

Exploring the Impact of Gender Stereotypes on Academic Pursuits among Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how gender stereotypes influence academic pursuits among students. The research methodology involved the use of a qualitative case study design, which employed interviews to collect data from a sample of 30 undergraduate students representing 16 departments across 6 faculties and an institute at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The study aimed to identify the influence of gender stereotype thinking on students in their higher studies and to understand how these perspectives affected the student's academic experiences such as campus selections, subject choices, study habits, academic capabilities, and classroom participation. The findings of this study indicate that there is a significant impact of gender stereotypes among students regarding their academic pursuits. The study also identified several factors that contribute to these gender stereotype formations, including cultural and societal norms, power dynamics, and personal experiences and perceptions. The implications of this research emphasize the necessity for increased attention to gender stereotypes within society and the significance of establishing more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all members of society. This approach ensures that no one is deprived of access to proper education and that all individuals have equal opportunities for learning. This study makes a valuable contribution to the literature on gender stereotypes and education by shedding light on the experiences of undergraduate students. It also offers recommendations for authorities to foster a more equitable environment aimed at addressing the issues highlighted in this research.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, Gender disparities, Academic pursuits, Feminism, University of Rajshahi

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives. (OHCHR, 2023)

This research aims to investigate the routes through which we can gain insights into how existing gender stereotypes evolve, survive, and have a dominant influence on academic pursuits among students of the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

The reasons behind choosing the University of Rajshahi are there are a few researches in the university that illustrate the experiences of students facing when choosing their academic discipline and educational institution as well as their experiences in an academic arena where they become victims of gendered biasness of stereotypical thinking. Also, Rajshahi University is one of the largest and most prominent public university of Bangladesh, has a rich history of academic excellence and research, and serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges faced by men and women in higher education. It can be the mirror of the wider gender

stereotype seen in many Bangladeshi universities. Exploring this context can lead to valuable insights applicable beyond its campus.

Now the purpose is to investigate how existing gender stereotypes have a dominant influence on academic pursuits among students and how to bring an end to the existing stereotypes.

1.2 Research question

Research questions set the direction and purpose of the research which are given below-

1. How do the existing gender stereotypes evolve, survive, and have a dominant influence on academic pursuits?
2. How to bring an end to the existing stereotypes that will help minimize the limitations of educational institutions like the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh?

1.3 Research Objectives

Engaging in research on gender stereotypes in academic pursuits and their impact on institutions like Rajshahi University can help individuals:

1. To gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors contributing to gender stereotypes in education and academia.
2. To recognize the significance of diversity and inclusion in academic environments.
3. To explore potential solutions to address gender stereotypes and contribute to positive change.
4. To advocate for policy changes and initiatives that promote gender equality and create a more inclusive educational system.
5. To contribute to broader societal efforts to reduce gender inequalities in various sectors.

1.4 Problem Statement

A problem statement describes the specific issue that the research project aims to address. A thesis statement is more focused on the final outcome of the research. While a problem statement is focused on the current state of knowledge and the gap in understanding that the research project aims to fill. (Sirisilla,2023)

Despite the significant influence of gender stereotypes on students' academic pursuits and their impact on educational choices, subject preferences, study habits, academic performance, and classroom participation, there is a lack of comprehensive research that explores these dynamics among undergraduate students at the University of Rajshahi. It requires deliberate research and far-reaching observation.

The existing gender biases, societal expectations, and cultural norms continue to perpetuate and reinforce these stereotypes, which ultimately hinder the creation of inclusive and equitable learning environments. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the enduring influence of gender stereotypes on academic pursuits among undergraduate students and seeks to identify strategies to dismantle these stereotypes for the benefit of students and society as a whole.

1.5 Limitations of the Study:

Research limitations are the practical or theoretical shortcomings of a study that are often outside of the researcher's control. Identifying and acknowledging limitations is crucial for conducting rigorous studies. Limitations provide context and shed light on gaps in the prevailing inquiry and literature. (Charla,2023)

This research has potential limitations, which are outlined below:

- i. This research interviewed one girl and one boy from each department, which may limit the ability to capture the overall departmental perspective based on the opinions of just two individuals.
- ii. Some students hesitate to share their perspectives with the interviewer due to fear that their ideas will be biased.
- iii. This research was conducted as a fresh graduate student of International Relations. In this context, one could regard the limited experience gained as an additional constraint.
- iv. The research focused on the experiences and opinions of current students, potentially overlooking the perspectives of alumni who could provide valuable insights based on their longer-term outcomes and experiences.
- v. Access to certain departmental records and data was restricted due to confidentiality policies, limiting the ability to corroborate student interviews with official departmental data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Literature Review

The task of reviewing literature has shown us research based on contemporary gender stereotypes such as;

In 'Gender Stereotype in Education' Arjun Sekhar Pm and Parameswari Javaraman have discussed about Gender stereotypes shape individuals' perceptions and attitudes through influences on students' classroom experience, choice of subject, and academic performance focusing on the gender stereotypes in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. (Pm & Javaraman,2019)

Another research by Raazia Hassan Naqvi and Dr. Muhammad Ibrar named ' Gender stereotyping in educational institutions: a case study of social sciences departments of the University of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan' where discussed the experiences of male students of social sciences departments of a public university about the promotion of gender stereotyping in educational institutions where the findings suggested that gender stereotyping is being promoted by students, teachers, and syllabi in educational institutions. (Naqvi, 2016)

Another research 'Support for Gender Stereotypes: Does Madrasah Education Matter?' by M. Niaz Asadullah, Sajeda Amin & Nazmul Chaudhury has discussed the influence of the institutional nature of schools on gender stereotyping by exploring contrasts between non-religious and Islamic faith (that is madrasah) schools among secondary school-going adolescents in rural Bangladesh. (Asadullah, Amin & Chowdhury, 2018)

Another research 'How Gender Stereotypes Impact Students' Academic Achievement' by Tianyi Zhao has revealed the factors of gender stereotypes on female adolescents' academic performances from the family, the school, and society, and the impact on student's academic achievement development. (Zhao, 2022)

In another research by Margaret Maddeni named 'Four gender stereotypes of Leaders: Do They Influence Leadership in Higher Education?' where the author stated the social psychological and organizational development literature on gender stereotypes and leadership style and effectiveness and explores its relevance for leadership in higher education. (Maddeni, 2011)

Another research 'Ethnic and gender stereotypes on college students' academic performance' by Ya-Wen (Melissa) Liang, Kingsville Don Jones, Kingsville Rebecca A. Robles-Pina Sam where they have stated that. Ethnic and gender stigmas that contribute to college student's academic performance and Grade Point Average. (Liang, n.d.)

