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LATENT STRUCTURE OF GENDER ATTITUDES IN URBAN AND RURAL ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract:

Adolescence serves as a demographic turnover point during which emerging individuals assimilate prevailing gender beliefs and social hierarchies into durable self-representations and anticipatory role enactments. This investigation applies a latent-variable analytic template to delineate the dispositional gender-attitude constellations of adolescents embedded within contrasting urban and rural micro-regions. The model is oriented toward partitioning the relative contributions of geographic milieu and sociocultural architecture to the divergence observed in three axial domains: normative assertions regarding prescriptive gender roles, consonance with equity-oriented mandates, and the design of gender-inflected identity trajectories. The analysis prioritises a locality-comparative lens by tracing the mutual entanglement of structural, relational, and symbolic capital that differentially scaffolds or circumscribes adolescents' appropriation and renegotiation of gender imperatives across transiting friendship networks, household micro-structures, and broader institutional domains. Adopting a cross-sectional framework, the investigation recruited a demographically balanced cohort of the male and female adolescent population aged 13–18 years from urban secondary schools and rural educational establishments. A structured instrument, integrating both conventional and contemporary items measuring gender attitudes, was delivered to the sample. The analyzed dataset was first subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in order to isolate latent attitudinal dimensions and was subsequently supplemented by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to verify the stability of the factor structure across urban and rural strata.

The analysis uncovers a three-factor latent architecture that comprises endorsement of conventional gender roles, openness to role variation, and awareness of equity norms. Factor loadings exhibit geographic variation: urban participants show stronger endorsement of egalitarian ideals, while rural respondents retain a stronger commitment to traditional roles. Socio-demographic moderators, specifically, parental education, habits of media engagement, and the salience of peer affiliations, compound the attitudinal constellation, exposing the iterative interplay of contextual and personal determinants in the solidification of gender-related cognitions. The present investigation broadens the empirical corpus on adolescent maturation by delivering a rigorously calibrated psychometric evaluation calibrated across disparate geographic contexts. These results furnish guidance of pragmatic value to education policymakers, to the architects of gender sensitization curricula, and to those designing community-oriented programmes, thereby endorsing interventions that are finely attuned to the variations of sociocultural contexts and that thereby further gender equity among young people across heterogeneous environments.

Keywords:

Gender Attitudes, Adolescents, Urban and Rural Youth, Latent Structure, Gender Roles, Psychometric Analysis, Social Norms, Factor Analysis, Cultural Differences, Youth Perceptions

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance

Gender attitudes are the ideas and feelings people have about what different genders should do, how they should behave, and what rights they should have in society. During adolescence, which is a key time for figuring out who we are, these attitudes begin to harden and usually remain the same for many years to come. At your age, the way you start forming ideas about what it means to be a boy, a girl, or neither comes from a few important places—including your family, your friends, the shows and videos you watch, and the lessons you get at school. One of the biggest things that changes these ideas is whether you grow up in a busy city, a smaller town, or in the countryside. City teens usually get to see a wider variety of media, hear more progressive ideas, and take classes about gender equality [1]. Country teens, on the other hand, often feel the pull of traditional beliefs, see fewer role models of different genders in schools, and may have fewer chances to talk about these issues. Recognizing these differences is crucial for creating gender education that fits each setting and for encouraging social norms that include everyone [2].

1.2 Research Gap

Earlier research has looked at how teens think about gender, but most studies just report facts or broad patterns within one type of community. Very few investigations have used advanced measurement methodslike Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis [4]to dig deeper into the hidden structures that build these gender attitudes, and even fewer have done this across urban and rural areas [3]. If we don't map out the invisible forces that mold these beliefs, any programs aimed at change might miss the point or clash with local ways of life.

1.3 Study Relevance

This study identifies specific structural variations in gender attitudes, providing a basis for refining school curricula, gender sensitization initiatives, and youth-targeted policy frameworks. Findings will enable educators and policymakers to design interventions that acknowledge and adapt to local and cultural contexts, thereby promoting gender equality and social inclusion in youth populations for the future[8].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Gender Attitudes

Gender attitudes start taking shape long before people even notice. According to Social Learning Theory, we pick up on what's "normal" for boys and girls just by watching those around us[6]. Parents, friends, teachers, and the media show us what to do, and when we do something that fits, we get a positive response that encourages us to do it again. Gender Schema Theory goes a step further and says that, as we grow, we build mental "files" that help us sort everything we see into boy things and girl things. These mental files not only help us remember things; they actually steer our actions and thoughts from the time we're little. Cultural Transmission Theory steps back and says the big picture matters, too: the beliefs and values about gender that our grandparents learned get passed down to us as if they were heirlooms[9]. Altogether, these theories show that our beliefs about what boys and girls should do are learned, kept, and acted out, not given by nature.

