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PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER ROLES AND CHARACTERISTICS: A GENDER ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Individuals perceptions provide instant interpretations of gender roles shaped by their personal experiences and biases, as a result, broader perspectives may evolve, leading to a change in gender roles. In this context, the present paper examines the shift in perceptions from traditional gender roles to contemporary views. It seeks to explore how men and women in the work force perceive traditional gender roles and whether they adopt gender traits based on their individual needs. Additionally, it aims to understand how both men and women view gender characteristics. Furthermore, it will investigate how the gender attitudes of working men and women regarding family responsibilities transformed. The data indicates a substantial shift in perceptions of gender roles, suggesting that men are no longer limited to traditional roles concerning household chores. A transformation in the mind set of women is essential; they must acknowledge that their employment and economic strength represent their independence and consequently , their empowerment.

Key words: Gender Perceptions, Traditional Gender Roles, Gender Traits, Gender Attitudes, Economic Independence, Empowerment

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

'Gender' is a social idea about what roles, behaviors, and identities are considered appropriate for men, women, and other genders. Gender perspective helps us understand how these ideas influence the chances, experiences, and power relationships people have in society. It shows how these social ideas shape what people need and want, leading to different results for people based on their gender in all areas of life. Using a gender perspective aims to make sure that women , men and people of all genders are considered equally, benefit from efforts, and that gender inequality is not kept or made worse. It makes a clear difference between sex, which refers to biological traits, and gender, which refers to the roles, behaviors, and identities that society says are right for each gender. The disparities in power and status generated by gender influence access to rights, resources, and opportunities.

A gender perspective is an analytical approach that considers the influence of gender, which refers to the social constructs of roles and norms associated with men, women, and other genders, on opportunities, experiences, and power relations within society. It entails recognizing how these social constructs shape individual needs and interests, resulting in different outcomes for people of various genders across all aspects of life, from policy formulation to economic progress. The application of a gender perspective seeks to ensure that women, men, and individuals of all genders are equally considered and benefit from initiatives, while also preventing the perpetuation of gender inequality. Gender perception relates to how individuals perceive the fulfillment of roles deemed appropriate for their gender. When taking into account individuals' perceptions, it provide instant interpretations of gender roles influenced by personal experiences and biases, broader perspectives will shift, leading to a transformation in gender roles.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Gender roles are the societal rules that tell people how they should act, dress, and behave based on whether they are assigned male or female. These roles have evolved overtime and differ from culture to culture. In the past, women were supposed to take care of the home and the children, while men were supposed to support and



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protect the family. Nonetheless, there is a growing movement to challenge and alter these traditional roles in many communities today. Given this background, the current paper sought to understand the extent of gender equality in working groups by examining whether men's and women's perceptions of traditional gender roles had transformed.

1.3. Aim

The present paper aims to determine how men and women in the workforce view traditional gender roles and whether they adopt gender traits according to their own needs.

1.4. Objectives

1. To examine how men and women in the workforce perceive gender roles.
2. To comprehend how both men and women in the workforce perceive gender characteristics.
3. To ascertain how both working men and women's gender attitudes of family responsibilities have changed.

1.5. Methodology

This paper is a descriptive research that was conducted using primary data collected from the employees of pharmaceutical industry in Parawada, Anakapalle district. A total of 176 samples were collected from both male and female employees. Basic statistical methods such as frequency tables with averages have been used. For simple understanding bar graphs are utilized for easy comprehension.

2.1. THE CONCEPT OF GENDER

'Gender' refers to the roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities that society constructs for girls, women, boys, men, and individuals who are gender-diverse. It influences how individuals see themselves and others, their interactions, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender identity is not limited to a binary classification (girls/women, boys/men) nor is it fixed; rather, it exists on a spectrum and may develop over time. 'Gender' encompasses the socially constructed attributes of women, men, girls, and boys.

This includes the norms, behaviors, and roles linked to each gender, as well as their interrelationships. Gender operates within a hierarchical framework, leading to inequalities that overlap with various social and economic disparities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender is largely viewed as a social construct, indicating that it is influenced not only by biological factors but also by societal norms, beliefs, and expectations. This viewpoint implies that gender roles, behaviors, and identities are acquired and differ across cultures and historical periods, rather than being innate or unchanging.

