

Chapter 75

Communication Process in Family Reinforcing the Gender Differences in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Family is an important institution to build a person's personality, morality, value and attitude. When this institution communicates properly, it shows the impact e.g. a boy or a girl becomes social human being. Unfortunately in our family gender biasness is reinforced continuously by starting to behave differently with boys and girls from the childhood. Parents communicate with them in a different way which constructs the traits of "masculinity" and "femininity". Girls are compelled to learn the feminine role with politeness, submissiveness and their mobility is restricted in public world. It is a family which trains a girl to be a good mother, wife, sister or daughter, on the other hand a boy learns to be social, intellectual, able to run the world and strong. This different formation of role and behavior results in the ongoing discrimination everywhere in the society. This reinforcement is sort of relief from social stigmatization but has overall negative impact on life and through this family can be counted as the main birthplace of discrimination against women. Girls and boys must be raised neutrally to eradicate the gender differences and ensure the equality.

INTRODUCTION

Family as the major institution of society readdresses the gender differences and social discrimination between boys and girls though it is consisted of love, affection and mutual understanding. Gender role stratification starts from the family and it is developed through the gendered communication. A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connection, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring of children. From the childhood gender norms and sex appropriate behavior is taught to

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make the child perfect to perform the social roles. The society imposes sex specific role which creates gender division of labor and identifies men and women with the socially constructed term masculinity and femininity. Ellman and Taggart (1993) suggest that differences in power between women and men are institutionalized by culture and are expressed in the everyday relations of men and women, particularly in families. Socialization process is somehow responsible for the connotation of cultural norms and to make able the members of the society to learn the way of life. Through the process of socialization individuals learn about social roles – socially defined expectations that a person in a given social position follows. In the family gendered behavior is imposed and regenerated to pursue the differences between boys and girls. Gendered parenting is a major fact for the persistence of the division. As children grow and develop, the gender stereotypes they are exposed to at home are reinforced by other elements in their environment and are thus perpetuated throughout childhood and on into adolescence (Martin, Wood, & Little, 1990). A child develops the sense of self and socially constructed roles, ideas, attitudes and behaviors to which he or she is fashioned. The information that surrounds the child and which is internalized comes to the child within the family arena through parent-child interactions, role modeling, reinforcement for desired behaviors, and parental approval or disapproval (Santrock, 1994). Family creates the form of sexual domination and discrimination which is reinforced thorough the communication and perceived as the natural endeavor.

Background: Theorists View About Gendered Parenting

Children internalize parental messages regarding gender at an early age, with awareness of adult sex role differences being found in two-year-old children (Weinraub et al., 1984). One study found that children at two and a half years of age use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world and are likely to generalize gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects, and occupations (Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992; Cowan & Hoffman, 1986). Children even deny the reality of what they are seeing when it does not conform to their gender expectations (i.e., a child whose mother is a doctor stating that only men are doctors) (Sheldon, 1990). Parents encourage their sons and daughters to participate in sex-typed activities, including doll playing and engaging in housekeeping activities for girls and playing with trucks and engaging in sports activities for boys (Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990). Children's toy preferences have been found to be significantly related to parental sex-typing (Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Henshaw, Kelly, & Gratton, 1992; Paretti & Sydney, 1984), with parents providing gender-differentiated toys and rewarding play behavior that is gender stereotyped (Carter, 1987). While both mothers and fathers contribute to the gender stereotyping of their children, fathers have been found to reinforce gender stereotypes more often than do mothers (Ruble, 1988). Boys are more likely to have maintenance chores around the house, such as painting and mowing the lawn, while girls are likely to have domestic chores such as cooking and doing the laundry (Basow, 1992). Household work is considered as the feminine work, a general devaluation of what women do, a lack of role models for participating in family work; men's inexperience with certain household chores; and "even women's difficulty in sharing control over the household domain" (Piotrkowski & Hughes, 1993, p. 191). This assignment of household tasks by gender leads children to link certain types of work with gender. It is difficult for a child to grow to adulthood without experiencing some form of gender bias or stereotyping, whether it is the expectation that boys are better than girls at math or the idea that only females can nurture children. The family is "the social and symbolic place in which difference, in particular sexual difference, is believed to be fundamental and at

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