



## PEDADIDAKTIKA: JURNAL ILMIAH PENDIDIKAN GURU SEKOLAH DASAR

# Understanding Emerging Gender Preferences In Adolescents: Gender Sensitivity's Role In Challenging Cultural Norms

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### Abstract

*This research explores the increasing acknowledgment of gender preference among adolescents, focusing on the social and cultural influences shaping their perceptions and the role of gender sensitivity in transforming societal norms. Using a descriptive survey design, the study gathers data from adolescents through self-constructed questionnaires and convenience sampling. Statistical analyses, including frequency distribution and mean analysis, are employed to interpret the results. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of adolescents experience emotional distress linked to gender preference, adversely affecting their social relationships and well-being. Additionally, the study examines gender sensitivity in Tubod, Lanao del Norte, evaluating its impact on political competition, job promotions, education, and family roles. The results highlight that while some areas, like political and job equality, reflect gender-sensitive practices, education and family roles still show gender biases. The research underscores the need for educational interventions, gender-sensitive policies, and continued advocacy to reduce gender disparities and promote inclusivity. It calls for the adoption of gender-sensitive practices to foster respect for gender diversity, ensuring long-term gender equity and equal opportunities for all individuals.*

**Keywords:** Gender Preference, Adolescents, Gender Sensitivity, Social and Cultural Norms, Inclusivity

## INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of gender identity and preference among adolescents have evolved significantly, influenced by a multitude of social, cultural, and political factors. Adolescence, a pivotal period in human development, is often marked by the exploration and solidification of one's personal identity, with gender being one of its most fundamental components. During this stage, adolescents are confronted with societal expectations and pressures that shape how they perceive their gender and

how they navigate the broader gender spectrum. These perceptions are often influenced by various external factors, including family structures, peer interactions, media portrayals, and cultural norms. As gender perspectives continue to broaden, the acknowledgment of emerging gender preferences among adolescents has gained significant attention, calling for a closer examination of the emotional and psychological impacts of this phenomenon.

A notable aspect of the adolescent experience is the emotional distress

associated with navigating gender preference. Adolescents, particularly those with non-binary or non-conventional gender identities, often face discrimination, exclusion, or misunderstanding from peers, educators, and even family members. Such experiences can adversely affect their social relationships, academic performance, and overall well-being. The increasing visibility of gender diversity in society has highlighted the importance of fostering an environment of inclusivity that supports young people in exploring and expressing their identities without fear of judgment or marginalization. It is essential to understand how these gender preferences shape adolescents' lives, as it has profound implications for their mental health and social integration.

In parallel, gender sensitivity has become a key concept in addressing these challenges. Gender sensitivity refers to the awareness and deliberate response to the differences between genders across various dimensions—biological, social, and behavioral. This approach challenges traditional gender stereotypes and aims to promote inclusivity and equity across all aspects of society, from political representation to educational opportunities. Research has shown that a lack of gender sensitivity perpetuates entrenched biases and systemic inequalities, particularly in areas

such as healthcare, education, and employment (Kamba, 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2019). For example, in the Philippines, despite women's strong presence in basic education roles, their representation diminishes in higher education and leadership positions, which reflects persistent structural barriers (Madjid, 2002). These gender biases not only limit access to opportunities but also hinder societal progress by reinforcing restrictive roles based on traditional gender norms.

The role of gender sensitivity in education and policymaking cannot be overstated. Educational institutions, in particular, play a critical role in shaping young people's perceptions of gender. However, many schools still perpetuate gender biases through curriculum choices, teaching styles, and institutional policies. For instance, gendered expectations in classroom behavior, subject choices, and extracurricular activities can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes. Schools must therefore adopt gender-sensitive practices that ensure all students, regardless of their gender identity, are given equal opportunities to succeed and express themselves freely. This approach not only improves the academic and social outcomes of students but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Furthermore, gender-sensitive policies in political and workplace contexts are crucial for promoting gender equality. While some progress has been made in these areas, significant disparities remain. In political competition, gender equality is often still a secondary concern, with women underrepresented in leadership roles. In the workplace, job promotions and access to higher-level positions often reflect gender biases that limit opportunities for women and gender minorities. In these domains, gender-sensitive practices can help to dismantle barriers and ensure equal access to opportunities for all, regardless of gender. Policies that promote diversity and inclusion at every level of society are not only necessary for fairness but also vital for social harmony and sustainable development.

