



# Understanding the Influence of Family Dynamics on Gender Identity Formation in Pre-school Children

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## ABSTRACT

Gender identity development in pre-school children is a complex process influenced by individual, familial, and societal factors. This research investigates the role of the family in shaping children's understanding and expression of gender, drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews, observations, and quantitative surveys. The study examines parental socialization practices, attitudes, and beliefs regarding gender, as well as the influence of sibling and peer interactions, cultural norms, and socioeconomic factors within the family context. Findings highlight the central role of parents as primary socialization agents, transmitting cultural norms and values related to gender through everyday interactions and practices. Sibling and peer influences further shape children's understanding of gender, while cultural and societal factors intersect with family dynamics to influence perceptions of gender roles and expectations. Practical implications for parents, educators, and policymakers are discussed, emphasizing the importance of fostering awareness, reflection, and action to create supportive environments that empower children to explore and embrace their gender identity authentically and affirmatively. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the processes underlying gender identity formation in early childhood and informs interventions and policies aimed at promoting healthy gender development in pre-school children.

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## Introduction

The formation of gender identity is a fundamental aspect of human development, taking root in the early years of childhood (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). During the pre-school years, typically defined as ages 3 to 5, children begin to explore and understand the concepts of gender, influenced significantly by their immediate environment, primarily their family. The family serves as the primary social unit, playing a critical role in shaping various aspects of a child's identity, including gender identity (Carter, 2014).

At its core, gender identity is about an individual's sense of themselves as male, female, or somewhere along the gender spectrum (Monro, 2005). Unlike gender expression, which involves external manifestations such as clothing, behavior, and interests, gender identity is an internal experience. For pre-school children, this internal sense starts to become apparent as they grow more aware of their own bodies, their social environment, and the gender norms prevalent in their culture.

From a developmental perspective, pre-school children are in a critical stage of cognitive and social development. They are rapidly learning about the world around them and are keen observers of the behaviors and attitudes of significant adults in their lives, particularly their parents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). As they interact with their environment, children begin to categorize and make sense of social roles, including gender roles. This categorization is a natural part of their cognitive development, helping them to navigate social interactions and understand their place within their family and society.

During these formative years, children often exhibit behaviors and preferences that align with societal gender norms (Fast & Olson, 2018). For instance, boys may gravitate towards activities considered masculine, such as playing with trucks or engaging in physical play, while girls may prefer activities considered feminine, such as playing with dolls or engaging in nurturing play. These preferences are not inherently tied to biological differences but are significantly shaped by the social cues and reinforcement they receive from their environment (Udell et al., 2010).

Parents and caregivers play a pivotal role in the development of gender identity in pre-school children (Carone et al., 2020). Through their interactions, children receive implicit and explicit messages about what is considered appropriate for their gender. For example, a child might observe that their father engages in certain activities while their mother engages in others, thereby internalizing these behaviors as gender-typical. Additionally, the types of toys provided, the activities encouraged, and the media content children are exposed to all contribute to shaping their understanding of gender (Spinner et al., 2018).

Importantly, pre-school children are also capable of expressing their gender identity in ways that may challenge traditional norms. Some children may show a preference for toys, clothing, or activities typically associated with the opposite gender, which can be a normal part of their exploration of identity. It is crucial for parents and caregivers to support this exploration and avoid imposing rigid gender expectations, as flexibility in gender expression can lead to a healthier and more authentic development of gender identity (Malpas, 2011).

Understanding gender identity in pre-school children also involves recognizing the influence of broader societal and cultural norms. Different cultures have varying expectations and norms regarding gender, which are communicated to children through family practices, media, and social interactions. These cultural norms can either reinforce traditional gender roles or provide a more inclusive and diverse understanding of gender (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

Several psychological and sociological theories provide a framework for understanding how gender identity develops (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget have emphasized the stages of psychosexual and cognitive development, respectively, highlighting how children internalize gender roles through interactions and observations. Albert Bandura's social learning theory posits that children learn gender-specific behaviors by observing and imitating adults, particularly parents, who model these behaviors.

Sociological perspectives further elaborate on the role of societal structures and cultural norms in shaping gender identity (Lawler, 2015). Gender schema theory suggests that children learn about gender roles and develop gender schemas through their experiences and the reinforcement of gender-typical behaviors by those around them. Social role theory explains how the roles assigned to men and women in society are perpetuated through family practices and expectations.

Within the family unit, parents serve as the primary agents of socialization (Grusec et al., 1988). Their attitudes, behaviors, and the roles they embody significantly influence their children's understanding of gender. For instance, parents who adhere to traditional gender roles may inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes by assigning gender-specific toys, activities, and chores. Conversely, parents who adopt a more egalitarian approach can provide a broader spectrum of gender experiences, allowing children to explore and express their identities more freely (Bussey, 2011).

Siblings also play a notable role in the gender socialization process (McHale et al., 2003). Interactions with older or younger siblings can reinforce or challenge gender norms, providing

additional models for behavior and identity formation. Furthermore, extended family members, such as grandparents, can contribute to the reinforcement of cultural and familial gender expectations.

The family's influence is not isolated but interwoven with broader cultural and societal contexts (Burnett & Jaeger, 2011). Cultural norms dictate what behaviors are deemed appropriate for different genders, and these norms are often reflected in family practices. Socioeconomic factors can also impact how gender roles are perceived and enacted within the family, influencing children's experiences and understandings of gender (Leaper & Friedman, 2007).