The another study ‘The effect of gender stereotype activation on entrepreneurial intentions.’ by Gupta, Turban, and Bhawe investigates how gender stereotypes affect entrepreneurial intentions in men and women. Grounded in stereotype activation theory, the research examines the differences in responses to implicit versus explicit gender stereotypes in the context of entrepreneurship, a field traditionally viewed as masculine. (Gupta et al., 2008)

Another research ‘You play like a Woman!’ Effects of gender stereotype threat on Women's performance in physical and sports activities: A meta-analysis’ by Gentile, Boca, and Giammusso conducted a meta-analysis to quantify the effect of stereotype threat on women's sports performance. They indicated that a medium effect size ($d = 0.33$), suggesting that stereotype threat significantly impairs women's performance in sports. (Gentile et al., 2018)

In the research of ‘The effect of gender stereotype activation on challenge and threat motivational states’, Vick, Seery, Blascovich, and Weisbuch's study reveals that gender stereotypes affect performance. They stated that women feel threatened and perform worse when a test is described as gender-biased but feel challenged and perform better under gender-fair conditions. Men show the opposite pattern. (Vick et al., 2008)

In another research ‘Battle of the sexes: Gender stereotype confirmation and reactance in negotiations,’ Kray, Thompson, and Gilinsky found that gender stereotypes affect negotiation performance, with men outperforming women when ability or gender-specific traits were highlighted. (Kray et al., 2001)

In the research of ‘Men Are Hierarchical, Women Are Egalitarian: An Implicit Gender Stereotype,’ Schmid Mast used a paper-based Implicit Association Test (IAT) to examine implicit gender stereotypes associating men with hierarchies and women with egalitarianism. Results from two undergraduate samples confirmed these stereotypes, with men showing a stronger implicit bias than women. (Mast, 2004)

Another research ‘Gender Roles and Stereotypes about Science Careers Help Explain Women and Men’s Science Pursuits’ by Stout, Grunberg, and Ito investigates how gender stereotypes affect career choices in science. They stated that perceptions of STEM careers as self-directed and self-promoting contribute to fewer women in these fields, while perceptions of behavioral sciences as communal lead to fewer men. (Stout et al., 2016)

Another research ‘Sexualized gender stereotypes predict girls’ academic self-efficacy and motivation across middle school’ by Brown explores how sexualized gender stereotypes impact girls' academic self-efficacy and motivation in middle school. They stated that girls endorsing these stereotypes in seventh grade have lower academic confidence in eighth grade, and vice versa, indicating a feedback loop. (Brown, 2019)

Another research ‘Too Pretty for Homework: Sexualized Gender Stereotypes Predict Academic Attitudes for Gender-Typical Early Adolescent Girls’ Nelson and Brown stated that girls who endorse SGS, believing they can boost social status by prioritizing attractiveness over intelligence, tend to have less positive academic outcomes. This effect is most pronounced for girls who strongly identify with traditional gender norms. (Nelson & Brown, 2018)

In the research “Expressing the self or achieving security through academic choices: Implications for gender gaps in STEM pursuit” Yalcinkaya and Adams (2022) investigate how cultural perceptions of academic choice affect gender gaps in STEM fields. They stated that emphasizing self-expression deters women from STEM, while emphasizing future security motivates both men and women equally in STEM. (Yalcinkaya & Adams, 2022)

Another research by Kollmayer, Schober, and Spiel named ‘Gender stereotypes in education: Development, consequences, and interventions’ where the author discuss gender stereotypes in education, highlighting their developmental origins and consequences. They stated that parents' and teachers' gender biases influence children's behaviors and propose interventions to address these issues, including the REFLECT program for secondary school teachers. (Kollmayer et al., 2016)

Another research by Smith and Hung named ‘Stereotype threat: effects on education’ where they examine the impact of stereotype threat on education, particularly in mathematics for females and minorities. They aim to debunk the belief that females are less capable than males in math and science, offering insights into interventions and future research directions. (Smith & Hung, 2008)

In the research ‘Gender stereotypes and education: A comparative content analysis of Malaysian, Indonesian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi school textbooks,’ Islam and Asadullah find a pro-male bias, with females underrepresented in both text and images, occupying mostly traditional roles. (Islam & Asadullah, 2018)

Another research by Igbo, Onu, and Obiyo named ‘Impact of Gender Stereotype on Secondary School Students’ Self-Concept and Academic Achievement’ where author examine the influence of gender stereotypes on secondary school students' self-concept and academic achievement. Their study reveals that gender stereotypes significantly impact both aspects, favoring male students. (Igbo et al., 2015)

Another research by Lin Bian named ‘Gender Stereotypes and Education’ where the author examines gender stereotypes impacting women's participation in various career domains despite their academic achievements matching those of men. She specifically focuses on stereotypes about women's intellectual abilities and the culture of different fields. (Bian, 2022)

In ‘A Review of Gender Stereotypes in Education,’ Su, Wang, Zhang, and Zhang have discussed about gender stereotypes in education, focusing on changes in the twenty-first century. Their study explores empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives on educational performance and attainment from kindergarten to college. (Bian, 2022)