Gender is not merely defined by biological sex (male or female); rather, societies ascribe meanings and expectations to these biological categories, shaping how individuals perceive and express their gender. Gender roles and norms vary significantly across cultures and have evolved over time within the same culture. For instance, societal expectations for women and men have transformed throughout different historical periods. Influences such as family, media, education, and religion play a crucial role in shaping our understanding and internalization of gender norms, which subsequently affect our behaviours and identities.

Gender identity is a dynamic and evolving concept, enabling individuals to align with a gender that reflects their internal self-perception, regardless of the sex assigned to them at birth. The social construction of gender underscores the necessity of understanding and challenging gender stereotypes, which can adversely impact individuals. Ultimately, the notion of the social construction of gender highlights that while biological sex is a contributing factor, it is the social interpretation and application of these biological characteristics that ultimately define our understanding and experience of gender.



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2.2. GENDER ROLES

Gender roles come from the different expectations that people, groups, and societies have about individuals based on their sex. These roles are also shaped by the values and beliefs that each society holds about gender. These roles form through the ways people interact with each other based on sex, as well as the beliefs and values of the society. These roles help determine what behaviors are considered acceptable for each sex. The idea of what is seen as appropriate for each gender is influenced by what a society believes about the differences between men and women. Often, gender roles are shaped by stereotypes, simple and general ideas about men and women and how they are different. People may form their understanding of suitable gender roles based on these stereotypes, which often include exaggerated or incorrect ideas about the characteristics of each gender. (Amy M. Blackstone, 2003). A gender role, or sex role, is a social idea that includes various behaviors and attitudes that are considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable based on someone's sex. It is important to understand the difference between gender identity, which is a person's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not match the society's expectations. In short, gender roles can change over time. It is important to realize that the world today is different from the past, and the future may bring change we haven't seen before. The roles of women and men will continue to evolve. (Rakesh Ashok More, 2023).

2.3. TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Gender roles are seen as changing depending on the situation and are influenced by other factors like age, race, class, and ethnicity. Traditional gender roles are ideas and rules that people in a culture accept, telling men and women how they should act. Usually, men are expected to be the main earners, protectors, and people who make decisions, while women are seen as those who take care of others, manage the home, and provide love and support. These ideas often supported by society, religion, and history, show men as strong and in charge, and women as quiet and less powerful. But these roles can be very different in various cultures and times. If people stick too strictly to these roles, it can cause unfairness, limit what individuals can achieve, and harm their mental health.

2.4. COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES:

Men used to be seen as the main breadwinners, strong providers, and protectors of their families. They were expected to be strong, confident, and in charge of making important decisions. They were also told not to show weakness or emotions. In traditional views, men were seen as the leaders of the family, responsible for earning money and being dominant.

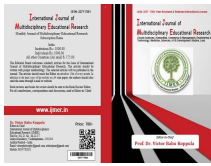
Women, on the other hand, were expected to be caring and supportive.

They were usually in charge of taking care of the home, raising children, and providing emotional support to their husbands. They were seen as kind, gentle, and often passive. Their role was mainly to manage the household and look after the family's needs.

Culture and religion have played a big role in supporting these traditional ideas about how men and women should behave. These views have been reinforced through stories in books, movies, and social norms over time. Also, in many cultures, the economy has traditionally seen men working outside the home to earn money, while women take care of the home and family.

2.5. TRADITIONAL GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR

The usual way people split up work by gender gives men jobs that are seen as masculine and done outside the home, like making money and doing hard physical work. Women are usually given works that are at home, like taking care



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of children, cooking, and cleaning. This way of dividing work has been common in the past and is based more on what society expects from men and women rather than on biology. It creates unfair advantages for men and makes women's work less valued, leading to unequal pay and power in the family and workplace. Men are often seen as the main providers, expected to work outside the home and protect the family, while women take on the role of managing the home and caring for family members. This division is not because of any real differences between men and women, but because of old ideas and expectations about what each gender should do. Even though things have changed, this traditional way of dividing work still affects how jobs are shared and how household tasks are divided, with women still doing more unpaid work and facing lower pay for their efforts.

