Measuring Gender Role Identity and Awareness among Women Towards Their Right in Family

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Abstract: This research is designed to examine awareness of women towards their right at household. The study highlights that patriarchal norms has an influence on women's attitudes concerning their privilege rights and responsibilities. Women's gender ideology appears to be constrained by patriarchal ideology that give priority to the masculine over the feminine in almost all environments such as school, household, labor market and community. Due to patriarchal belief, women tend to have lack awareness about their own rights. The article argued that women education has an influence on awareness of women gender ideology. The objectives of this research are (a) to examine awareness of women concerning their rights and responsibilities in family; (b) to identify the factors that affect on women gender awareness. A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out and the results showed education, occupation, income and age were highly significant at p<0.001. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed the overall significant of the linear regression model with F-test (p<0.001) for considerable adjustment of the model with the regression coefficient (R square) of R-square: 0.513. Employing detailed descriptive quantitative results, the work suggests that education, occupation, income, age are highly significantly effect on women gender ideology.

Key words: Gender ideology, Awareness, Patriarchal norms, Gender relation, Traditional ideology, Egalitarian Ideology.

INTRODUCTION

Gender identity is how an individual identifies himself or herself socially. Basically, it refers to attitudes, behaviors, rights, and responsibilities that a society associates with each sex (Holt and Ellis, 1998). It can be further defined as individuals' roles which influence how men and women interact and the attitudes and behaviors expected of each (Lindsey, 1994). Gender roles can be learned in order to perform the appropriate role towards family, society and community or other social group. The concept can reflect these attitudes generally or in a specific domain, such as an economic, familial, and social domain. Most gender ideology constructs from traditional (conservative), or anti-feminist to non-traditional (egalitarian), liberal, or feminist. Traditional gender ideologies emphasize the value of distinctive roles for women and men. According to a traditional gender ideology men are considered as breadwinning whereas women fulfill their roles through nurturing and homemaking activities. In addition, according to the traditional point of view, men are more assertive, competitive, decisive, confident, ambitious, and instrumentally oriented, whereas women are more nurturing, empathetic, helpful, sympathetic, gentle, affectionate, and expressively oriented (Lueptow et al., 2001; Hoffman & Borders, 2001). Traditional gender roles emphasize separate spheres of influence for women and men, with women inside the home and men outside the home. The purpose of this article is to discuss the construction of gender ideology among women and its consequences in rural Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, women tend to have traditional ideologies that make them disadvantage situation compared with men in many aspects of their lives in the rural society. The gender stereotypes influence on women that appeared since its establishment. Since then it is commonly believed that women and men have their separate areas of influence. For example, women's the areas of influence are home and children, whereas men's sphere includes work and the outside world. Women were passive, dependent, pure, refined, and delicate; men were active, independent and strong. True women were wives whose concern was with domestic affairs-making a home and having children. The true woman's place was unquestionably by her own fireside-as daughter, sister.

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However, there is no changing attitudes have been observed in contemporary Bangladesh, where the socio-cultural values and norms has a strong influence majority of women's attitudes (Sultana., 2010; White, 1992; Zaman, 1996). Both men and women, hold strong beliefs regarding appropriate behavior for women. Women are often required to put men first. Women are often expected to defer to male authority. For such belief, women are discriminated in many aspects of their life from birth to adulthood. The subordination of women is a consequence of the existing patriarchal social system which determines power relations within households and the bargaining power of household members through the organization of the family, kinship and marriage, inheritance patterns, gender segregation and associated ideologies (Kabeer 1999).

The present study argued that education plays an important role towards increasing women awareness about their status, right and responsibility. It increases women's self-confidence and develop understanding on how to operate in the world (Cochrane 1979; Sultana., 2010; Safilios-Rothschild 1980). Most importantly, education has to enable women to think critically and to question about their disempowerment. Consequently, education has to become the women and girls begin to question their own beliefs about themselves and gradually develop self-confidence and a positive self-image so that they begin to appreciate their own capacities and potentialities (Anita Digue 1998). In a study, Smith et al. (1995) examined the role of female literacy and awareness of village women in Nepal. The researchers observed that literacy skill increases self-esteem and offers an important peer-support mechanism for the village women in Nepal. The authors elaborated that as the women increase their capacity to learn and to care for themselves and their families, they begin to take on a crucial leadership role in their household and villages.