This study focuses on two interconnected aspects of gender: the experiences of adolescents as they navigate emerging gender preferences and the role of gender sensitivity in transforming societal norms. By exploring how gender preferences shape adolescent identity and how gender-sensitive practices can reduce gender-based disparities, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of these complex dynamics. The study's findings will inform the development of interventions, policies, and educational practices that support gender

diversity and foster inclusivity across various social domains.

The implications of this research extend beyond the academic realm, offering practical insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders. By examining gender sensitivity in the context of political competition, job promotions, education, and gender equality in Tubod, Lanao del Norte, the study seeks to identify pathways for reducing systemic inequalities and creating a more inclusive society. The research calls for continued advocacy and action to challenge gender biases, promote gender equity, and ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender, can access equal opportunities and live fulfilling lives.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in a blend of influential theoretical perspectives that explore the intersections of gender, identity, societal influences, and adolescent development. Each theory provides a unique lens through which to understand the complexities of increasing gender preference among adolescents, offering insights into how these young individuals navigate their gender identities and how societal structures shape these experiences.

### 1. Social Constructionist Theory

Social Constructionist Theory suggests that gender is not an innate, biological trait but rather a social construct shaped by cultural norms and societal interactions. According to this theory, the understanding of gender is learned through experiences and socialization processes rather than being fixed or universally determined. Adolescents, as they transition from childhood to adulthood, encounter various social forces—family, media, school, and peer groups—that play crucial roles in shaping their gender identities. This theory helps us understand how gender preferences, which may not align with traditional norms, emerge and evolve as individuals experience different societal messages about what it means to be masculine or feminine. The increasing visibility of diverse gender identities among adolescents can thus be seen as a reflection of the fluidity of gender, as individuals break away from rigid gender roles and embrace a more personalized and self-determined identity. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding how adolescents form their gender identities amidst growing societal debates about gender norms.

## **2. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory**

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development focuses on the importance of identity formation during adolescence, a

critical stage in human development. According to Erikson, adolescence is characterized by the crisis of "identity vs. role confusion," where young people actively explore different aspects of their identity, including gender, sexuality, and social roles. This period is pivotal because the resolution of this crisis leads to a strong sense of self, while unresolved conflicts can result in confusion and instability. Adolescents' experiences with gender preference are intricately tied to this process of identity exploration. As they question and redefine who they are, including their gender identity, they encounter both external and internal challenges. Erikson's theory provides a framework for understanding how adolescents make sense of their gender preferences and integrate them into their evolving sense of self. Gender identity is thus not just a personal or individual matter; it is a social process, influenced by the interaction of the individual with societal expectations and norms.

## **3. Marcia's Identity Statuses Model**

Building upon Erikson's foundational work, James Marcia developed a model of identity development that identifies four distinct identity statuses: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. These statuses describe the different ways adolescents approach the exploration and commitment to various

aspects of their identity, including gender. In the context of gender preference, adolescents may be in different stages of exploration and commitment to their gender identity. For instance, some may be in a state of “identity moratorium,” where they are actively exploring their gender preferences without making firm commitments, while others may have achieved a clear and stable gender identity (identity achievement). Marcia’s model will guide this study by helping to assess how adolescents explore, question, and ultimately commit to their gender identities, offering a nuanced understanding of how gender preference is integrated into broader identity development during adolescence. This model highlights that identity is not a static construct but an evolving process shaped by personal exploration and social influences.

#### **4. Intersectionality Theory**

Introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a theoretical framework that emphasizes how different social identities, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality, intersect to create unique experiences of privilege or discrimination. In the context of gender preference, intersectionality helps us understand how an adolescent's experience with gender identity might differ depending on their other social identities. For example, an adolescent’s

experience of gender preference may be shaped differently by their socioeconomic status, cultural background, or ethnicity. The theory of intersectionality allows for a deeper exploration of the complexities adolescents face when their gender identity intersects with other factors, such as race or class. It highlights that gender experiences are not universal and that social context—such as community, family, and broader societal structures—shapes how adolescents experience and express their gender identity. This study will use intersectionality to assess how these intersecting factors influence adolescents' gender preferences and how societal inequalities may exacerbate or mitigate their challenges.