3. ASSESSMENT OF GENDER PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER ROLES AND GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

An effort was made to comprehend how individuals engaged in the workforce view gender roles. Table-1 displays the data regarding perceptions of gender roles. Notably, it was observed that a majority of respondents (80%) believe that both men and women make decisions. A minimal percentage of respondents (13%) indicated that men are the primary decision makers. Given that the respondents are employed, most of them (70%) expressed that both men and women serve as breadwinners. Over fifty percent of respondents perceived that both men and women act as protectors of the family (52%). A notable percentage of respondents (42%) thought that men are the protectors. Interestingly, a considerable majority perceived that women as the homemakers (60%). It's important to point out that a significant number of respondents (35%) believed that both men and women share the role of homemakers. Interestingly, it was observed that most respondents believed that both men and women serve as caregivers (62%), followed by those who thought that women are the sole caregivers (30%). Although respondents felt that both genders are leaders within the family (44%), a notable proportion believed that men hold the role of leaders (42%).

According to the data, it was observed that a significant proportion of respondents believe that men and women are protectors decision-makers and leaders, while a significant proportion of respondents believe that only men are protectors (42%) and leaders (42%). This data suggests that men's perceptions of their roles as leaders and protectors need to change.

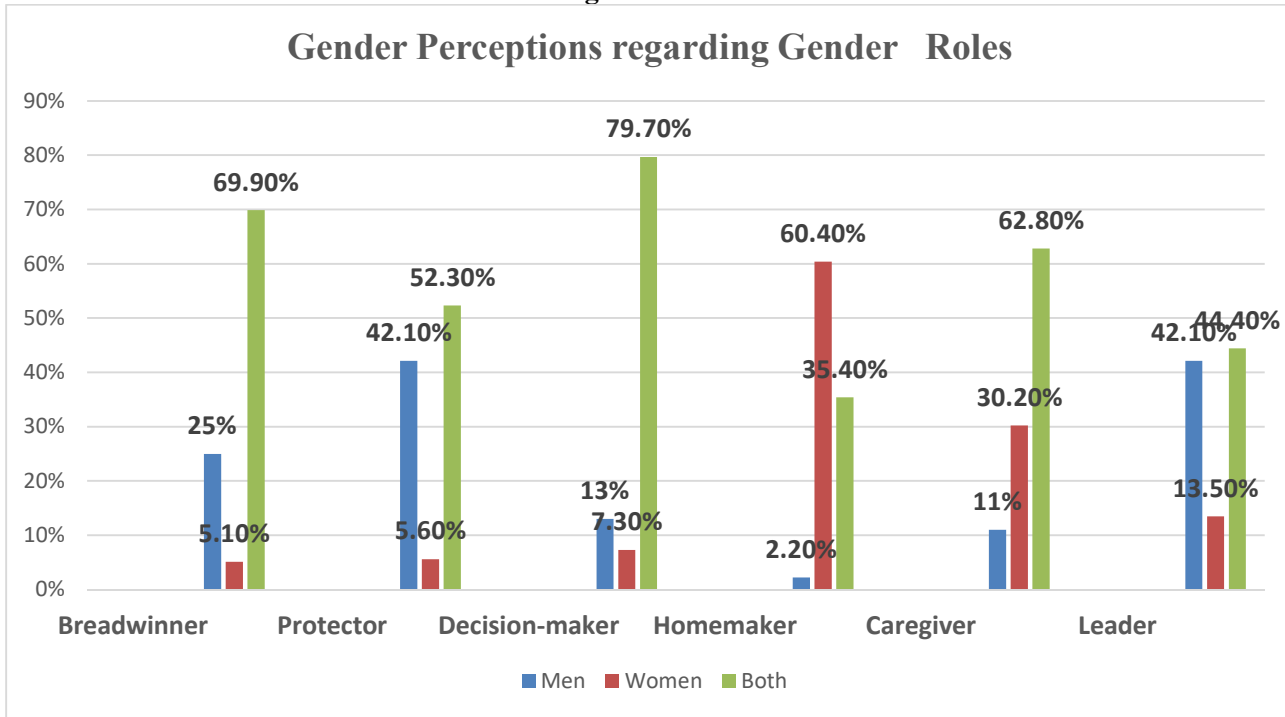
Table-1
Gender Perceptions regarding Gender Roles

