

Art Interpretation of Gender Stereotypes amongst Youth

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Abstract

Since the time we take birth, we all are being taught to socialise in an appropriate manner, to understand our gender-roles of either being a boy or a girl. In childhood only, people eventually develop their bias viewpoints about these gender-roles and their meaning in our society. As and when these children grow up these biases against the gender and the gender-specific beliefs and viewpoints become stronger. These strong beliefs and viewpoints that exist in the society are the gender stereotypes which are described as the core beliefs that people hold about the characteristics of the specific genders, males and females. People's language has a great role to play in identifying and understanding their perceptions and beliefs about gender stereotypes and their strength. Through the language, people unconsciously reveal about the gender stereotypes they hold. Art and drawing have the ability to bring out the unconscious of an individual which they might have not been able to identify or express otherwise in language or actions. Similarly, drawings made by the people have the ability to express the gender stereotypes that are held by them either consciously or unconsciously. Both males and females have their own different views about gender stereotyping. The present study focuses on identifying these perceptions as well as views of people about the gender stereotyping and the effects it may have on them and the society through their drawings as well as their responses to a few open-ended survey questions. It's an explorative study utilising surveys and evaluation of the drawings. Sample consisted of 20 males and females. The study highlighted consideration of gender stereotyping as fixed gender roles, gender differences, gender biases or discrimination. A major belief pertained to gender stereotypes having an adverse effect on the youth as well as our society.

Keywords: gender, youth, gender roles, gender stereotypes, language, art, expression.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The day a baby is born, he or she is being socialised accurately to take on their gender-roles appropriate to their sex. The children gradually develop their biases and subjective perceptions about the gender-roles. Gender stereotypes are basically the core beliefs that are held by the people about the characteristics of both genders, males as well as females.

Even in our daily life intentionally or unintentionally, we all subjected to gender stereotypes and we all possess gender stereotypes. "Boys don't cry and girls do not get angry". "Girls play with dolls and kitchen sets and the boys play with cars and swords as their toys." "Blue is the colour for boys but girls prefer pink." "Girls are sensitive while the boys should be tough and rough." These are some of the very common statements that exist in the society and used frequently. These biases contribute enough to how an individual sees the world around him. The harsh fact is that even the emotions are gendered. For example, boys are aggressive while girls tend to get hurt more and become sad in comparison of boys.

McNaughton (2000) conducted an evidence based study in which he stated that the children devote a substantial amount of time trying to act and behave like a 'normal girl' or a 'normal boy'. They attempt to comply and conform to their culture's viewpoints, opinions of masculinity as well as femininity. They spend a significant period of their time

trying to understand the rules that are set by their culture for them on the basis of their particular gender. They try their best to abide by those rules and regulations in order to be considered as appropriate in this society in accordance to their culture.

These kind of gender stereotypes hurt people regardless of their gender by putting unnecessary expectations on them of how they must behave and live. The beliefs of people and the content about the stereotypes varies over cultures and also evolves over the period of time. These expectations are related to the subjective and specific roles that these genders are expected to fulfil in their particular culture.

II. EXPRESSION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES THROUGH ART

Art is a very important means which helps people in developing creativity and a sense of inner innovation. Art can enhance an individual's confidence, self-esteem as well as his consciousness. Art can help the individual to express on the paper what he/she cannot express through his/her language whether those are his/her thoughts, emotions, feelings or ideas. Not only these, but the artwork of an individual reveals a lot about their unconscious mind, their views, thought process and their personality. Artwork and drawings give a visual representation of the viewpoints, perceptions and

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beliefs of the people about gender stereotyping. Artwork has the ability to change individual's way of how they may experience the world around them. Therefore, art has the capability to play a very important role in identifying and understanding the gender stereotypes and also the people's perceptions, views as well as their beliefs about the same. People may find it difficult to express their views and beliefs about the gender roles, gender biases or gender specific characteristics in words while they may be able to express these better through their artwork. The drawings and the artwork enable them to freely express, without any reluctance, if they've suffered in any ways due to gender stereotyping or if they've found it useful also somewhere, if they've been deprived off from some opportunities in life or if this gender stereotyping has simplified their life in some way. The emotions of the people regarding their own gender as well as the opposite gender can be identified and understood well through their drawings and artwork.