#### **5. The Theory of Stress and Coping**

Lazarus and Folkman’s Theory of Stress and Coping is relevant to understanding how gender preference can create stress for adolescents and how they cope with these stressors. According to this theory, stress occurs when an individual perceives a situation or demand as overwhelming, and coping is the process through which individuals manage stress. Adolescents who experience gender-related stress may face bullying, rejection, or confusion from peers and family, leading to psychological distress. The theory also emphasizes that coping mechanisms—such as seeking social support,

avoiding stressful situations, or reframing negative experiences—are critical for managing these challenges. By applying this theory, the study will examine how adolescents respond to stressors related to their gender preference, identifying the coping strategies they employ to protect their mental and emotional well-being. Understanding how adolescents navigate these stressors and the effectiveness of their coping strategies is crucial for supporting their mental health during this formative stage.

## 6. Social Ecological Model

The Social Ecological Model, developed by Bronfenbrenner, focuses on the multiple layers of influence that shape human behavior and development. This model suggests that individuals are influenced by interactions with various systems, such as family, school, peers, and society at large. These systems do not exist in isolation but interact with each other in complex ways to influence behavior. In the case of adolescents' gender preference, the social ecological model provides a lens for understanding how different environments—such as a supportive family, a tolerant school, or a peer group—can impact how adolescents perceive and express their gender identity. Additionally, societal and cultural norms, such as those governing gender roles, play a significant role in shaping how adolescents experience their gender identity. The study

will use this model to analyze how various societal systems, including educational institutions, cultural norms, and peer influences, affect adolescents' gender preferences and contribute to the development of gender-sensitive policies and practices.

## 7. Donabedian Model

Originally used in healthcare to evaluate the quality of care, the Donabedian Model focuses on the relationship between structures (e.g., organizational characteristics), processes (e.g., practices and behaviors), and outcomes (e.g., experiences and results). This model is particularly useful for understanding how different elements of a system interact to influence outcomes. In the context of gender sensitivity, the study will adapt the Donabedian Model to assess how the structural characteristics of institutions (e.g., schools, workplaces) and the processes involved (e.g., gender-sensitive policies) shape gender-sensitive outcomes (e.g., equal treatment and opportunities). The study will explore how organizational practices, such as inclusive policies and anti-discrimination programs, can improve outcomes related to gender equality. By emphasizing the importance of improving processes to achieve better outcomes, this model provides valuable insights into how gender-sensitive practices can be integrated into educational

and professional settings to promote gender equality.

### **8. Bobbit-Zeher's Theory of Gender Discrimination**

Bobbit-Zeher's theory of gender discrimination focuses on how societal ideologies and institutional behaviors perpetuate gender inequities. According to this theory, gender discrimination is not only a result of individual biases but also stems from institutional practices and cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality. For example, in educational and workplace settings, certain practices and policies may unintentionally disadvantage women and gender minorities, even when the intention is to be neutral or fair. This theory will help the study explore how such subtle forms of discrimination manifest in various domains, including political competition, job promotions, and educational opportunities. The findings will help assess whether institutional practices are truly gender-neutral or if they continue to perpetuate disparities despite efforts to promote gender equality.

### **9. Claringbould and Knoppers' Paradoxical Practices**

Claringbould and Knoppers' concept of paradoxical practices refers to the subtle and often unnoticed ways in which gender inequalities are perpetuated under the guise of gender neutrality. Practices such as

promoting "gender normalcy" or "gender passivity" may appear to promote equality but, in reality, maintain traditional gender hierarchies by ignoring or downplaying systemic inequality. In the context of this study, these paradoxical practices will be examined to understand how gender-neutral policies or discourses might still reinforce unequal power dynamics between genders. The study will explore whether gender-neutral policies in political, educational, and workplace settings effectively address underlying gender disparities or whether they simply normalize gender inequality. This framework will highlight the complexities of achieving true gender equality and the need for deeper societal shifts in how gender is understood and practiced.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

To ensure clarity and understanding of the concepts used in this study, the following terms are defined:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) refers to a global treaty that addresses women's rights and aims to combat gender discrimination, helping women worldwide achieve meaningful changes in their daily lives. In this study, it refers to organizations and conventions



established to address and assess issues related to gender discrimination.