Sl. No	Gender Roles	Men	Women	Both	Total
1	Breadwinner	44 (25%)	9 (5.1%)	123 (69.9%)	176 (100%)
2	Protector	75 (42.1%)	10 (5.6%)	92 (52.3%)	176 (100%)
3	Decision-maker	23 (13%)	13 (7.3%)	140 (79.7%)	176 (100%)
4	Homemaker	4 (2.2%)	108 (60.4%)	65 (35.4%)	176 (100%)
5	Caregiver	19 (11%)	52 (30.2%)	105 (62.8%)	176 (100%)
6	Leader	75 (42.1%)	24 (13.5%)	77 (44.4%)	176 (100%)



Figure-1 depicts the gender perceptions regarding gender roles.

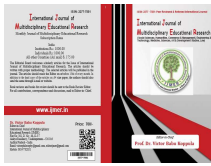
Figure.1



An attempt was made to understand how both working women and men perceive gender characteristics. Table-2 displays the data. From the data, it can be inferred that nearly and over fifty percent of the respondents believed that both men and women exhibit the characteristic traits of kindness (48%), assertiveness (50%), confidence (58%), politeness (50%), and sensitivity (67%). A notable percentage of them perceived that both men and women are bold (41%) and emotional (40%). Interestingly, it was found that a significant percentage of the respondents believed that only men are dominant (38%) while 34% perceived that women are dominant, and a considerable percentage believed that both are dominant (28%). The majority of the respondents perceived that men are aggressive (43%). It was noted that a significant percentage of them perceived that both are aggressive (31%). Interestingly, a considerable percentage of them perceived that women are also aggressive (25%). The data reveals that when it comes to characteristics such as assertiveness, confidence, kindness, politeness, emotionality, and sensitivity, half of the respondents perceived that both men and women share these common traits. However, regarding characteristics like dominance and aggressiveness, it was found that men possess these traits.

Table-2
Gender Perceptions regarding Gender Characteristics

Sl. No	Gender Characteristics	Men	Women	Both	Total
1	Assertive	59 (33.5%)	29 (16.4%)	88 (50%)	176 (100%)
2	Confident	40 (22.7%)	34 (19.3%)	102 (58%)	176 (100%)
3	Kind	28	63	85	176