In order to understand and know about the people's perceptions of gender stereotyping and it's impacts on them "Children's Gender Stereotypes Through Drawings" is an effective way to study the gender stereotypes and it includes asking the individuals to free handily draw their own character. The free drawings of the people help to identify how they perceive their own gender particularly in the context of their perceived gender roles, culture and their society as well as social roles. For example, when asked to draw male appropriate hobbies and female appropriate hobbies, the individual draws cricket, games, tools, etc for males and for females he/she may draw cooking, drawing, dancing, shopping, etc. This will reflect upon the perception and views of an individual about the particular genders and gender appropriate hobbies according to them. Their drawing also may depict how strong gender stereotypes he/she may holds which might be stopping him from expressing his real interests or indulging in his actual hobbies which he/she couldn't opt because of being of a particular gender.

Therefore, artwork and drawings can identify and display the gender stereotypes that are either consciously or unconsciously held by the people of any age group. Like, for example, in the year 1983, a social scientist named as David Chambers had researched on the children's drawings. The study collected drawing samples from about 5000 students belonging to different countries and they were asked to "draw a scientist." There was one observed pattern that appeared very strongly that almost all the drawings of scientists made by the samples depicted "male gender" as that of the scientist they had made. This significantly identified the gender stereotyping in the context of profession among these subjects. Similarly, the drawings have the ability to identify and reveal the thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, viewpoints and emotions of the people regarding the specific genders and the gender stereotypes. Therefore, the current study focuses on expressions of the gender stereotypes through the artwork of the subjects and their responses to the open-ended survey questions based on their artwork and views.

III. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore an individual's understanding about gender stereotypes.

Research question

What are the beliefs of the people about Gender Stereotyping?

What could be the impact of Gender Stereotyping on youth?

Ethical considerations

The present study took care of all the ethical considerations including consent and information regarding the work.

Research methods

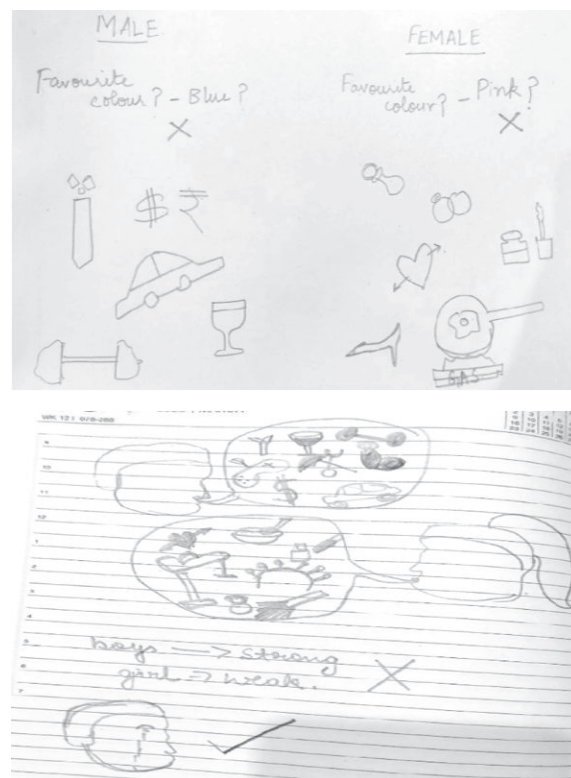
The data was collected using a survey pertaining to their artwork through the virtual means because of the COVID-19 restrictions. The subjects were asked to draw their views, perceptions and understanding of gender stereotypes depending upon the experiences they have had and their knowledge about the same. Through the same virtual platform, the subjects were sent a small survey which included a few open-ended and close-ended questions that had to be answered in relation to their artwork and according to their understanding, experiences and views about the gender stereotyping. Data was collected from 20 males and females.