- Clinical Social Worker (CSW) refers to professionals who provide communication support through various strategies and modes tailored to individual rights, needs, and preferences. In this study, it pertains to social workers offering coping mechanisms and therapy to victims of gender discrimination.
- Educational Competition refers to ensuring fairness between men and women in academic settings, where no biases or unequal treatment occur. In this study, it highlights intellectual engagement between men and women to achieve academic excellence on equal terms.
- Gender Sensitivity refers to the process of increasing awareness of the role of gender in societal and interpersonal interactions. In this study, it pertains to the respondents' perspectives and understanding of gender fairness and dynamics.
- Gender Mainstreaming refers to integrating gender equality perspectives across all stages and levels of policies, programs, and projects. In this study, it relates to approaches and policies that address gender sensitivity based on the respondents' insights.
- Gender Equality refers to fairness between men and women, ensuring that strategies and measures are implemented to compensate for historical and social disadvantages, thereby promoting equitable opportunities. In this study, it refers to respondents' perceptions of fairness and equal opportunities for men and women.
- Job Promotion or Position refers to the unbiased advancement of men and women to higher ranks, roles, or positions within organizations. In this study, it examines how gender influences eligibility and outcomes in professional advancements.
- Political Competition refers to the engagement of individuals in democratic processes central to governance. In this study, it pertains to the participation and involvement of both sexes in political activities and roles.
- World Health Organization (WHO) refers to a United Nations agency responsible for international public health. In this study, it pertains to respondents' perspectives on the organization's role in promoting gender equality and sensitivity.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 1. Gender Preferences



This study reviews key literature and research on the development of gender role attitudes, which informed the study's conceptual framework. It explores how gender preferences impact adolescents and how factors like sex, social background, and cognitive ability shape these attitudes.

Research by the World Health Organization (WHO) highlights that girls facing gender discrimination are more prone to mental health issues and risky behaviors. In contrast, boys socialized into traditional gender roles often experience stress and aggression. Studies, such as those by Halimi et al. (2021) and Updegraff et al. (2014), reveal conflicting trends—some adolescents move toward traditional gender roles, while others adopt more egalitarian views.

Gender preference also influences adolescents' career choices, perpetuating stereotypes and limiting opportunities (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2020). Moreover, it affects social relationships, fostering division and exclusion. International studies, like Rees (2017), show that traditional roles persist globally, despite societal changes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to promoting inclusivity and well-being among adolescents.

## **2. Gender Sensitivity**

The findings from this study yield several significant insights based on the

interpretation of the collected data. A substantial proportion of respondents, specifically 36 individuals (48.0%), fall within the 16–18 age range, emphasizing the priority stage of late adolescence, a period critical for identity formation and social development. A notable majority of 52 respondents (69.3%) identify as female, while an overwhelming 74 participants (98.7%) reported being single, indicating a relatively uniform civil status. The distribution across educational levels is balanced, with 25 individuals (33.3%) each from both junior and senior high school, suggesting a broad representation of adolescent learners.

The analysis underscores how increasing gender preference influences adolescents' social dynamics, revealing a growing sense of division. Many respondents “occasionally” noticed identity, race, or cultural differences, which can foster social fragmentation. Additionally, participants “often” chose friends based on gender preference, highlighting how gender identity shapes social connections during adolescence. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive approaches across education and healthcare sectors. Social media was also found to play a prominent role in shaping adolescents' understanding of gender roles, reinforcing the findings of Vlassoff and Garcia

Moreno (2002), who asserted the significance of culturally responsive communication in shaping individual perspectives.

Further, gender preference was found to influence academic and career aspirations, with respondents frequently affirming this in their choices, underscoring how societal norms and stereotypes affect adolescent ambitions. The data also illuminate the link between gender preference and experiences of hostility; participants reported “occasional” encounters with hostility and “often” perceived that such differences contribute to peer conflict. These outcomes resonate with Celik et al. (2009), who argued that institutional resistance and lack of gender-sensitive policies can exacerbate social tension and marginalization.