In another research by Albuquerque, Bittencourt, Coelho, and Silva named ‘Does gender stereotype threat in gamified educational environments cause anxiety?’ where the authors investigate the impact of gender stereotype threat in gamified educational environments on anxiety and performance and indicate that exposure to a male-stereotyped environment in gamified educational scenarios increases participants' anxiety levels. (Albuquerque et al., 2017)

The last research is ‘Gender stereotypes: the impact upon perceived roles and practice of in-service teachers in physical education’ by Stacey Preece and Rachael Bullingham where the researchers have explored gender stereotypes and their impact on perceived roles and practice of teachers. (Preece & Bullingham, 2023)

Yet none of these researches are close to our quest to investigate how Gender Stereotypes survive, and have a dominant influence impact on academic pursuits among students at the University level, especially at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

In order to hunt that quest, we are going to construct a conceptual framework to find our dedicated ways to explore our goal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research is going to explore how existing gender stereotypes influence academic pursuits among the students of the University of Rajshahi. And there is a little existing literature in this area, we will employ an inductive approach to conduct this research. This research is going to follow the qualitative way of research.

3.2 Area of Study

This resource is primarily focused on 16 departments including Accounting, Library Management, History and culture, Material Science and Engineering (MSE), Law, Sociology, Economics, Public Administration, Journalism, International Relations, Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), Pharmacy, Marketing,

Applied Mathematics, Arabic, and Banking under the six faculties: Social Science, Fine Arts, Law, Business Studies, Science, and Engineering. Additionally, it includes an institute, IER.

In this research, we are going to focus on gender stereotypes which make disparities exposed to girls and where boys enjoy immunity, particularly focusing on the challenges and obstacles faced by girls compared to boys. Key areas where these stereotypes manifest, such as family, Society, classmates or other students, and teachers.

3.3 Data Collection

Data will be gathered through interviews with committed students. A series of questions will be posed during these interviews, and the responses will be subsequently analyzed.

3.3.1 Interview Questionnaires

The interview questions which are used to gather information on gender stereotypes and disparities in academic pursuits:

1. Were there any expectations from your family or society regarding campus selection and subjects to study based on your gender? Did they influence your decisions? How?
2. Have you ever felt like you weren't included in a study group or project because you're a boy/girl in your campus life? How?
3. Do teachers treat boys and girls the same or differently in your classroom in terms of academic abilities or classroom participation? How?
4. Did you ever hear the stereotype from your campus surroundings that studying more is a feminine habit that doesn't align with boys' behavior? Does it influence your study habits?
5. Do you believe girls are less engaged in group studies than boys? What do you think could be the reason behind this?
6. Do you believe gender stereotypes still exist within the academic environment? What steps should be taken to promote awareness and challenge these gender stereotypes in your opinion?

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed by the researcher, who will systematically organize the interviewee's responses according to the predefined analysis criteria. These organized data will then be recorded in computerized software for further processing and examination.

DISCUSSION

The responses of the participants are presented in the following sequence:

Respondent 1 (Male):

Response to the first question: He had no family influence in terms of campus and subject selection regarding gender. However, he feels that other female members of his family are not treated equally. Families do not feel comfortable educating girls away from home.

Response to the 2nd question: No. He was never excluded.

Response to the 3rd question: He thinks that teachers treat boys and girls differently in the classroom. Girls are taken extra care. They are given more priority than boys.

Response to the 4th question: He heard many times from campus surroundings. But this stereotype has no effect on his study habits.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. He feels that girls are slightly less engaged in group studies than boys on campus. And for this, he blames religious expectations and self-centeredness as the main reasons.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. And he thinks it's possible through fair classroom practice. Boys and girls sit separately in his classroom. He thinks religious and cultural expectations work behind this.

Respondent 2 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No, He had no such an impact, but he saw it in others' lives. One of his friends is a girl who had to leave the textile engineering subject. Her family and society have taught her that it is not a girl's subject.

Response to the 2nd question: No. He never faced it but he saw his classmates being deprived with his own eyes.

Response to the 3rd question: He feels that in some cases boys are taken extra care of than girls.

Response to the 4th question: Heard since childhood even in campus surroundings. But it doesn't affect his study habits much.

Response to the 5th question: No comments.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. People's mindset needs to change, especially families and teachers need to change their mindset.

Respondent 3 (Female):

Response to the first question: No, she was given freedom by her family.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes, she was deprived of projects and research work for being a girl.

Response to the 3rd question: She thinks that boys are given more priority than girls in terms of classroom participation.

Response to the 4th question: She heard it since childhood, but it had no effect on her life.

Response to the 5th question: No. She does not seem like that.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Attitudes of students and teachers need to change and awareness can be raised through seminars, workshops, and various writings.

Respondent 4 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: She felt that there were gender-based expectations but it has no impact on her case.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes, she was excluded from the research project. Even though she was ahead of the other boy members in terms of skill, she was not taken into that project only because she was a girl.

Response to the 3rd question: She thinks there is no inequality in her classroom. Teachers treat boys and girls equally.

Response to the 4th question: No comments.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. She thinks so, Self-centeredness, cultural/Societal Bullying, religious Practices.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Individual mindset, Administrative Policy, and Research Awareness need to address these issues. In particular, teachers who treat girls equally should not be bullied or they need to pay attention to bullying.

Respondent 5 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. He has been deprived of group study being a religious boy. And accused of bullying because everyone thinks that people with beards and hats are not suitable in group discussions with girls.

Response to the 3rd question: No.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard from campus surroundings. But no effects.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. He argued that girls are generally self-centered and also religious expectations can be the crucial reasons.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Need to Grow the mental maturity of individuals. Workshop, Student Organization can be effective.

Respondent 6 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, her family had gender expectations regarding campus selection. He wanted to study in the University of Dhaka, but she was forced by her family to choose Rajshahi University for being a girl she seems.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. Once she was excluded from group studies with boys because she was bullied by other students on her campus.

Response to the 3rd question: She thinks teachers treat both boys and girls equally in her classroom.

Response to the 4th question: No comments.