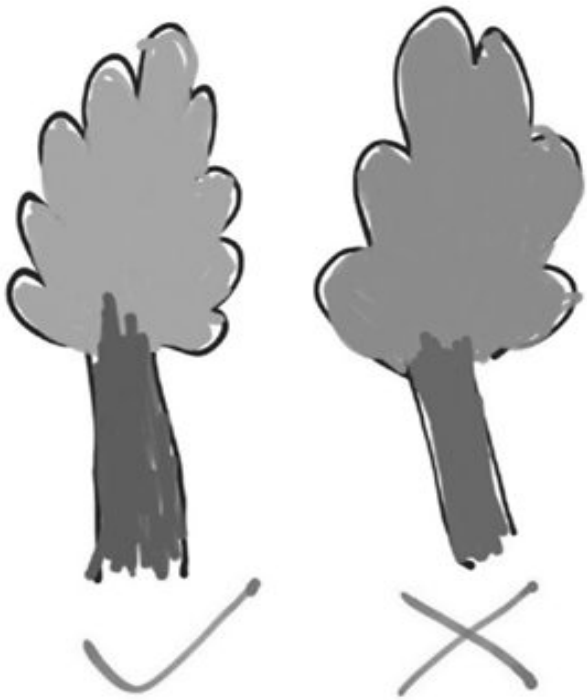
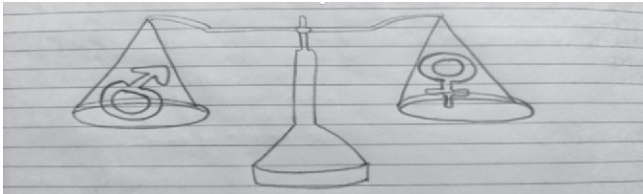
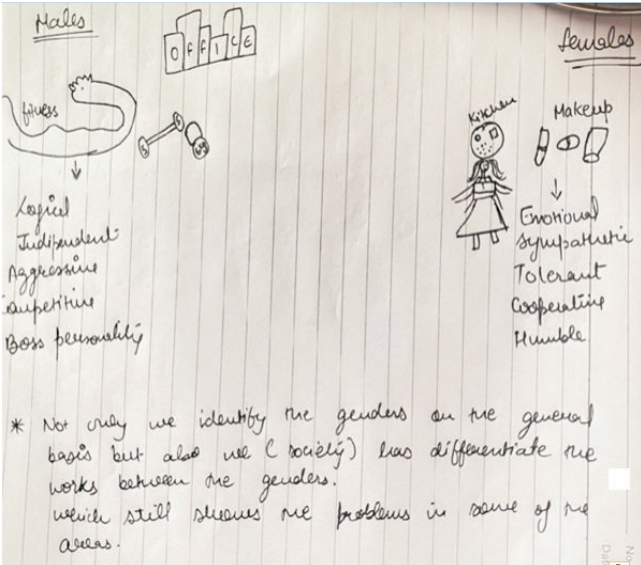
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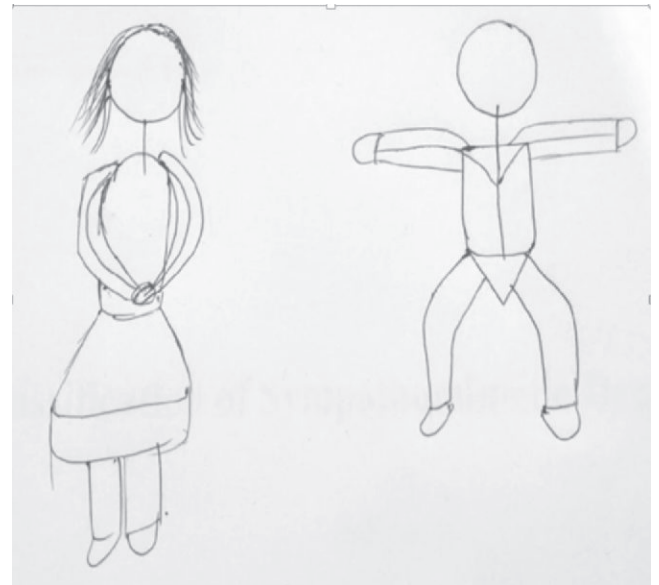
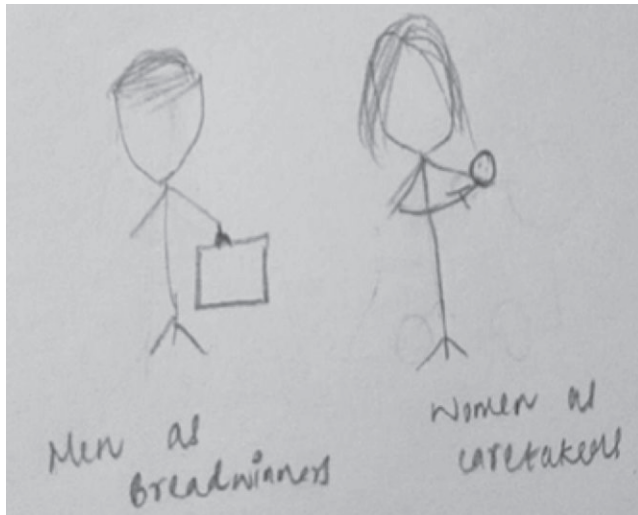
"On a plain sheet of paper, create a drawing in which you depict your understanding, experiences, perception or knowledge about what is gender stereotypes. There isn't any need for any kind of perfection in the drawing as it should be as natural as possible in terms of your experiences, emotions and thought process".