2.2 Adolescent Identity Formation and Attitude Development

Adolescence is the big growth spurt for the self, brain, body, and soul. Kids start pinning down who they are and where they fit in, especially when it comes to gender and the roles that come with it. At first, home is the stage where families hand out the scripts for "how girls act" and "how boys act" through chores, attitudes, and the words they choose [10]. Once teens taste some freedom, they scroll and swipe into a wider world where movies, TikToks, and memes show even more ways to be. Friends then step in, some pushing kids toward the "normal" way and others daring them to be different. Classrooms also have a quiet power; what books get read and how teachers react to a skirt or a baseball cap can either lock kids into old scripts or crack the door open to new roles they can write for themselves [11].

2.3 Urban-Rural Cultural Divide in Gender Socialization

Research shows that where you grow up, a bustling city block or quiet dirt road shapes the gender rules you pick up. City kids bump into a wider blend of ideas through big schools, Wi-Fi, and laws that nudge everybody toward fairness[12]. Rural teens, however, are often wrapped in older ways. Community events, the same magazine on the coffee table, and stories at family reunions quietly underline who does what without asking much. These different settings don't just color opinions; they carve them into different shapes. To help every kid find their true self, schools need to notice the surrounding culture and adjust their lesson plans, teams, and talks accordingly[13].

2.4 How Psychometrics Measure Attitudes

Researchers studying attitudes toward gender use psychometric techniques to turn complex ideas into useful numbers. One common method is factor analysis[5]. There are two kinds of researchers used: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which discovers the hidden structure of attitudes, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which checks whether the structure is as expected. By looking at how people answer survey questions, these methods reveal clusters of ideas, such as support for equal treatment, adherence to traditional roles, or acceptance of flexible roles. Such analysis offers a strong statistical foundation for comparing different groups, testing whether surveys really measure what they intend, and designing specific educational programs. Because attitudes toward gender are complex, psychometrics is a key method for unpacking and understanding them.

III. STUDY METHOD

3.1 Study Set-Up

In this study, we picked a design that was cross-sectional, comparative, and psychometric to learn how gender attitudes form in teens from city and country settings. Collecting every piece of data at the same moment lets us capture a clear picture to compare the two groups. Looking at the two groups side by side helps us spot both the common patterns they share and the unique differences that make them stand out. To understand what people really think about gender, we first ran Exploratory Factor Analysis, and then we did a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Doing it this way lets us check that our findings are solid and also shows that they can really make a difference outside the lab.

3.2 Participants

Our sample included adolescents aged 13 to 18, drawn from a balanced set of urban and rural secondary schools. To ensure balanced gender representation, we employed purposive stratified sampling, recruiting approximately equal numbers of boys and girls from each study setting. The schools we picked came from very different neighborhoods, yet they all offered the same basic courses and similar ways of running things. By the time we finished, we had surveys from 400 teenagers, a large enough number that the math behind factor analysis works well and that we can confidently share what we learned with all adolescents.

3.3 Instrument

The key tool we relied on was a Gender Attitude Scale, either an existing measure or a tweaked form designed for teens and influenced by local traditions. The scale contained around 20 to 30 statements prompting respondents to reveal their level of agreement with beliefs about gender roles, identity, and fairness. We grouped the questions by themes: household chores, opportunities in school and at work, emotions society thinks boys and girls should express, and availability of leadership roles. Psychologists and educators reviewed each item to confirm the relevance of language and focus, then we piloted them in various settings to ensure that the wording was clear and that participants engaged with them comfortably.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The first look at the data painted an easy-to-read map of how views on gender roles flow from suburb to street. Across the board, lots of young people leaned toward open-minded, fair-minded thinking. We noticed city kids, on average, agreed a little more strongly that chores, sports, and careers should be a shared gig and that it's cool to see a boy in an apron or a girl on a skateboard. Their scores also clustered closely together, meaning most held similar views. In contrast, country teens scored more widely, some strongly supportive of traditional roles and others less so. When we compared the two groups with independent sample t-tests, we found meaningful differences: city teens were more open than country teens about who can be a leader, how they expect others to show emotions, and what careers they picture for themselves.
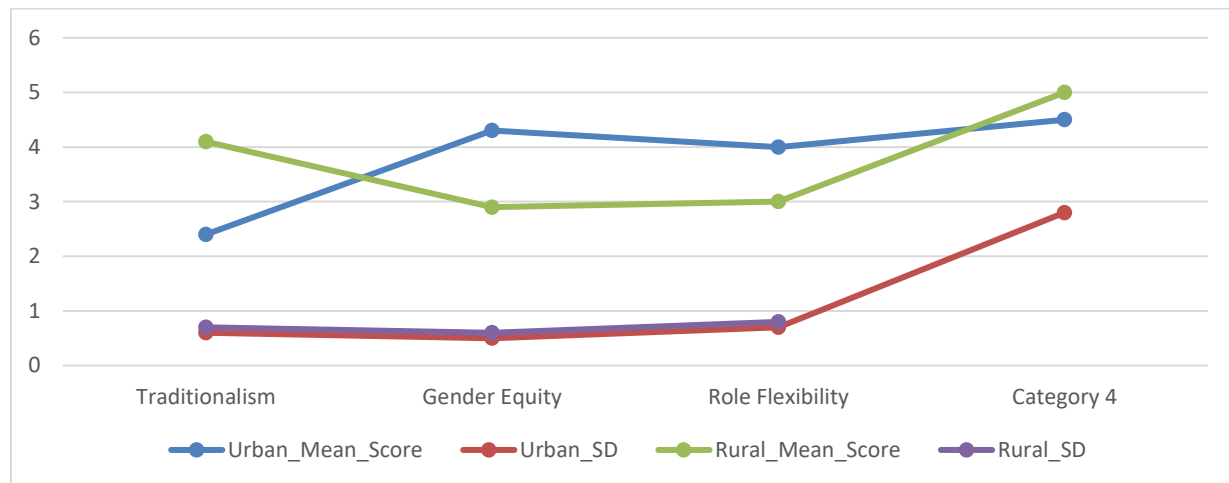
Graph 1: Comparative Analysis of Gender Attitude Dimensions Among Urban and Rural Adolescents

