and educational opportunities. Importantly, Kolasib is geographically close to Aizawl, with the two districts connected by road and accessible within approximately three hours of travel. This proximity makes them particularly suitable for comparative analysis, as differences in students' beliefs and practices can be studied without the confounding effects of vast geographical separation.

This study seeks to investigate the prevalence and nature of gender-stereotyped beliefs among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib, as well as the practices that emerge from these beliefs. By comparing the two districts, the research aims to highlight similarities and differences in students' perspectives, offering insights into how local contexts influence gender socialization. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to broader discussions on gender equality in education and inform strategies for fostering more inclusive learning environments.

II. Rationale of the study

Gender stereotypes remain deeply embedded in social structures, influencing how individuals perceive roles, responsibilities, and opportunities. In the educational sphere, these stereotypes can shape students' self-concept, academic choices, and future aspirations. Higher secondary school students, standing at the threshold of adulthood, are particularly vulnerable to internalizing such beliefs, which may affect their career decisions, interpersonal relationships, and participation in society. Examining these stereotypes at this stage is therefore crucial for understanding how gendered norms are reproduced or challenged among youth.

The districts of Aizawl and Kolasib in Mizoram provide a meaningful context for such an inquiry. Aizawl, as the capital city, is more urbanized and exposed to diverse cultural and educational influences, while Kolasib, though geographically close—reachable within approximately three hours by road—retains more semi-urban and rural characteristics. This proximity ensures that differences in students' beliefs and practices are not simply the result of distance or isolation, but rather reflect variations in socialization, exposure, and local contexts. Comparing these two districts allows for a nuanced understanding of how environment and community shape gender perceptions among students who share similar cultural roots.

The study is significant because it addresses a gap in localized research on gender stereotypes in Mizoram. While national and global studies highlight the persistence of gendered norms, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on how these beliefs manifest among Mizo youth in different districts. By investigating both beliefs and practices, the research not only identifies prevailing stereotypes but also explores how they translate into everyday behavior. The findings will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to promote gender equity in education and beyond. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the creation of more inclusive learning environments that empower students to transcend restrictive gender norms.

III. Review of Related Literature

Sahoo and Klasen (2021) found that girls are substantially less likely to choose science and commerce streams compared to boys, with humanities being the more common choice.

Su et al. (2021) argue that gender stereotypes in education simplify social categorization but restrict human development, limiting students' ability to pursue diverse academic and professional paths.

The OECD (2022) stresses that policies addressing gender stereotypes in education must tackle both structural and cultural dimensions to achieve meaningful change.

Vanchhawng and Lalhriatpuii (2023) examined life skills among B.Ed students and found notable differences based on gender, suggesting that stereotypes continue to shape educational experiences even at advanced levels.

Lalthanpuii et al. (2024) investigated mental health among higher secondary students and reported gender-based variations in coping strategies, further indicating that social expectations influence not only academic choices but also psychological well-being.

Omojemite, Cishe, and Zibongiwe (2024) highlight that educational institutions often mirror societal inequalities, embedding gendered expectations into everyday practices.

IV. Objectives of the study

1. To compare the overall gender stereotyped beliefs among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
2. To compare the overall level of gender stereotyped practices among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
3. To assess the difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between female students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
4. To assess the difference in gender stereotyped practices between female students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
5. To examine the difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between male students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
6. To examine the difference in gender stereotyped practices between male students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

V. Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant difference in the overall gender stereotyped beliefs among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
2. There is no significant difference in the overall gender stereotyped practices among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
3. There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
4. There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped practices between female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
5. There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.
6. There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped practices between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

VI. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, comparative survey design. The purpose was to collect numerical data at a single point in time to systematically compare gender-stereotyped beliefs and practices between students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts

6.1 Population: The target population for this study is all higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

6.2.1 Sample Size: The total sample consisted of 554 students. Out of which 219 are male students and 334 are female students.

6.2.2 Sampling Technique: This study used Stratified Random Sampling technique.

6.3 Tools used: A self-structured tool titled "Gender stereotyped beliefs and practices among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib District" developed by the researcher is used.

VII. Findings of the study

1. To compare the overall level of gender stereotyped beliefs among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 1

Comparison of Aizawl and Kolasib overall gender stereotyped beliefs among higher secondary school students.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	348	35.46	5.89	5.25	483	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	206	32.98	5.06			

A t-test was conducted to compare the overall gender stereotyped beliefs of higher secondary students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts. The analysis, presented in Table 1, revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Students from Aizawl ($M=35.46$, $SD=5.89$) demonstrated significantly stronger gender stereotyped beliefs than their counterparts in Kolasib ($M=32.98$, $SD=5.06$), $t = 5.25$. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.