"After you have uploaded your drawing there is a survey which has to be responded and there are no right or wrong answers. All the responses will be kept confidential."

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULT

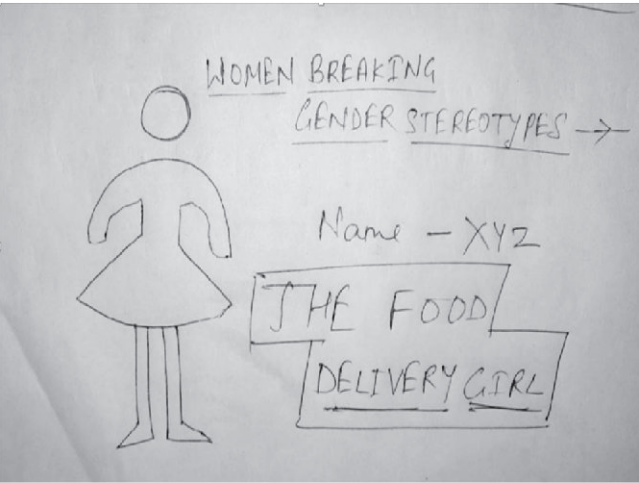
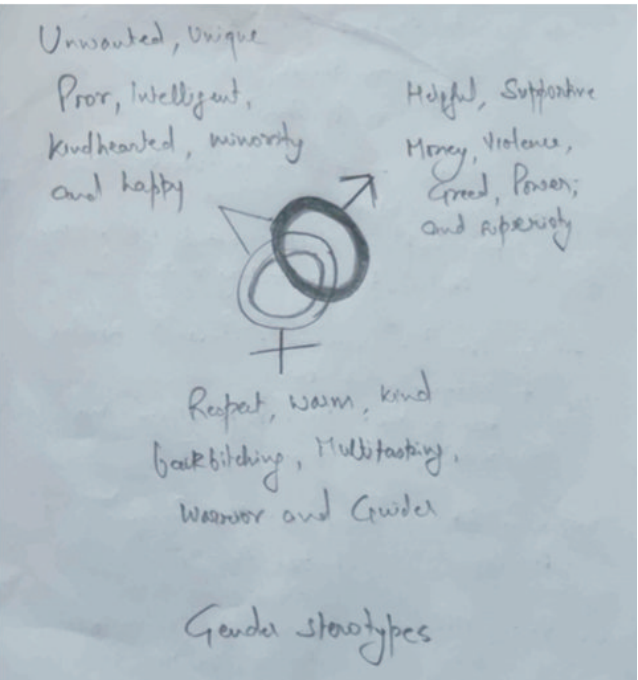
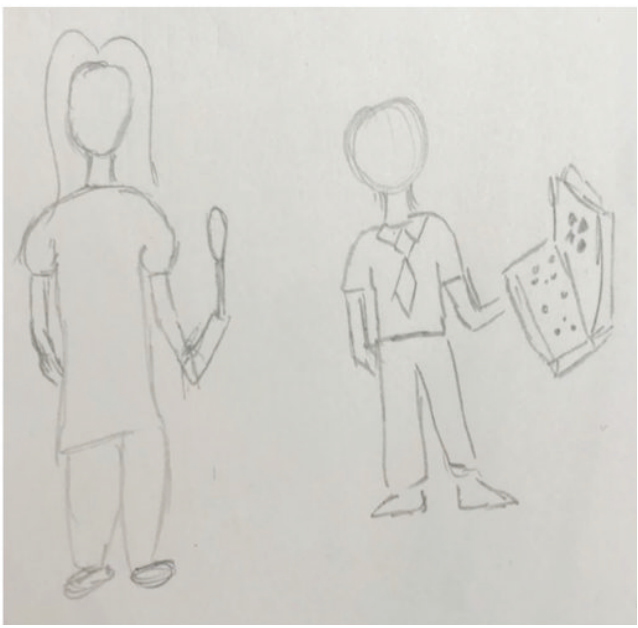
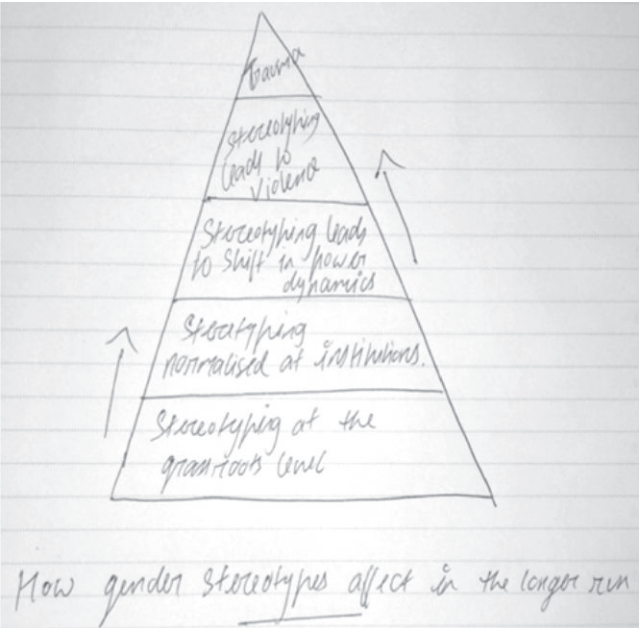