Response to the 5th question: She thinks so a few. He blames the self-centeredness of girls and she also blames society, because society thinks girls are sweet with girls and boys with boys.

Response to the 6th question; She seems it slightly reduced from earlier. Administrative portion, public awareness. Government policy on educational institutions would be effective from her point of view.

Respondent 7 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: There was no gender expectation from her family in her case but she saw gender expectations in her neighborhood families.

Response to the 2nd question: No, she was not excluded from any kind of study group or project.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: No, she didn't hear.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, she heard and saw. She believes that society and religious influence are

behind it.

Response to the 5th question: She believes it shapes both the academic and job sectors. Academically, a seminar would be effective for raising awareness.

Respondent 8 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: There was no influence on her campus and subject selections from her family.

Response to the 2nd question: No. She was not excluded ever for being a girl.

Response to the 3rd question: She believes boys are given more preference in some cases like class participation because boys are less serious about to studies than girls.

Response to the 4th question: No. She didn't hear from her campus surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Because most girls think why should we mix with boys, what people will think?

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Discrimination between men and women should be reduced. Communication with each other should be increased. Gender-based attitudes should be changed.

Respondent 9 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: No. As a boy, there are no expectations.

Response to the 2nd question: No.

Response to the 3rd question: Yes. But not for all. He has seen in some teachers that they prefer girls more than boys. They are caring towards girls and rude towards boys.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard.

Response to the 5th question: No. He doesn't seem so.

Response to the 6th question: He believes a few and blames the mindsets and attitudes of individuals.

Respondent 10 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Family did not influence her but there was societal pressure. Because people think engineering sectors are only for boys. Girls are more preferred in memorized and theoretical-based studies in society. Boys are more preferred in the technological sector.

Response to the 2nd question: No, she never felt it.

Response to the 3rd question: Yes, they treat equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, she heard from her campus surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, there is some difference. Because he thinks girls can't enjoy campus life as much as boys. Because like boys, girls don't always have access to the hall or to get out of the mess.

Response to the 6th question: He thinks the campus environment is good. The human mentality in this case directly and indirectly impacts. But he did not get any such influence from any authoritative figure. According to her, to make a reduction individuals have to be aware of it.

Respondent 11 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: There were both family and societal expectations. They preferred universities closer to home. They are because they think it is not suitable for a girl to study away. They think there tends to deteriorate.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. She has to enter the mess before evening due to which he cannot participate in various seminars and debate sessions.

Response to the 3rd question: She thinks they treat equally. But sometimes girls are given a little more preference.

Response to the 4th question: Yes. And teachers also sometimes say that girls study more, they don't hang out like boys so their results are better than boys.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, she thinks so. There may be many reasons behind it like family restrictions, religious expectations, cultural expectations, and self (girls prefer to study alone)

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Awareness campaigns or seminars can be conducted.

Respondent 12 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, her family and neighbors did not consider it suitable her for being a girl to study law.

Response to the 2nd question: No. Never felt like that.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally. But girls are slightly more preferred than boys she felt.

Response to the 4th question: He heard. As a result, she thinks boys have better brains than girls probably. Their retention capacity is relatively high. They can do well even if they read less.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Due to family restrictions, they cannot spend more time outside like boys. And those who live in the mess are deprived of group study and various projects due to time limitations. Moreover, due to religious reasons, many boys and girls do not feel easy to work in teamwork with the opposite sex.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. He thinks that people's mentality needs to change in this regard. Generally, there is no binding in any department-centered co-curriculum activities. In that case, the teacher should be concerned about promoting teamwork combined, then everyone's mentality will gradually change and teamwork will be normalized among boys and girls.

Respondent 13 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No expectations.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. He felt that when some of his classmate's study in groups, it is seen that only girls study in groups and there is no tendency to include boys as a result he was excluded once.

Response to the 3rd question: Fifty-Fifty. Most teachers treat them equally and most do not. In this case, those who treat them a little unequally give boys a little more priority, he thinks.

Response to the 4th question: Yes. Some effect on the sense of control. Sometimes I think that I am a boy, why should I study so much?

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Girls are less engaged. Because they don't want to go outside, they feel more comfortable in the room. On the other hand, boys are more chatty, so they are engaged in group study.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. He thinks that there is a need to change the mentality from their own places.

Respondent 14 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No.

Response to the 2nd question: No.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: No, he never heard before.

Response to the 5th question: He thinks that girls are more engaged in group studies.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. There is a stereotype in society that engineering sectors are not suitable for girls. In this case, a seminar and walk-through can be organized for the girls who are studying in these sectors. They can build awareness through campaigns by highlighting their success.

Respondent 15 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes. It was about subject choice. He wanted to study journalism but his family thought journalism is too risky profession. It is not suitable for girls. Due to this, he was forced to join the IER department. Because they prefer the teaching profession.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. She was not included in the department's research work in the fieldwork for being a girl. Teammates said she couldn't walk; they think girls can't adjust to that situation. That's Q why he thinks.

Response to the 3rd question: There is some difference. But it is about participation and capabilities.

Response to the 4th question: Yes. He has heard from the campus surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Because girls prefer to study alone. Because society thinks girls are suitable with girls, boys are suitable with boys.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Awareness can be raised through fair classroom practice and various awareness workshops.

Respondent 16 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: It was not in his case. However, he saw in the neighbor's families where female students were forced to admit to medical college being interested in engineering subjects.

Response to the 2nd question: No. He never felt it.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, He heard in campus surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: No opinion

Response to the 6th question: Yes, we need teaching about gender.

Respondent 17 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, there was. He was from science background, due to which his expectation was to study engineering subject. But her family thinks that engineering subject is not suitable for girls. As a result, they asked her to prepare for medical even only within the Rajshahi division. As a result, she had to be admitted to the Department of Sociology at Rajshahi University after not being in Rajshahi Medical.

Response to the 2nd question: No. She never felt like that.

Response to the 3rd question: Yes, Teacher treats equally in the classroom.