Emotional well-being was another key concern, particularly where hostility related to gender preferences was present. Respondents highlighted the role of inclusive educational programs in promoting understanding, with many agreeing that such efforts “often” foster a more accepting environment. These insights affirm the need for culturally sensitive and inclusive reforms in schools and communities to address systemic inequalities, as stressed by Payne (2011) and WHO (2013). Moreover, the study echoes Widdershoven's (2013) and Stringer's (2015) call for reforms that support equitable

participation and challenge discriminatory norms in male-dominated spaces.

Overall, the findings highlight the intricate interplay between gender preference, social relationships, and well-being, while emphasizing the broader implications of gender sensitivity across healthcare, education, and political sectors. Future initiatives must prioritize gender mainstreaming and targeted interventions that address inequality and foster more inclusive environments for adolescents.

Ultimately, the findings emphasize the urgent need for gender-sensitive policies in healthcare, politics, and education to address systemic disparities and promote social equity. These efforts are vital for creating inclusive environments that respect and empower all genders.

## METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to assess the socio-demographic profiles of respondents, including their age, gender, educational attainment, and occupation. The focus was to explore the perspectives of selected residents from Tubod, Lanao del Norte, on gender sensitivity. A total of 70 individuals were selected from three barangays using a convenience sampling method, based on their availability and willingness to participate.

Following the initial selection, simple random sampling was applied to ensure proper representation of the participants. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, ensuring the rights and privacy of the participants were protected.

The primary data collection tool was a self-constructed survey questionnaire, which consisted of two sections. The first section focused on obtaining socio-demographic information from the respondents, while the second section contained statements designed to evaluate their views on gender sensitivity across four areas: political competition, job promotion or position, educational competition, and gender equality. The development of the questionnaire was based on a thorough review of existing literature, including books, academic journals, and unpublished theses. To ensure participants' cooperation, a formal letter was sent explaining the purpose of the study, and data collection was done at the participants' convenience, with questionnaires being retrieved immediately after completion.

Data analysis involved using frequency and percentage distributions to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. To evaluate the respondents' perceptions of gender sensitivity, mean and standard deviation were applied to the data, offering a clear and structured method for

interpreting the findings and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Hence, a descriptive quantitative approach was employed to examine the extent of gender preference, its contributing factors, and the potential impact on the lives of adolescents. This methodology was instrumental in understanding the complex dynamics of gender preference and its effects on adolescent experiences. By focusing on the adolescents' views, the study aimed to provide in-depth insights into the growing recognition of gender preference in the community.

For this aspect of the study, the researcher selected respondents from the barangays of Bulod, Pigcarangan, Poblacion, and San Antonio in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. A total of 75 adolescents from these barangays were identified as the target population for the study.

Formal permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the barangay chairpersons, ensuring that the research process complied with local regulations. After receiving approval, letters were distributed to both the barangay chairpersons and the adolescent respondents, outlining the study's purpose and seeking consent for participation. The researcher used a combination of convenience sampling and simple random sampling to select

participants. This approach allowed for easy recruitment, while random sampling ensured that the selection was fair and representative of the population under study.

The research tool for data collection was a self-constructed survey questionnaire, designed to capture the perspectives of adolescents from the selected barangays on the increasing recognition of gender preference in their community. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: one for collecting demographic information and the other to gather insights on gender sensitivity. The responses were analyzed to evaluate the adolescents' perceptions of gender roles and preferences within their local context.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The consent forms provided detailed information about the study's goals, participant rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Written consent was required before the adolescents could participate.

Adhering to the Data Privacy Act, the study ensured that all collected data remained confidential and were used exclusively for research purposes. In cases involving adolescent participants, parental consent was also obtained. This process was designed to protect the privacy and rights of the participants throughout the research.

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the data collection tools, a pilot test was conducted. This test involved a small group of participants and aimed to refine the survey instruments and interview guides before full-scale data collection commenced. The pilot test helped ensure that the tools were effective and that the data collected would be robust and reliable for analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the study offer a deeper understanding of the perspectives of adolescents in Tubod, Lanao del Norte, particularly in terms of gender sensitivity and how gender preferences shape their views and experiences. A large portion of the respondents, specifically those aged between 16 and 18, were predominantly female, which suggests that gender influences the way they perceive and experience their social environment. A notable majority of the participants were single, indicating that their perspectives on gender roles and relationships were likely uninfluenced by the commitments or responsibilities that often come with familial relationships. The distribution of respondents across both junior and senior high school students helped ensure that the study captured the views of adolescents at varying stages of their educational development, further enriching

the data on how gender preferences and sensitivities evolve during adolescence.