V. ARTWORK OF 10 FEMALES ABOUT THEIR UNDERSTANDING AND PERCEPTION ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPES





VI. ARTWORK OF 10 MALES ABOUT THEIR UNDERSTANDING AND PERCEPTION ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPES

ELEMENTS IN THE DRAWING	NUMBER OF THE FEMALE SUBJECTS	NUMBER OF MALE SUBJECTS
Well defined figures	8	6
Stick drawings	2	2
Included Both Gender figures	5	6
Depicted Gender Roles	4	3
Depicted Gender Specific professions	1	2
Depicted Gender Specific emotions	2	1
Depicted Gender Specific preferences/ interests	5	3
Depicted gender equality/ gender discrimination/ breaking stereotypes	2	2
Drawn impact on the society	0	1
Drawn at Higher end of the sheet	2	1
Drawn at Lower end of the sheet	0	0
Drawn In the center of the sheet	2	3
Drawn in extreme edges	1	4
Used the entire sheet	6	3
Unclearly made fingers or no fingers	4	6
Unusual large figures	0	1
Unusual small figures	1	1
Colorful	2	0
Black and white	8	10

Table 1: research findings and result about the drawings

The data in form of artwork reveals about the perception, beliefs and viewpoints of the subjects about gender stereotypes and their subjective experiences, emotions, thoughts and feelings associated with them.

VII. INTERPRETATION ON THE BASIS OF THE CONTENT OF THE DRAWINGS

Buck (1948) in HTP stated that each individual attaches a specific meaning to each element he draws in his drawings and the format he makes it in. If the individual is making full figures with well-defined figures and elements, it shows his/her sensitivity, flexibility, efficiency and maturity of that individual towards the theme.