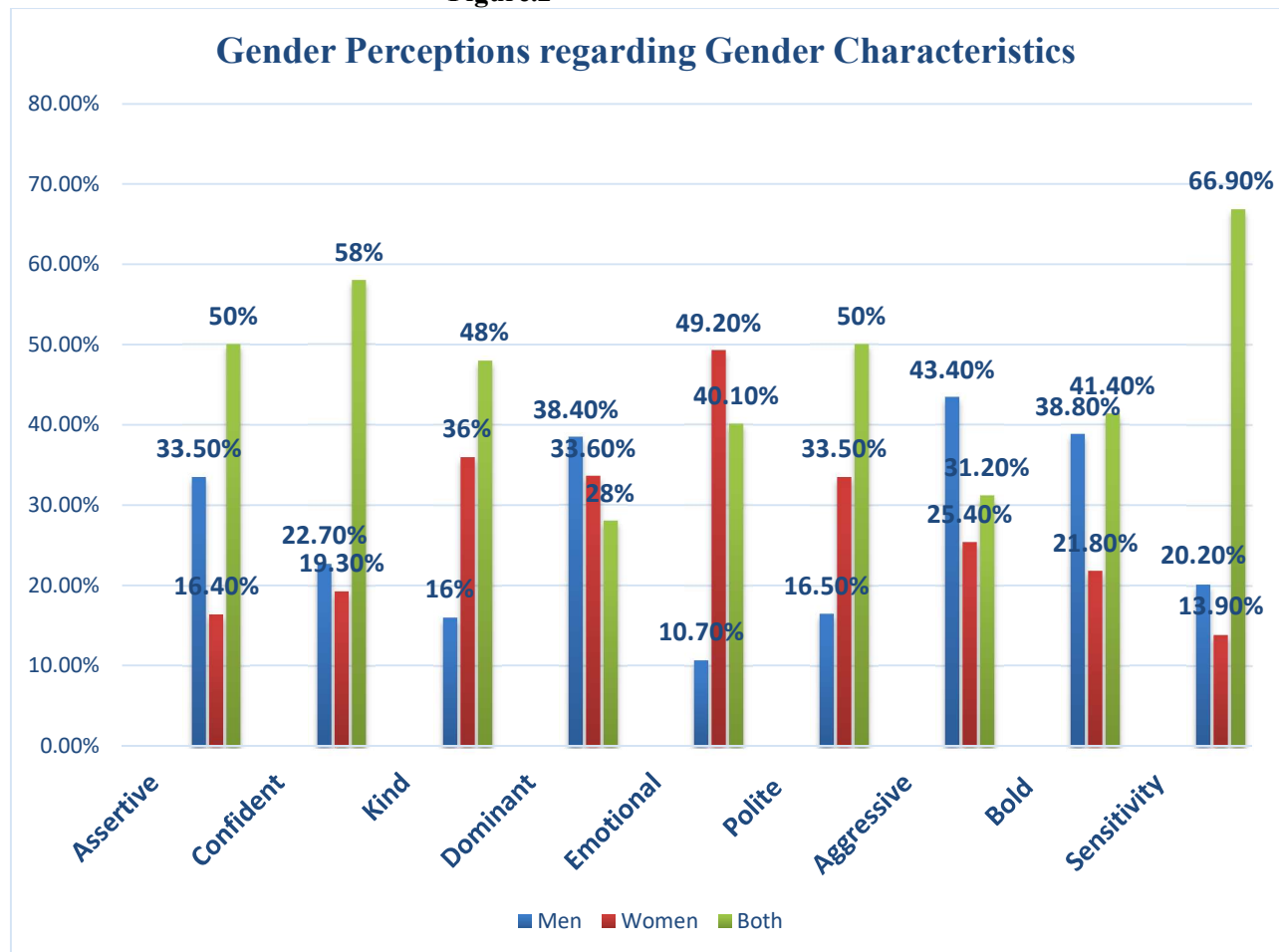
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		(16%)	(36%)	(48%)	(100%)
4	Dominant	69 (38.4%)	58 (33.6%)	49 (28%)	176 (100%)
5	Emotional	19 (10.7%)	86 (49.2%)	71 (40.1%)	176 (100%)
6	Polite	29 (16.5%)	59 (33.5%)	88 (50%)	176 (100%)
7	Aggressive	75 (43.4%)	45 (25.4%)	56 (31.2%)	176 (100%)
8	Bold	66 (38.8%)	37 (21.8%)	73 (41.4%)	176 (100%)
9	Sensitivity	35 (20.2%)	24 (13.9%)	117 (66.9%)	176 (100%)

Figure-2 depicts the data.