Response to the 4th question: Yes. She heard from Campus Surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: No opinion.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. Awareness can be increased through workshops and seminars. Institutional policies need to be changed. Girls need to be engaged more.

Respondent 18 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No, there was no gender expectation from his family for being a boy.

Response to the 2nd question: No. He never felt it.

Response to the 3rd question: No opinion.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard from Campus Surroundings. There was not much effect on him personally.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, he seems like that. They can be influenced by ethnicity, religious feelings, or personal life but it is not for everyone.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. Because some obstacles remain in our patriarchal society. Awareness campaigning like workshops or seminars and also student organizations would be effective in this case. He argues it is possible to overcome the problem by working on increasing the mutual cordial relationship between students.

Respondent 19 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. He feels that he has some female classmates who study in groups and don't allow the boys in their group

Response to the 3rd question: He felt that some teachers prefer girls. But it doesn't apply to everyone.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, heard it since childhood. And he also heard that girls are better at memorization.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. From his experience, girls are not always able to engage in group studies. In this case, there are some restrictions such as not being able to enter the hall and mess before evening or leaving it after evening. And those who are from conservative families have restrictions on free-mixing.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. Awareness can be raised through such organizations.

Respondent 20 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes. She couldn't pick up the form of "Jahangir Nagor University" for being a girl. And after getting a chance at RU, she wanted to study *Journalism* but was not allowed to study from her family. They think journalism doesn't go with girls.

Response to the 2nd question: 2) No. However, sometimes she cannot go outside because of the restrictions in the hall.

Response to the 3rd question: Some teachers prefer girls and some teachers prefer boys. She seems to have some inequality. But not much.

Response to the 4th question: No, she never heard it.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. The reason behind this may be the restriction of the hall and the mess. But she thinks that boys are a little more serious about studies, about the future. Because girls generally think that their husbands will earn and they will take responsibility for them. She also argues this may be due to cultural expectations of this campus such as here girls with girls, and boys with boys are considered as suitable.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Various student organizations in varsity would be effective for Spreading awareness. In this case, social media platforms would be the best way to speed up awareness.

Respondent 21 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: There was no gender expectation of his family regarding his campus and subject choice.

Response to the 2nd question: No, he never excluded.

Response to the 3rd question: He said that he felt some inequality, some teachers prefer girls over boys in the classroom participation. But not all.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard. But not affect so much.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, he thinks girls are less engaged. He thinks that there is a religious perception behind it. There is a matter of ethics, conservative families do not accept free mixing culture.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Awareness can be created through workshops.

Respondent 22 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, there was an expectation in campus selection. Her family preferred to take admission to campus nearer to home due to insecurity. Moreover, as a girl she faced hindrances about why she should study engineering subject, she had heard such talk from society and people from the neighborhood.

Response to the 2nd question: No, she didn't feel like that.

Response to the 3rd question: There is some inequality she felt. Some teachers prefer boys; some teachers prefer girls. But beyond this, there are many teachers who treat equally.

Response to the 4th question: No. But she has heard that girls are better at rote learning. Boys are considered to have more critical minds.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Religious factors work behind it because free mixing is not supported in many religions.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, he thinks so. Awareness can be increased through various academic activities such as teachers practicing equality in their classroom fairly.

Respondent 23 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, she faced such questions “*Why should she study at the university as a girl?*” She has heard this kind of talk from relatives and neighbors. However, there were no gender-based expectations from the family.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes, she thinks so. Many times it has been seen that she cannot get engaged in any boys' group study because she is the only girl and the boys are also not interested in getting her engaged.

Response to the 3rd question: Yes, they treat equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, she heard from her friends. In some cases, some young boys think that girls are better at rote learning. Their analytical power is low. And they think girls will get married and become dependent.

Response to the 5th question: No comments

Response to the 6th question: No comments

Respondent 24 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No. There was no gender-based expectation in his case. But feels that other female members of his family are not independent like him.

Response to the 2nd question: No.

Response to the 3rd question: Yes. They treat equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard from his friend-circle. Mostly when someone studies a little more, does not leave the house to study. Other friends give him a feminine tag. They think studying more is a feminine nature.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, he thinks so. According to him, most of the group studies take place at night. Because, in the science faculty, they have to study with classes and labs during the day. In that case, girls can't get out of the hall or mess after a long time at night. The cultural perception of the campus is that free-mixing of boys and girls is not seen well here.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. Awareness can be created academically.

Respondent 25 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes, it was in the case of campus selection. Despite getting a chance at DU, her family did not allow her to get admission there due to insecurity.

Response to the 2nd question: No.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: She heard occasionally.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. she thinks so. She argues that religious expectations and lack of female roles can be the main reasons behind it.

Response to the 6th question: Yes. He believes academic fairness is possible through classroom practice.

Respondent 26 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No was not.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes, he was deprived. Sometimes when sir made a group for a project, it was seen that I was the only boy in the group of 10 people. In that case, he was not taken because he felt uncomfortable working with them. It was seen again that it was not possible to work with them even if he wanted to.

Response to the 3rd question: No. He thinks that in this case, girls are a little more preferred. Because they are a bit soft-hearted and sensitive. As a result, teachers consider many things in their cases.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard. Seeing friends studying more gives a feminine tag and it has a psychological effect. Like studying more seems it doesn't go with boys. Due to this study habits changed a little.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. He feels less engaged.

However, he thinks that the reason behind this is that girls usually cannot go out frequently. They spend more time at home and study more. As a result, it can be seen that they are a little more proficient in comparative studies, while boys are relatively less attentive in studies, so they need group study. Moreover, if we think beyond this, we can see that there are some cultural and religious barriers in the case of female students. Like boys and girls walking together, many people do not see it well. Also, people do not like free mixing with boys because of religious norms and values.

Response to the 6th question: He thinks yes. In this case, it is possible to increase awareness through various campaigns, and student organizations on campus.

Respondent 27 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No, there were gender expectations in his case.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes, sometimes he is deprived of girls' group due to poor understanding.