The research focuses on how education, occupation and income might have influence to overcome traditional ideology. In a study, Khanam (2003) pointed out that women who have a lower level of education are more likely to follow traditional gender ideology in Bangladesh. In contrast, women who have a higher level of education are more likely to support non-traditional gender ideology. A similar approach is brought by Spiro (1983) and Cassidy et al. (1996). The authors argued that women who had a lower level of education tended to support traditional gender role and gender inequality. It should be noted that education is the key variable in overcoming traditional gender ideology (Case et al., 1989). Further, several studies find that working women tend to have egalitarian attitudes and are likely to spend more time on the job (Cunningham et al., 2005; Vella, 1994).

Hence, the presents attempts to examine gender role identity and awareness among women in rural Bangladesh. More specifically the objectives of this study are: (1) to examine women's gender ideology and awareness about their rights in family; (2) to identify the socio-economic factors that might affect on women gender ideology and awareness towards their right in family.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is based on primary information. The paper uses ethnographic and structured survey data from the selected study areas to examine women's gender ideology concerning their children's education, their privilege rights and responsibilities and also to determine the factors that effect on women's ideology. The findings presented in this paper are based on ethnographic and survey research by the researcher in three villages in north region of Bangladesh between 2009 and 2010 and a purposive sampling survey of about 340 women. One-shot cross-sectional survey research design was employed in this article. The research was a non-probability sampling. The principle researcher had selected two research assistants who had previous experienced in conducting demographic surveys. The survey included socio-demographic information, questions related to women's roles and responsibilities, about the role of education.

In order to examine gender awareness of women, a total of eight variables were constructed summing all the values of the eight variables for each respondent. To measure maximum, medium and minimum values, mean, standard deviation and range were used for the survey research design. In this article, regression models were also employed in a multivariate analysis of the survey data to explore the socio-economic factors that might effect on respondent's gender ideology (Dependent variable).

The independent variables are the respondent's age, educational status, and occupational status, and income, total number of children, son's education and daughter's education. Among seven independent variables son's education and daughter's education were converted as the dummy variables. A total of eight statements were quantified and determined as the dependent variable.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In Bangladesh, gender ideologies are characterized by unequal power. 'Gender norms' assign specific
entitlements and responsibilities to men and women - for example, women are expected to take on caring or domestic duties and remain close to home, while men are expected to be the main breadwinner, working outside the home, with greater freedom to move around in public places. This traditional ideology may negatively affect gender relation. It is said that power is directly related to gender relation with regard to the distribution of responsibility and resources. An unequal power relation between women and men exits is that is the basic problem in gender relations.

**Socio-economic Profiles of Respondents:**

The study has measured respondents' socio-economic profile that might effect on their ideology. The average age of the respondents was 36 years and the majority of them were married. Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country. Both Hindu and Muslim women were considered in this study and the majority of the respondents were Muslim (91.5 percent), whereas only 8.5 percent of the respondents were Hindu. Majority of these women (52.9 percent) had two children and very few respondents (0.6 percent) were found with to have eight or nine children.

Different educational levels of respondents were considered in this study. The respondents were categorized according to the level of education they received. These categories include: 'illiterate', 'can sign only', 'able to sign and read', 'primary', 'secondary', 'higher secondary' and 'graduate level of education'. For better understanding the categories of 'can sign only' and 'sign and read only' are combined as the category of 'basic education'. The educational achievement of these women is low. Almost 26.2 percent respondents had primary education, and 22.4 percent obtained secondary education whereas 14.7 and 6.4 percent respondents were found illiterate and having the basic education respectively. On the other hand, the higher secondary and graduate level was found 14.1 percent and 6.2 percent of the total respondents respectively. When respondents were asked about their occupation, it found that among the total respondents 50 percent were housewives, 30.9 percent were self-employed and only 19.7 percent were full-time employed. It can be said that the highest score was found for the 'housewife' group. The low level of the respondent's education was thus reflected in the lower participation in the labor market as well. The average income of the respondents was also low and the mean income of the respondents was TK. 2468.