The study found that gender preferences significantly influence adolescents' social relationships. Many respondents indicated that they "often" or "occasionally" selected friends or acquaintances based on gender, suggesting that gender-based social divisions are still very much present in their social circles. This pattern of behavior points to the significant role that traditional gender norms play in shaping the ways adolescents form friendships and interact with others. Moreover, social media was identified as a key player in shaping the perceptions of gender roles. Given its pervasive influence on young people, social media both reinforces existing stereotypes and introduces new gender concepts, making it a powerful tool in either perpetuating or challenging traditional views on gender.

Furthermore, the study uncovered the impact of gender preference on academic and career aspirations. A substantial number of respondents reported that their gender preferences influenced their choices regarding education and career, suggesting that gender continues to serve as a determining factor in the opportunities adolescents feel are available to them. This is particularly relevant in a context where

opportunities for advancement, especially in certain professions or academic fields, are often perceived as being gender-specific. This reveals that while there is a clear desire among adolescents to pursue their dreams, societal expectations still heavily influence these aspirations, particularly in terms of what is considered "appropriate" for their gender.

Another critical theme in the study was the relationship between gender preferences and experiences of hostility. A considerable number of respondents admitted to experiencing or witnessing hostility related to gender preferences, pointing to the tension and conflict that still arise from non-conforming gender identities or behaviors. These experiences of discrimination and exclusion often led to emotional distress, highlighting the psychological toll that societal pressures can place on adolescents who feel their gender preferences do not align with mainstream expectations. This finding emphasizes the urgent need for interventions aimed at creating more inclusive environments in schools and communities, where individuals can express their gender identities without fear of judgment or retribution.

The study also shed light on the role of education in shaping gender sensitivities. A majority of the respondents believed that educational programs focused on gender

inclusivity had a positive impact on promoting acceptance and understanding of gender diversity. This finding suggests that schools play an essential role in fostering a more inclusive atmosphere, where students are educated about the importance of respecting all gender identities. Despite this, there were still mixed views on broader societal issues, such as whether women are taking jobs away from men or whether both genders have equal opportunities in professional settings. While some respondents acknowledged that men and women should have equal rights in the workplace, there was uncertainty about how these ideals play out in real-life situations, particularly in terms of job assignments and career progression. This mixed response indicates that while gender equality is supported in principle, traditional views on gender roles are still deeply ingrained, particularly in certain contexts like the workplace and family dynamics.

When it came to political equality, the study revealed a strong belief in gender equality, with respondents agreeing that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities in politics. However, traditional gender roles still persisted in other areas, particularly in household decision-making. Many respondents believed that men should have the final say in family matters, reinforcing traditional gender norms that

position men as the primary decision-makers in the home. Additionally, while there was support for gender equality in education, the study revealed that men were often viewed as more competitive in academic settings, which suggests a lingering belief in male dominance in intellectual capabilities, even though both genders were acknowledged for their equal intellectual potential.

Finally, the study highlighted the complexity of achieving true gender equality. Despite a general consensus on the need for gender equality across various domains, respondents remained uncertain about whether true equality had been achieved, reflecting the ongoing challenges that women and non-binary individuals face in striving for equal opportunities and recognition. The respondents' mixed views on gender issues underscore the need for continued efforts to address gender-based disparities in politics, education, and the workplace, as well as the importance of providing platforms for marginalized voices. The study also points to the importance of ongoing education and advocacy in dismantling gender stereotypes and promoting an inclusive and supportive environment for all adolescents, regardless of their gender identity. Through these findings, it becomes clear that while there has been significant progress, there is still much work to

be done in achieving true gender equality in both public and private spheres.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The analysis and findings of this study lead to several important conclusions regarding the impact of gender preference among adolescents. Almost all respondents indicated a positive perspective on the increasing recognition of gender preference within their demographic, showing a shift toward greater acceptance and understanding of gender diversity. The majority of participants were aged between 16 and 18 years, with a notable predominance of females who identified as single, suggesting that their perceptions of gender roles may be evolving as they navigate adolescence. The study revealed that gender preference significantly influences respondents' academic and career aspirations, with many reporting that these preferences helped shape their views on future opportunities. This impact underscores the potential for gender preferences to create divisions in social spheres, as participants also noted occasional observations of divisions based on race, identity, or culture within their communities. Such social fragmentation suggests that while greater gender recognition is taking place, it still contributes

to the complexities of social interactions among young people.