Response to the 3rd question: In this case, he thinks there is a little inequality. Because girls are soft-hearted and a little sensitive, and because of this they are given a little preference than boys.

Response to the 4th question: No, he has not heard.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. Many of them do not feel comfortable due to religious norms and values.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. Awareness can be increased through seminars and workshops.

Respondent 28 (Female):

Response to the 1st question: Yes. There was a gender-based expectation in her campus selection. For example, even after he got a chance at Jagannath University, his family did not allow him to get admission there. He had to get admission to Rajshahi University which is nearest to home.

Response to the 2nd question: No, she was not deprived.

Response to the 3rd question: She thinks girls are slightly more preferred because they are more interested in studies than boys.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, she heard from Campus Surroundings.

Response to the 5th question: Yes, it seems. Many female students prefer to study at home. Also, many of them do not want to mix with boys for religious reasons.

Response to the 6th question: She seems to be limited. No comments.

Respondent 29 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No.

However, he found that there are some restrictions on subject choice in our society, especially for girls who face it more. For example, engineering subjects are not considered suitable for them. The nursing profession is considered suitable.

Response to the 2nd question: Yes. He has been excluded from an organization for his religious ideologies and practices.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, he heard.

Response to the 5th question: Yes. But there are many reasons behind it such as due to the restrictions of the hall or mess, they have to enter the room before evening for safety. Also, many people are not comfortable with Free mixing for religious norms.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, there is. Awareness can be raised among people who are not aware at the root level through campaigns at the root level. In that case, families can be aware.

Respondent 30 (Male):

Response to the 1st question: No was not.

Response to the 2nd question: Not deprived.

Response to the 3rd question: Treats equally.

Response to the 4th question: Yes, heard. He has seen that when somebody studies more and does not leave the house, he is tagged as a girl and “Gharkuno”. It seems to have some psychological impact for a certain period.

Response to the 5th question: No comments.

Response to the 6th question: Yes, still exists. In this case, friend-circle and teachers can also take care. Students generally come from different places and different cultures. In that case, they cannot adapt themselves to the new environment. Can't get along with everyone. If the students do not like working together, friends can help him in various ways, showing him the positive and negative side. On the other hand, the teachers can make the students into combined groups when they make different groups in the classroom, as a result, it can be seen that the hesitation between them will be removed gradually.

RESULT

5.1 Result

The analysis of the questions was carried out sequentially, and the resulting findings are presented in the following order:

1. **Evaluating the outcome of question 01:** Were there any expectations from your family or society regarding campus selection and subjects to study based on your gender? Did they influence your decisions? How?

Male Respondents:

Out of the 15 male responses, no one indicated that they had faced gender-based expectations regarding campus selection and subject choice. This represents 0 out of 15 male responses.

The percentage of boys facing gender-based expectations: $(0/15) * 100\% = 0\%$.

So, most of the male respondents reported that they did not face any gender-based expectations or influences regarding their campus and subject choices. However, some male respondents observed gender expectations and influences in their society or in their families and neighbors' families, where female students were sometimes discouraged from pursuing certain subjects like engineering. And families do not feel comfortable educating girls away from home.

Female Respondents:

Out of the 15 female responses, 12 indicated that they had faced gender-based expectations regarding campus selection and subject choice. This represents 12 out of 15 female responses.

The percentage of girls facing gender-based expectations: $(12/15) * 100\% = 80\%$

So, female respondents had mixed experiences. Some argued that their families had gender-based expectations or influences on their campus and subject choices, often favoring universities closer to home due to safety concerns. Some mentioned that societal expectations influenced their choices, with a perception that certain subjects, like *engineering, Journalism, and law* were not suitable for girls.

Some female respondents expressed that their families or society had reservations about them pursuing **Engineering** as a field of study. There was a perception in society that engineering is primarily a field for boys. A female respondent mentioned that her family believed **Journalism** was a risky profession and not suitable for girls. Another female respondent reported that her family and neighbors did not consider it suitable for them to study **Law**. And a few female respondents shared experiences of facing societal pressure and hearing discouraging comments from relatives and neighbors about their pursuit of higher education. They have faced such questions "Why should she study at the University as a girl?"

On the other hand, some female respondents (20%) mentioned that they were given the freedom to make their own choices, with no family expectations or influences.

So, approximately 0% of the boys and 80% of the girls in these responses faced gender-based expectations in this question.

2. **Evaluating the outcome of question 02:** Have you ever felt like you weren't included in a study group or project because you're a boy/girl in your campus life? How?

Male Responses:

Out of the 15 male responses, 4 indicated that they have felt excluded from study groups or projects due to their gender. This represents 4 out of 15 male responses.

A majority of male respondents (10 out of 15) reported that they were not excluded or deprived of opportunities in study groups or projects because of their gender. A male respondent (1 out of 15) mentioned that they observed other classmates being excluded, indicating that they did not personally experience such exclusion but were aware of it happening. A few male respondents (4 out of 15) indicated that they were indeed excluded.

One mentioned religious beliefs, while another talked about feeling uncomfortable working with a group of girls.

So, the percentage of boys who faced gender-based expectations: $(4 / 15) * 100\% = 26.67\%$.

Female responses:

A significant number of female respondents (6 out of 15) reported that they were excluded or deprived of opportunities in study groups or projects because of their gender.

One female respondent mentioned being bullied by other students as a reason for exclusion. Another female respondent mentioned that even though she had more skills, she was excluded from a research project simply because she was a girl. Some female respondents (3 out of 15) indicated that they faced other gender-related restrictions, such as not being able to participate in certain events due to early evening curfews in the mess or hall (Sandhya Ain)

The percentage of girls who faced gender-based expectations: $(6 / 15) * 100\% = 40\%$.

So, approximately 26.67% of the boys and 40% of the girls mentioned that they faced gender-based expectations or exclusion in this question.

3. **Evaluating the outcome of question 03:** Do teachers treat boys and girls the same or differently in your classroom in terms of academic abilities or classroom participation? How?