2. To compare the overall level of gender stereotyped practices among higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 2
Comparison of Aizawl and Kolasib overall gender stereotyped practices among higher secondary school students.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	348	27.95	5.62	9.23	383	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	206	32.96	6.48			

The analysis indicates that the mean score and standard deviation for higher secondary school students in Aizawl are 27.95 and 5.62, respectively, while those in Kolasib recorded a mean of 32.96 with a standard deviation of 6.48. With a degree of freedom of 383, the computed t-value is 9.23, which exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 significance level. This result confirms that the difference is statistically significant. It can therefore be inferred that students in Kolasib district exhibit higher levels of gender-stereotyped practices compared to their counterparts in Aizawl. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.

3. To assess the difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between girls in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 3

Comparison of gender stereotyped beliefs between female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	205	33.96	6.02	4.66	322	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	129	31.26	4.51			

From the above table, we can see that the mean score of the two districts is 33.96 and 31.26 respectively and their standard deviation is 6.02 and 4.51 respectively. The calculated t-value is 4.66 which is greater than the critical t-value at 0.01 significance level. Therefore, it is evident that there exists a significant difference between the two groups indicating that Kolasib female higher secondary school students exhibit higher gender stereotypical beliefs than their counterparts. Hence, the hypothesis, “There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.” is rejected.

4. To assess the difference in gender stereotyped practices between girls in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 4
Comparison of gender stereotyped practices between female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	205	26.88	5.51	7.93	310	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	129	31.26	4.51			

The above table shows that there is a significant difference between gender stereotyped practices among female higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts. The mean score of the two groups is 26.88 and 31.26 respectively with a t-value of 7.93. This suggests that female students from Kolasib District higher secondary school tend to hold stronger gender stereotyped practices than female students from Aizawl District higher secondary school. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

5. To examine the difference in gender stereotyped beliefs between male students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 5
Comparison of gender stereotyped beliefs between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	143	37.60	4.97	2.74	164	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	76	35.76	4.60			

A t-test was conducted to compare the gender-stereotyped beliefs of male higher secondary students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts. The analysis, presented in Table 5, revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Male students from Aizawl ($M=37.60$, $SD=4.97$) demonstrated significantly stronger gender stereotyped beliefs than their counterparts in Kolasib ($M=35.76$, $SD=4.60$), and the calculated t-value is 2.74 which is greater than the critical t-value at 0.01. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

6. To examine the difference in gender stereotyped practices between male students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

Table No. 6
Comparison of gender stereotyped practices between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

District	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	Significance level
Aizawl	143	29.50	5.43	6.32	125	Significant at 0.01
Kolasib	76	35.28	6.92			

As shown in table no. 6 the mean score and standard deviation of male students in Aizawl district is 29.50 and 5.43 respectively while male students in Kolasib district is 35.28 and 6.92. The calculated value is 6.32 which is greater than the critical value at 0.01 significance level, therefore there exist a significant difference between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts where male students from Kolasib demonstrated significantly stronger gender stereotyped practices than their counterparts in Aizawl. Therefore, the hypothesis, “There is no significant difference in gender stereotyped practices between male higher secondary school students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.” is rejected.

VIII. Findings of the study

1. Students from Aizawl held significantly stronger gender stereotyped beliefs than students from Kolasib. Conversely, students from Kolasib engaged in significantly stronger gender stereotyped practices than students from Aizawl.
2. Female students in Aizawl reported significantly stronger stereotyped beliefs than female students in Kolasib. However, female in Kolasib demonstrated significantly stronger stereotyped practices than female in Aizawl.
3. Male students in Aizawl held significantly stronger stereotyped beliefs than boys in Kolasib. In contrast, male students in Kolasib exhibited significantly stronger stereotyped practices than boys in Aizawl.
4. The largest and most pronounced difference was in the overall practices, while the smallest significant difference was in the beliefs of male students.
5. Every t-test conducted to compare Aizawl and Kolasib districts, for both beliefs and practices and across total, female, and male groups, resulted in a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level.
6. The results provide strong evidence that there are significant differences in gender stereotyped beliefs and practices between students in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

IX. Conclusion

Based on your study results, this research concludes a clear and significant divergence in gender stereotypes between the two districts. Students in Aizawl district demonstrated significantly stronger gender stereotyped **beliefs**, while their counterparts in Kolasib reported significantly stronger gender stereotyped **practices**. This distinct belief practice contrast was consistent across both male and female student groups.

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