80 % of the female and 60 % male subjects made well-defined drawings with properly made figures and objects which may predict that they may comparatively have a clearer understanding about the two genders. 20 % of each sample size of both males and females made stick figures which may interpret that they may have given a lesser expression of their understanding about the gender.

Wenck (1977), in reference to HTP, claimed that a person's drawings are a manifestation of their conscious or unconscious perceptions, and beliefs about the theme they have drawn about. On the basis of the same, interpretation for the subjects was done.

50 % females and 60 % male subjects drew figures for both the genders which may interpret that they are clear about the stereotypes attached to both the genders in their society.

40 % of the females and 30 % male subjects drew gender roles showing that gender stereotyping exists in the form of differentiating roles and responsibilities on the basis of particular gender. The society has created gender specific expectations. For example, females are required to sit back home and take care of the families and men must go out and earn. 10 % of the females and 20 % male subjects have drawn gender specific professions which corresponds to their understanding of gender stereotypes. They may believe that the society has attached specific genders to different particular professions. 20 % of the females and 10 % male subjects drew their perception and understanding of gender stereotypes as gender specific emotions. According to them, there are emotions that are being subjected to the particular genders and it is considered as uncommon or inappropriate in the society if the other gender expresses those emotions. For example, "boys don't cry", "girls should stay calm and not show aggression". 50 % of the females and 30 % male subjects understand gender stereotypes as gender specific preferences being set in the society. They may believe that different interests or preferences must be carried by people on the basis of their own gender and this has been going on since ages. Pink is preferred by girls while blue is for boys, girls play with toys and remote-controlled car is for the boys. If the vice versa happens, it is not taken as ideal by the society. About 20 % of each, females and male subjects, formed their artworks depicting either gender discrimination or gender equality. This entailed that they may perceive gender stereotyping as gender discrimination and inequality while there is a need of a literal understanding gender equality in the society.

No female and 10 % males depicted any impact of gender stereotyping on the society.

VIII. INTERPRETATION ON THE BASIS OF THE ORIENTATION OF THE DRAWINGS ON THE SHEET

Buck (1948) in HTP mentioned, the orientation of the drawings also have a role to play in revealing additional details. In the current study, 20 % of the females and 10 % male subjects made drawings at a high position in the sheet which may reveal that they have been optimistic about the status of gender stereotypes and its impacts on the society and sometimes they may have gotten into some unjustified optimism also. This also may reveal that these males and females may look forward to better changes in the society and have hopes for a better society. Out of the entire sample size of 10 females and 10 males, nobody has drew on the lower side of the sheet. 10 % of the females and 40 % male subjects made drawings at the extreme edges of the sheet which may interpret that they may need some support and they may have been subjected to gender stereotyping. The position of their drawing may also indicate that they may have low self-assurance and confidence while they may possess high insecurities and dependence. 20 % of the females and 30 % male subjects made their drawings in the centre position of

the sheet which gives an assumption that they are secure in their skins and may not have experienced any serious gender stereotypes or they may not have been impacted by gender stereotyping. They may also be hopeful. 60 % of the females and 30 % male subjects made use of their entire sheet which may show fulfilment and the fact that they may not have been affected by gender stereotyping rather they may have a complete and logical understanding about the same. This also shows their expressive and confident side of their personality.

40 % of the females and 60 % male subjects did not make fingers of the figures clearly or they did not make the fingers at all. This may give an interpretation that they may have issues and confusion with their own personal identity. They may have been seeking for clarity about their own understanding, preferences or gender-related roles.

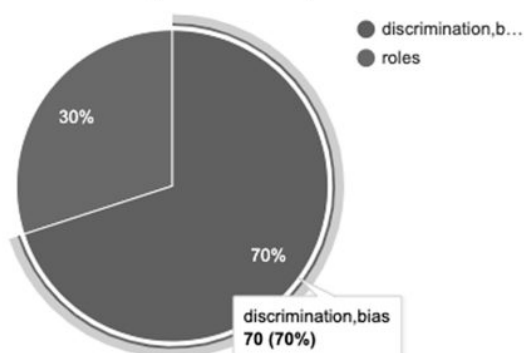
In HTP, Machover (1949) explained that the size of the drawing of an individual is related to the energy levels of him regarding what he is creating. In the present study, one of the females and 10 % male subjects made unusually large figures in their drawing which gives an assumption that majority of them may not have been maniac about this topic at all. Out of the entire sample size, 10 % of the females and 10 % of the males also made unusually small figures in their drawing which may interpret that they have been very sensitive about this topic or they may even have had negative experiences which might have a negative impact on their emotions or mood.