Additionally, the study highlighted the emotional toll that hostility related to gender preferences can have on adolescents. Many respondents expressed perceptions of hostility, indicating that such experiences negatively affect their emotional well-being, which is crucial to overall quality of life. This led to a consensus among the participants, advocating for intervention programs that could address and mitigate such hostility. The importance of supporting emotional health is evident, as distress from gender-related discrimination can have long-lasting effects. This finding is consistent with studies like the one from the Mental Health Foundation (2023), which discusses how transgender individuals may experience distress from the incongruence between their gender identity and biological sex. Such distress often manifests in higher levels of body dissatisfaction, particularly prior to gender confirmation treatments, further underscoring the need for targeted mental health interventions.

The study also shed light on the broader implications of gender preference on physical and emotional health, which is often tied to societal perceptions and treatment of non-conforming gender identities. In terms of family dynamics, the study found that while



both men and women share responsibilities such as family planning and pregnancy, women are often still viewed as the primary caregivers, reflecting traditional gender roles that persist in many societies. Despite these traditional expectations, the study observed a growing trend toward recognizing the importance of gender equality in various spheres, including politics and the workplace. Respondents largely agreed that men and women have equal rights and opportunities in these areas, with many acknowledging the increasing role of women in political spheres and recognizing both genders as equally capable in professional settings.

Further, the findings suggest that there is an evolving perception of gender equality in education, with both men and women being seen as possessing equal intellectual potential. However, some respondents still held the view that men were more intelligent, while women were perceived as more dedicated to their studies, reflecting lingering stereotypes that continue to influence educational achievement. This finding calls for continued research to explore the impact of societal expectations and gender norms on academic performance and the ways in which they can be overcome to promote equal opportunities for all students.

To sum up, the findings underscore the complex interplay between gender

preference, social dynamics, and individual well-being, emphasizing the need for continued research, education, and intervention. The study also highlighted the crucial role of effective parenting in fostering an environment where children can embrace their identities and preferences. Parents are encouraged to support their children's gender identities, which can prevent adverse effects on their well-being. Additionally, educators should introduce activities that enhance students' understanding of gender, further fostering an inclusive and accepting atmosphere in schools. School administrators are urged to implement specific interventions aimed at reducing hostility related to gender preferences to create a supportive environment for all students. Likewise, community workers must work to raise awareness and promote inclusivity by developing programs that educate the public on the importance of respecting and supporting diverse gender identities.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the local government of Tubod, Lanao del Norte, along with relevant agencies, advocate for programs on gender sensitivity and equality, ensuring fair treatment of both genders in all sectors of society. There should be a strong focus on social interventions that challenge societal attitudes, promote gender equality, and

reduce stereotypes. Awareness programs aimed at preventing discrimination and fostering inclusivity should be prioritized in the community to create a more supportive and understanding environment for individuals of all gender identities. Finally, future research should investigate deeper into how gender roles continue to shape behavior in professional and social contexts, particularly focusing on the evolving role of women in leadership. Research into the role of education in challenging gender stereotypes will also be vital in advancing gender equality across society.

### GENERAL IMPLICATIONS

This study underscores the critical need for creating an inclusive and supportive environment for adolescents, particularly those with diverse gender preferences. It highlights the importance of implementing educational programs and interventions to reduce gender-related hostility and foster acceptance. Schools, parents, and communities must actively promote gender sensitivity to challenge traditional stereotypes and ensure safe spaces for self-expression. The findings emphasize that ongoing efforts in education, public awareness, and policy reforms are essential for advancing gender equality. By prioritizing inclusivity and respect for diversity, we can create a society where all

individuals, regardless of gender identity, can thrive.

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Conflicts of Interest.

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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