Male Responses:

Out of the 15 boys, 4 mentioned that they observed differences in how teachers treat boys and girls. they observed teachers preferring girls and giving them more attention (4 out of 15). The teachers are perceived as preferring girls and being rude to boys. Their perception is that girls receive a little more preference due to their soft-hearted and sensitive nature.

Responses from male students are mixed. Some feel that teachers treat boys and girls equally (6 out of 15). Some don't see any significant difference. They think some inequality is perceived, but it doesn't apply to everyone. One male respondent mentioned that in cases of unequal treatment, boys are sometimes given more priority.

Percentage of boys who mentioned differences in teacher treatment based on gender: $(4 / 15) * 100\% = 26.67\%$

Female Responses:

Out of the 15 female, 5 argued that they observed differences in how teachers treat boys and girls.

Female students also had mixed responses, with some believing that teachers treat both genders equally (5 out of 15). Some female respondents mentioned that teachers sometimes give a slight preference to girls (3 out of 15). A few respondents suggested that there is inequality based on capabilities and participation (2 out of 15). One female respondent felt that girls were more interested in studies and, as a result, slightly more preferred by teachers.

The percentage of girls who mentioned differences in teacher treatment based on gender: $(5 / 15) * 100\% = 33.33\%$

So, approximately 26.67% of the boys and 33.33% of the girls mentioned differences in how teachers treat students based on their gender in their responses to this question.

4. **Evaluating the outcome of question 04:** Did you ever hear the stereotype from your campus surroundings that studying more is a feminine habit that doesn't align/go with boys' behavior? Does it influence your study habits?

Male Responses:

Several male respondents (7 out of 15) reported hearing this stereotype from their campus surroundings.

Some of these respondents mentioned that this stereotype has a psychological impact on them or their friends. They described feeling that studying more was associated with being feminine, and it sometimes influenced their study habits.

Others (8 out of 15) mentioned that they had heard the stereotype but it didn't have much effect on them personally.

Percentage of boys who heard the stereotype: $(7 / 15) * 100\% = 46.67\%$

Female Responses:

A smaller number of female respondents (4 out of 15) mentioned that they had heard this stereotype from their campus surroundings.

Some female respondents (2 out of 15) indicated that they had heard variations of the stereotype, such as girls being better at rote learning while boys were considered to have more critical thinking skills. Others (9 out of 15) reported that they did not hear or were not influenced by this stereotype.

Percentage of girls who heard the stereotype: $(4 / 15) * 100\% = 26.67\%$

For the overall percentage among all respondents and effects:

- Total respondents who mentioned they have encountered stereotypical activities: 7 (boys) + 4 (girls) = 11
- Total respondents (boys and girls): 15 (boys) + 15 (girls) = 30

Percentage overall: $(11 / 30) * 100\% = 36.67\%$

So, approximately 46.67% of the boys, 26.67% of the girls, and around 36.67% of all respondents mentioned hearing the stereotype about studying more being considered a feminine habit.

Effects

Percentage of respondents who reported experiencing effects from the stereotype: $(6 / 30) * 100\% = 20\%$. So, approximately 20% of the respondents, both male and female, mentioned experiencing effects from the stereotype about studying more being considered a feminine habit.

While some felt that it had a psychological effect, others mentioned that it didn't affect them significantly. However, the existence of this stereotype suggests that traditional gender norms and expectations can influence perceptions of academic behaviors.

5. **Evaluating the outcome of question 05:** Do you believe that girls are less engaged in group studies than boys? What do you think could be the reason behind this?

Male Responses:

Out of the 15 boys, 10 expressed their opinions on whether girls are less engaged in group studies compared

to boys. They believed that girls are less engaged in group studies compared to boys. They suggested various reasons, including religious expectations, self-centeredness, and restrictions on the mobility of female students.

A few male respondents didn't express a clear opinion on this matter.

Percentage of boys who expressed their opinions on behalf of this question: $(10 / 15) * 100\% = 66.66\%$

Female Responses:

Out of the 15 girls, 12 expressed their opinions on whether girls are less engaged in group studies compared to boys. They believed that girls are less engaged in group studies than boys. The reasons given by female respondents included self-centeredness, societal and cultural expectations, religious influences, family restrictions, "Sandhya Ain" and a preference for studying alone.

The rest of the female respondents did not agree with the idea confidently that girls are less engaged in group studies and provided reasons such as religious factors and the lack of female roles as potential explanations.

Percentage of girls who expressed their opinions on this question: $(12 / 15) * 100\% = 80\%$

So, approximately 6.66%% of the boys, 80 % of the girls, and around 73.33% of all respondents provided their opinions on the question about whether girls are less engaged in group studies than boys.

6. **Evaluating the outcome of question 06:** Do you believe gender stereotypes still exist within the academic environment? What steps should be taken to promote awareness and challenge these gender stereotypes in your opinion?

All male and female respondents (30 out of 30) acknowledged the existence of gender stereotypes within the academic environment.

They proposed various steps to promote awareness and challenge these stereotypes, including changing individuals' mindsets, conducting seminars and workshops, fostering mutual relationships between students, creating student organizations, public awareness campaigns, and promoting fair classroom practices.

One respondent challenged the stereotype that suggests engineering sectors are not suitable for girls. He suggested that seminars and walk-through events can be organized for female students studying in these sectors. These events can help raise awareness by highlighting the success of female engineers.

Another respondent proposed that teachers play a vital role in promoting teamwork among students, including both boys and girls. The idea is that when students engage in teamwork and collaboration, it gradually normalizes the involvement of both genders.

Another respondent believes that friends can help individuals by providing support and guidance, showcasing both the positive and negative aspects of situations. It is proposed that teachers can also contribute to reducing hesitation between students of different genders by creating combined groups in the classroom. This approach is expected to gradually eliminate any discomfort associated with working together.