In HTP, Hammer (1969) suggested that the use of colours in the drawings reveal more energetically about the expression and emotions of an individual. 20 % females made colourful drawings which may reveal that they may be hopeful about the society getting better in context of gender stereotyping, gender equality and gender discrimination. They may be much expressive about the same. None of the males created colourful drawings. 80 % females and all the males had made black and white drawings which may interpret that they have been hesitant about the full expression or they may be less hopeful about our society that it will really understanding about the sensitivity of this topic.

IX. SURVEY RESPONSES

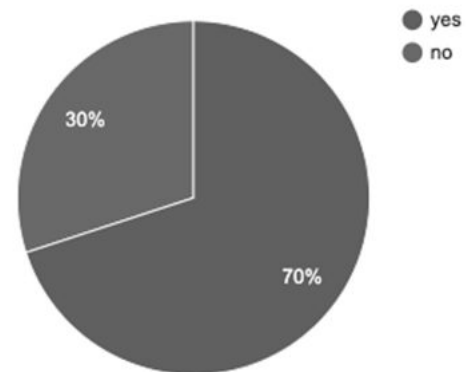
70 % of individuals understand gender stereotypes as gender based biases, gender differences and discrimination, while, 30 % of them believe that gender stereotypes are fixed gender roles and responsibilities.

Gender Stereotypes Understanding



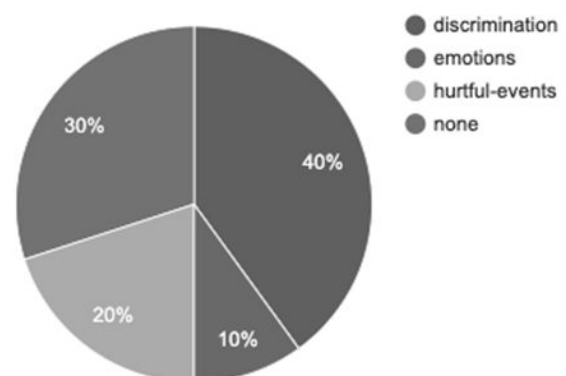
About 70 % of the subjects had experienced gender stereotyping in some or the other way but about 30 % of them haven't had any experience of gender stereotyping in their lives yet.

Gender Stereotypes Experience



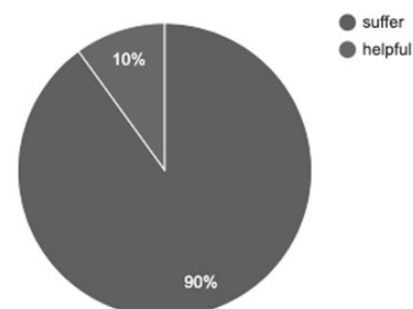
40 % of them have experienced instances related to gender discrimination and have faced gender specific expectations, 10 % of them have had suffered instances related to gender based emotions, 20 % of them have faced hurtful event wherein they were bullied or teased or criticised by gender based comments, while, 30 % of them have not had any personal experiences where they faced gender stereotyping.