Figure.2



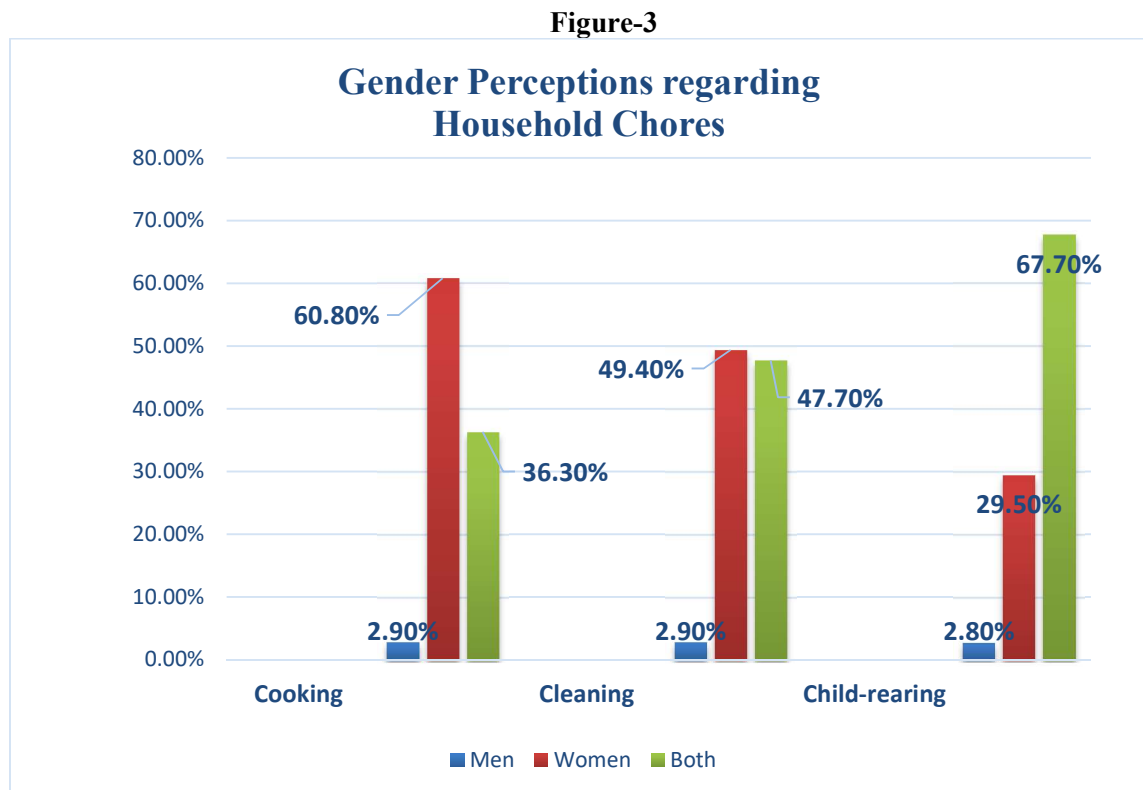


An effort was made to determine how the gender attitudes of both working men and women towards family responsibilities have evolved. Table-3 presents the data. It was discovered that the majority of respondents believe that women share the responsibility of cooking (61%). Interestingly, a significant percentage of respondents also perceived that both men and women cook meals for their families (36%). Furthermore, it was found that most respondents felt that women take on the responsibility of house cleaning (49%), closely followed by both genders (48%). A noteworthy observation is that the majority of respondents perceived that child-rearing responsibilities are shared by both men and women. Additionally, men are increasingly participating in household chores such as cleaning alongside women. However, perceptions regarding the sharing of cooking responsibilities still require change. The data indicates a substantial shift in perceptions of gender roles, suggesting that men are no longer limited to traditional roles concerning household chores.

Table-3
Gender Perceptions regarding Household Chores

Sl. No	Gender Roles	Men	Women	Both	Total
1	Cooking	5 (2.9%)	107 (60.8%)	64 (36.3%)	176 (100%)
2	Cleaning	7 (2.9 %)	87 (49.4%)	84 (47.7%)	176 (100%)
3	Child-rearing	5 (2.8%)	52 (29.5%)	121 (67.7%)	176 (100%)