**Factors Effect on Women Awareness:**

In order to identify the factors that effect on women's gender ideology, a total of eight variables were constructed in using four point of Likert scales. Scores of 1 and 2 were assigned if the respondent made responded 'agree' and 'strongly agree' while 3 and 4 were assigned if the responses were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' respectively. The overall awareness of the gender ideology was created summing all the values of the eight variables for each respondent. The maximum total score was calculated to the 32 (8 variables x score 4) if the respondent indicated 'strongly disagree' for all variables. Respondents' s gender ideology was classified as 'low', 'moderate' and 'high' on the basis of the total number of responses (score from 8 to 32) given by the respondents for all variables. The calculation of the overall gender awareness of respondents is shown in the Table 1.

The results presented in Table 1 show that only 62.9 percent of the respondents were in the 'low awareness' category whereas 22.4 percent of the respondents are in the 'medium awareness' category. On the other hand, only 14.7 percent of the respondents were in the 'high awareness' category. These results indicate that the majority of the respondents fell under the 'low awareness' category. Overall it can be said most of respondents had low gender awareness and tended traditional ideology in educating their children.

The multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to determine the factors that significantly contribute /effect on women gender ideology In order to measure the influence the factors, seven variables have been selected namely: age, education, occupation, income, total number of children, son's education and daughter's education, were considered as the independent variables. Son's education and daughter's education is considered as the dummy variables were regressed on the dependent variable, respondent perception on decision making. Undoubtedly, many effective factors have influenced on women ideology which can be seen in Table 3.

The results of regression analysis are presented in Table 2. Among seven independent variables five items were significant at two different levels namely: education, occupation, income, age and total number of children. These variables significantly effect on the variation on the level of women gender ideology. The regression model was found to be significant at two levels: p<0.001 and p<0.05.

Among the five independent education, occupation, income and age were highly significant at p<0.001. Only number of children was significant at p<0.05. The regression coefficient (R square) value was found to be 0.513 which indicates about 51.3% of the independent variables were validated in the model. The other variables namely: son's educational status and daughter's educational status were insignificant because
t-values and p-values of these variables were shown in the higher level (Table 3). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) from the linear multiple regression shown in Table 3 indicated the overall significant of the model by the F-value which was 32.232 (P<0.001). The results show that women education, occupation, income and number of children's positively effect on the variation of women gender ideology. Women those who are educated, employed and have income are more liberal and tend non-traditional ideology than uneducated and unemployed women. In the literature review, many authors (Khanam, 2003; Cassidy et al., 1996; Case et al., 1989; Hobcraft, 1993; Le Vine, 1994; Jejeebhoy, 1995;Coverman, 1985) supported with this statement that woman who have a lower level of education are more likely to follow the traditional ideology.

Table 1: Response on the gender awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Ideology</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Evaluation of the model: the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable (gender ideology).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Coefficients (Beta)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>7.548</td>
<td>4.196</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>4.538</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational status</td>
<td>1.984</td>
<td>8.369</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>-1.703</td>
<td>-2.336</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1.317</td>
<td>4.536</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children</td>
<td>-1.302</td>
<td>-2.341</td>
<td>0.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son's education</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter's education</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>2.052</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant levels: *p<0.05, **p<0.00

Table 3: ANOVA for multiple regression analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>10044.908</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1434.987</td>
<td>32.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>14780.842</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>44.521</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24825.750</td>
<td>339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R-square: 0.513

Conclusions:

Based on the above discussions, it can be said that education, occupation, and income awareness has significant effect on women awareness towards their in family. In this study, women's education was found to be a key indicator in enhancing the level of women awareness towards their right in family. Education helps to increase women's consciousness about gender relations, and organize them to engage in grassroots struggles for their rights. Similarly, it is argued that education provides women employment and income. These (employment and income) increase women's mobility and makes them more confident towards their rights in household decisions. Overall, these enable women to overcome gender barriers, increase their control over their own lives, and improve their relative positions in their households. Indeed to say that education, occupation and income play an important role to overcoming traditional ideology as well as increase awareness of women towards their right in family.

REFERENCES