Instances related to Gender stereotypes



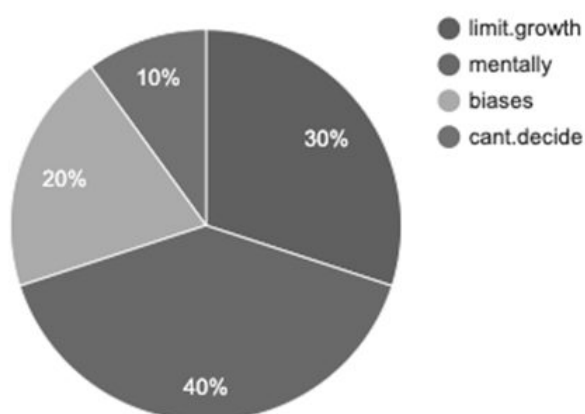
90 % of them believed that gender stereotypes has a negative impact and it causes the individuals to suffer. They believed that it can be dealt by spreading awareness and knowledge about gender. Some of them believed that it can be dealt by changing oneself, one's thoughts, beliefs as well as actions. 10 % stated that gender stereotyping can be advantageous also and it can also lead people to suffer.

gender stereotypes- helps or makes suffer?



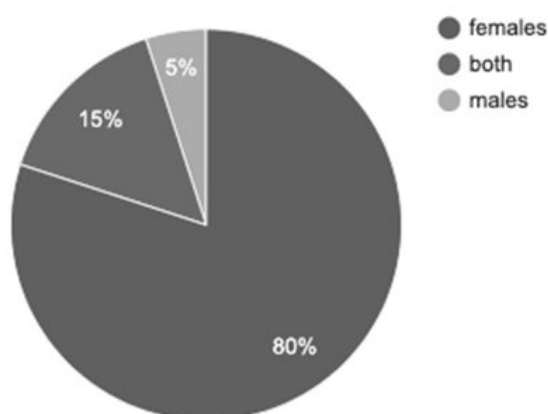
30 % of them believed that gender stereotyping can limit the opportunities and choices for people and also limits the growth and development in the society. 40 % of them believe that gender stereotyping can affect individuals mentally. 20 % believed that gender stereotyping can cause biased and unequal mindset in the society and about 10 % of them couldn't really decide what could be the effects of gender stereotyping on the youth and society.

Impacts on youth and society



80 % of the subjects believed that gender stereotyping effects females more, 15 % believe that it has an equal impact on males and females, while, 5 % believed that males are more effected by gender stereotyping.

who is more impacted?



X. CONCLUSION

The society we live in has a seemingly inflexible particular set of ideas and opinions running from generations about how people expect us, both genders, to dress up, to behave ideally according to our gender as well as how to present ourselves. According to Kohlberg (1984), children's understanding of the gender develops with the progression of their age, as they mature while living in this society. These existing overgeneralisations, widely accepted irrational judgements or these biases about the men and women develop and lead to formation of the gender stereotypes. There is much more need for empirical primary research to be undertaken in this area to focus people's understanding as well as to create

awareness of gender stereotyping among them and its effects on youth and society. The present study aimed at understanding the youth about the gender stereotypes through their artwork and their responses to the small open-ended survey. The study also attempted to identify the impact of gender stereotyping on the youth and society. Most of the drawings show that majority of the subjects understood gender stereotyping as the pre-decided as well as the fixed gender roles and responsibilities. The subjects depicted males as working and burdened under the expectations of work and family, whereas, the females are expected to take care of the family, raise children, and to do the household chores. Different professions depicted in the drawings are subjected to specific genders. Some drawings reflect on the preferences like colour, games, toy, etc. also are gender based. The subjects have shown long hair as a characteristic of girls and boys have been shown to have short hair which are yet another stereotypes being attached to these genders in terms of beautification. The responses also show that the education quality, choice and decisions related to education are also based on their gender. Subjects depicted that there is a huge need of equality between both the genders, whereas, some showed how their emotions are being expected to be in accordance with their gender. There were a few which have shown the biasness and also the subjectivity in opportunities basis of the gender. The drawings have revealed additional subconscious views, perceptions as well as their understanding regarding these gender stereotypes which might have not been expressed by them in language or words. The artwork and drawings made by the subjects displayed well about the understanding of gender stereotypes that are being consciously or unconsciously held by these subjects. The responses of the individuals to the survey provided the additional understanding and perception they have about gender stereotypes and their responses provide an evidence to their drawings. The study concluded that all had their own understanding and experiences of gender stereotypes and most of them understood and explained gender stereotyping as the fixed gender roles, set of gender differences, gender biases and discrimination on the basis of the gender. Almost all of them found gender stereotypes to have a negative impact on the youth and society.

XI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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