Another respondent argued that awareness can be raised among people who are not aware at the root level through campaigns at the root level. In that case, families can be aware of the consequences of gender stereotypes.

5.2 Theoretical Explanation of these Phenomena

The existing gender stereotypes revealed in the survey results can be analyzed through the lens of feminist theory, which seeks to understand and challenge how traditional gender norms, expectations, and power

imbalances influence various aspects of society, including academic pursuits. Here's an analysis of how these stereotypes evolve, survive, and have a dominant influence on academic pursuits within the context of feminist theory.

In question 1, the survey indicates that many female respondents faced gender-based expectations and influences regarding campus selection and subject choice. This influence on academic decisions is a direct result of gender stereotypes that suggest certain fields of study are more suitable for one gender over another. Feminist theory would argue that these stereotypes restrict the choices available to individuals based on their gender, limiting their academic pursuits.

The survey shows that 100 percent of men didn't face any gender-based expectations from their family on the contrary 80 percent of women faced some degree of gender-based expectations which indicates the fundamental assumption of society that set a boundary for women to take part in social activities where women are expected to go certain directions and not beyond a certain limit that can be observed by the expectations like studying close to home and going not so far as well from expectations such as studying a subject that fulfills the gendered expectations and not studying in a subject that has the potential to lead them to a job sector that does not comply with their social norms.

Questions 2 and 3 reveal that some male and female respondents felt excluded from study groups or observed differences in how teachers treat students based on their gender. This exclusion and unequal treatment are indicative of the influence of gender stereotypes, where certain behaviors and abilities are associated with masculinity or femininity. Feminist theory highlights how these stereotypes can lead to unequal opportunities and treatment in educational settings, further perpetuating gender disparities.

From the analysis of the answers women are found to be excluded from group studies and not held compatible with conducting a study project based on their gender identity. The rate of women exclusion is higher than boys which shows that groups are inclined toward preferring boys more than girls. Girls are seen as less capable of blending into groups and fulfilling expectations. In projects far away women are not preferred suitable as assumptions that women have fewer capabilities than men to handle labor-intensive and complex tasks and are less adaptive than men with a new environment.

In question 4, the survey indicates that both male and female respondents heard the stereotype that studying more is considered a feminine habit. This stereotype suggests that academic diligence is associated with femininity and may stigmatize boys who excel in their studies. Feminist theory would argue that this stereotype contributes to the maintenance of traditional gender norms, discouraging boys from pursuing academic excellence and reinforcing the idea that certain behaviors are gendered.

The societal discriminatory outlook toward women limits women's interaction in society. Some societies tend to push women only to be involved in certain activities such as spending the larger part of their life within the household and sticking to household activities so that in future they become more skilled and efficient in their future household activities when those societies often expectedly limit the social interaction and thus limiting girl's freedom where boys are unaffected of those. These phenomena further joined women's association with studying more as they spend much of their time in the household and boys in the outside world.

Question 5 highlights that some respondents believe girls are less engaged in group studies than boys, attributing this difference to societal and cultural expectations. Feminist theory would argue that these expectations emerged from deeply ingrained gender norms that position girls as less academically inclined and emphasize self-centeredness. These stereotypes can limit girls' participation in collaborative learning environments.

The culture of dominating women and limiting their movement in the outer world is highly influenced by religious sentiments. Religion works as an instrument to impose legitimate boundaries on women's activities. Religion is criticized by Marxist-inclined thinkers who see it as a manifestation of capitalism. Men hold the dominant control over this manifestation of capitalism in a society where men tend to limit women's activities

in society to such an extent that provides a perpetual monopoly of controlling freedom of activity to men. This capitalism provides enough support to families which are fundamentally dominated by men as well as masculinity to restrict women from achieving freedom. If women acquire greater freedom, then men-dominated families become insecure about losing its status quo of subordinating women. Limiting women's societal interaction consequently discriminate women from experiencing the world than men thus in the same society the distribution of decision-making authority is unequal and constructs a hierarchy where women are always subordinate. The 'Sandhya Ain' of Rajshahi University depicts the perfect example of this hierarchy where men are provided with freedom of movement 24 hours but the freedom is limited to women after dawn as the dawn comes to Earth and on women at the same time.

FUTURE DIRECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The respondents proposed several steps to address these stereotypes, including changing mindsets, conducting seminars and workshops, fostering relationships between students, creating student organizations, launching public awareness campaigns, and promoting fair classroom practices.

Regarding their arguments and situated knowledge, some potential recommendations and directions are given below-

To challenge prevailing stereotypes that discourage girls from pursuing careers in fields like engineering, journalism, and law, future directions and recommendations should involve organizing seminars and events that feature accomplished female professionals in these areas. By highlighting the successes of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors, we can inspire and encourage more girls to pursue careers in these fields.

In the pursuit of normalizing the involvement of both genders in collaborative activities, teachers should actively promote teamwork, and mixed-gender group work within the classroom can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

Future efforts should focus on initiating awareness campaigns at the foundational level. Targeting families through these campaigns can be a powerful way to increase awareness about gender stereotypes. By engaging parents, guardians, and community members, we can work to shift perceptions and create a more inclusive and equitable environment for students.

While most research on stereotypes has predominantly centered around the STEM field (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). This study brings to light the impact of gender stereotypes in other domains of the social sciences, including journalism and the legal field. These findings underscore the importance of scholars directing their attention to these specific areas for further exploration and analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

This research at the University of Rajshahi reveals the significant influence of gender stereotypes on students' academic pursuits. Gender biases, societal expectations, and cultural norms strongly affect educational choices and academic performance among students. The study identifies multiple factors contributing to the formation of gender stereotypes, such as cultural norms and personal experiences. The implications of this research stress the urgent need for increased attention to gender stereotypes within society and the importance of creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. To address the issues highlighted, it is essential to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals in education. This research offers valuable knowledge into the experiences of undergraduate students and provides recommendations for fostering a more equitable academic environment. It serves as a foundation for addressing and destroying existing gender stereotypes in higher education and beyond.

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