Graph 1 compares how boys and girls from cities and farms think about three things: sticking to old ideas about boys and girls, supporting every kid having the same chances, and being open to swapping roles. Kids from farms scored higher on Traditionalism, meaning they really stick to the old rules about what boys and girls should do. City kids, on the other hand, showed stronger support for Gender Equity and Role Flexibility. Standard deviation calculations reveal that urban groups were more uniform in their attitudes, while rural respondents displayed broader individual variation. These findings underscore a significant urban–rural contrast, pointing to the necessity for gender education initiatives that account for geographic context[14].

4.2 Factor Structures Identified through EFA

We ran an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and found a clean three-factor structure for attitudes about gender. The first factor, which we call Traditionalism, pulled together items stressing rigid gender roles, the belief that men should guide, and that household tasks should be assigned by gender. The second factor, Gender Equity, clustered beliefs that all genders should receive the same chances for schooling, jobs, and leadership. The third factor, Role Flexibility, collected support for boys expressing feelings, girls being urged to take charge, and an openness to non-binary gender pathways. Each factor showed strong internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$), and the three factors in total explained over 60% of the variance, showing that the model for measuring gender attitudes is both solid and dependable [15].

4.3 CFA Model Fit Comparisons

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To check if the earlier EFA results made sense, we ran Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for separate groups of urban and rural teens. Both groups showed pretty good overall fit: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was over 0.90 for each, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) stayed under the 0.08 cutoff. Still, we picked up some small but telling differences in the factor loadings. The Gender Equity factor had higher loadings for city teens, meaning the ideas fit the data more clearly there. On the other hand, rural teens had higher loadings for the Traditionalism factor. These patterns confirm that the three-factor model is valid, and they also suggest that culture shapes how strongly each idea is recognized by the teens.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 What the Factor Structures Mean

The factor analysis showed that teens' ideas about gender divide into three main areas: Traditionalism, Gender Equity, and Role Flexibility. When we looked separately at teens from rural and urban areas, we saw each group highlighted the areas a little differently. Rural teens leaned hard into Traditionalism, agreeing strongly that men and women should stick to fixed roles and that society should favor men. On the other hand, urban teens showed greater agreement with the ideas of Gender Equity and Role Flexibility, meaning they were more likely to support equal rights and to accept behaviors that don't fit the usual male-female splits. These different patterns suggest that the place where students grow up shapes the way they understand and take to heart the rules about gender.

5.2 Psychological and Cultural Explanations

The gaps we see come from how growing minds and local cultures interact. City teens get a wider range of TV shows, progressive classes, and friends who question tired gender labels. This mix sharpens their flexible thinking and moral choices, so they start to see and question familiar rules. In contrast, kids in the countryside feel those rules in the daily rhythms of home life, faith, and local customs. Schools in these areas often let unspoken expectations decide who speaks up, who lifts the heaviest boxes, and who does the neat handwriting. Because of these quiet but powerful messages, the inner maps of city and rural teens end up quite different.

VI. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

We looked closely at how teens in the city and the countryside develop views about gender roles and found three main pieces of the puzzle: Traditionalism, Gender Equity, and Role Flexibility. Through a mix of initial and deeper statistical tests, we discovered that all three pieces showed up in both city and rural youth, but each piece shone in its own way depending on the teen's home environment. City adolescents leaned more towards progressive views, especially in their strong support for equal chances and greater emotional expression for all genders. Country adolescents, on the other hand, remained more tied to traditional roles, a pattern shaped by local customs and family expectations. All this evidence shows that views on gender are not uniform; they are shaped by the specific neighborhoods we live in, the schools we attend, and the customs that surround us.

6.2 Future Directions

While this study shines a light on the mental and emotional sides of gender attitudes, it also clears the way for exciting new research and policy ideas. Following young people over several years in longitudinal studies would show exactly how their views about gender change during school and life's big events. Adding qualitative research, like interviews or focus groups, would reveal the personal stories and feelings motivating their beliefs. Future studies should also widen their lens to include non-binary and third-gender youth, whose stories too often get left out of the male-female frame. By welcoming all gender identities, these efforts would build a richer picture of how every young person sees and shapes gender, no matter who they are or where they live.

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