Figure-4 depicts the data



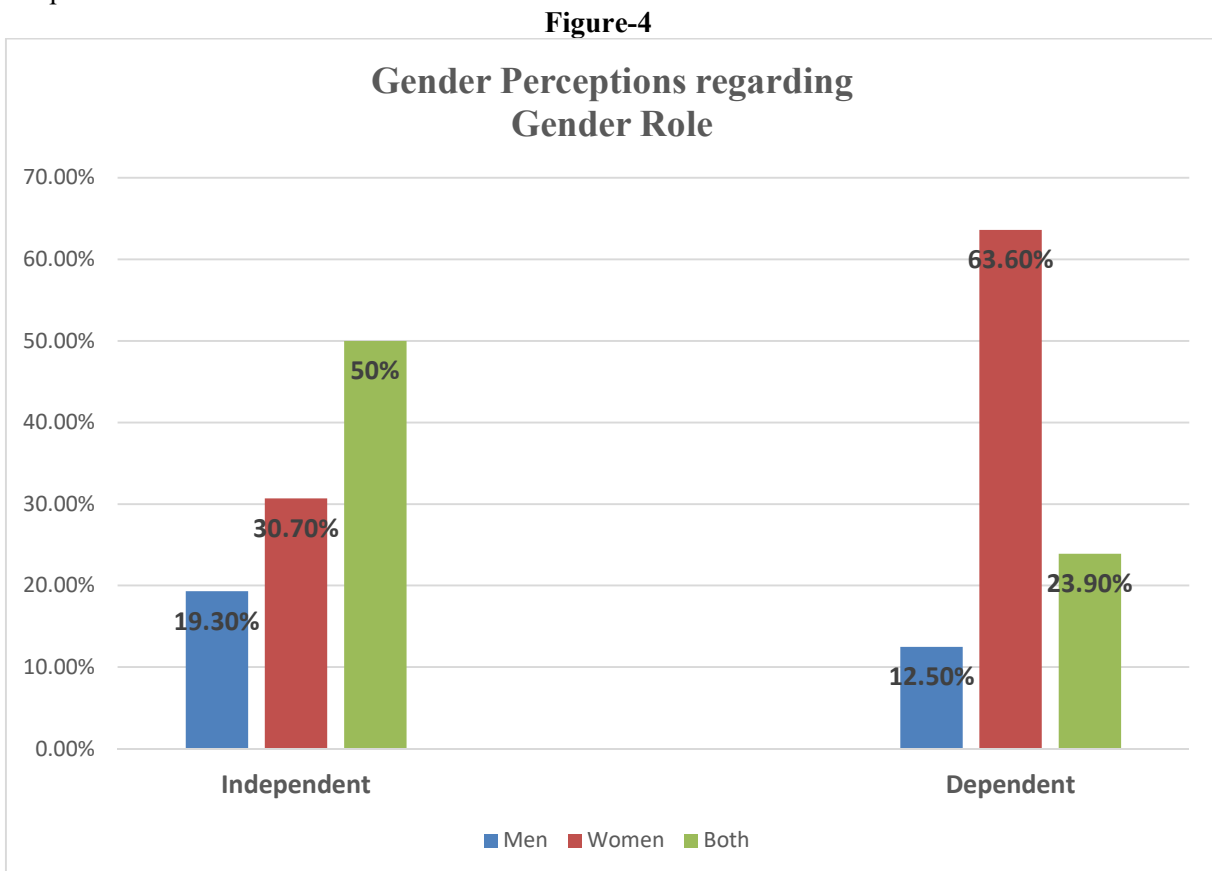


An effort was undertaken to comprehend the perceptions of the respondents concerning the gender roles of dependency and independency. Table-4 reveals the data. Half of the respondents, representing 50% , perceived that both men and women are independent, as women are also part of the workforce. Interestingly, a majority of the respondents, 64% , believed that women are dependents despite their employment . It is a noteworthy that a smaller percentage, 19% of the respondents perceived that only men are independent. There needs to be shift in the mind set of women; they must recognize that their employment and economic strength signify their independence. Economic independence will empower women in every facet of life. This mind set should be cultivated by women.

Table-4
Gender Perceptions regarding Gender Role

Sl. No	Gender Role	Men	Women	Both	Total
1	Independent	34 (19.3%)	54 (30.7%)	88 (50%)	176 (100%)
2	Dependent	22 (12.5%)	112 (63.6%)	42 (23.9%)	176 (100%)

Figure-4 depicts the data.





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4. Summary

To sum up , though a significant proportion of respondents believe that men and women are protectors, decision-makers and leaders, while a significant proportion of respondents believe that only men are protectors and leaders. This data suggests those men's perceptions of their roles as leaders and protectors need to change. The characteristics such as assertiveness, confidence, kindness, politeness, emotionality, and sensitivity, half of the respondents perceived that both men and women share these common traits. However, regarding characteristics like dominance and aggressiveness, it was found that men possess these traits. A noteworthy observation is that the majority of respondents perceived that child-rearing responsibilities are shared by both men and women. Additionally, men are increasingly participating in household chores such as cleaning alongside women. However, perceptions regarding the sharing of cooking responsibilities still require change. The data indicates a substantial shift in perceptions of gender roles, suggesting that men are no longer limited to traditional roles concerning household chores.

5. Conclusion:

To conclude , the current generation is expecting a shift in gender roles from traditional to modern. Men and women in the workforce are altering their perceptions of gender roles and collaborating on domestic chores and other household responsibilities. While some traits are shared by both genders, men tend to be associated with specific characteristics such as dominance and aggression. Although women have achieved economic independence , they still find themselves reliant on men. It is essential to change these attitudes to achieve gender equality. There needs to be shift in the mind set of women; they must recognize that their employment and economic strength signify their independence. Economic independence will empower women in every facet of life. This mind set should be cultivated by women.

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