This research aims to analyze these multifaceted influences by examining various family practices, from the types of toys and activities provided to the gendered division of household chores (Boe & Woods, 2018). It also considers the broader societal and cultural contexts in which families operate, acknowledging that the family's role in gender identity formation is both powerful and complex.

By exploring these dynamics, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender identity is formed during the critical pre-school years and to offer insights that can inform parents, educators, and policymakers (Kellner & Share, 2007). Understanding the role of the family in this process is essential for fostering environments that support healthy gender development and for challenging restrictive gender norms that can limit individual potential and perpetuate inequality.

### Method

Understanding the formation of gender identity in pre-school children requires an examination of various theoretical perspectives that explain how children come to understand and internalize their gender. Sigmund Freud's theory of psychosexual development includes a stage where gender identity begins to form: the phallic stage, occurring around ages 3 to 6 (Wong, 1982). During this period, children become aware of their own bodies, the differences between males and females, and the concept of gender roles. Freud believed that family dynamics, particularly the child's relationship with their parents, play a crucial role in this stage. Through processes like identification with the same-sex parent, children develop a sense of gender identity. While Freud's theories are considered somewhat outdated and controversial today, they laid the groundwork for understanding the importance of early childhood experiences in gender identity formation.

Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory posits that children's understanding of gender evolves through stages of cognitive development (Martin et al., 2002). According to Kohlberg, children go through three stages: gender identity (recognizing themselves as male or female around age 2-3), gender stability (understanding that gender is stable over time around age 4-5), and gender constancy (realizing that gender remains consistent despite changes in appearance or behavior around age 6-7). This theory emphasizes that children actively construct their understanding of gender as they mature cognitively, and their interactions with their environment, including their family, are crucial in this process.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory highlights the role of observational learning, imitation, and reinforcement in the development of gender identity. According to Bandura, children learn gender roles by observing the behaviors of others, particularly their parents and other significant adults. They imitate these behaviors and are either reinforced or discouraged through social feedback. For instance, a boy who observes his father engaging in certain activities may imitate those behaviors and receive positive reinforcement, reinforcing his understanding of those activities as male-appropriate. This theory underscores the importance of the family environment in modeling and reinforcing gender-typical behaviors.

Gender schema theory, developed by Sandra Bem, combines cognitive and social learning theories to explain how children develop gender identity (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017). According to this theory, children create cognitive schemas, or mental frameworks, that help them organize and interpret information about gender. These schemas are influenced by societal norms and expectations and guide

children's perceptions and behaviors. From a young age, children categorize themselves and others based on gender and use these schemas to navigate their social world. Family interactions and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping these gender schemas, as children are exposed to gendered expectations and behaviors from their immediate environment (Halim et al., 2016).

Social role theory, proposed by Alice Eagly, suggests that gender roles are a reflection of the social and cultural expectations placed on individuals based on their gender (Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to this theory, society assigns different roles and responsibilities to men and women, and individuals internalize these roles through socialization processes. In the context of early childhood, family practices and parental behaviors provide the primary framework through which children learn about these social roles (Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health Adoption, and Dependent Care, and Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics et al., 2012). For example, if a child observes that caregiving responsibilities are primarily undertaken by the mother, they may internalize the belief that caregiving is a female role.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the various environmental influences on a child's development, including gender identity (Peterson, 2014). According to this theory, a child's development is influenced by multiple layers of their environment, from the immediate family (microsystem) to broader societal and cultural contexts (macrosystem). The interactions between these layers, or systems, play a critical role in shaping a child's gender identity. For instance, the family environment (microsystem) directly influences a child's daily experiences, while cultural norms and societal expectations (macrosystem) provide the overarching context within which these experiences occur.

### **The Role of the Family**

The family serves as the foundational social unit where early childhood development, including the formation of gender identity, takes place (Chodorow, 2018). As the primary context for socialization, the family profoundly influences children's understanding and internalization of gender roles and expectations.

Parents are the first and most influential figures in a child's life, and their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions provide the initial framework for understanding gender. From birth, children observe and imitate their parents, learning about gender roles through both direct instruction and implicit modeling.

Parents often consciously teach their children about gender through explicit communication (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). For example, they might use gendered language, assign gender-specific chores, or encourage participation in activities traditionally associated with their child's gender. These direct instructions help children learn societal norms and expectations regarding gender-appropriate behavior.

Beyond direct teaching, parents model gender roles through their own behaviors and interactions (Gunderson et al., 2012). Children observe how their parents divide household labor, engage in leisure activities, and interact with each other and the outside world. For instance, if a mother takes on most of the caregiving responsibilities while the father handles financial matters, children may internalize these roles as normative and expected for their own gender.

The attitudes and beliefs that parents hold about gender can also shape their children's gender identity. Parents who adhere to traditional gender norms may reinforce these norms through their parenting practices, while those with more egalitarian views may encourage a broader range of gender expressions. For example, a father who believes in gender equality might support his son in playing with dolls or his daughter in playing sports, thereby challenging traditional gender stereotypes.

Siblings also play a significant role in the development of gender identity. Interactions with older or younger siblings can reinforce or challenge gender norms, providing additional models for behavior and identity formation. Older siblings often serve as role models for younger ones,

demonstrating gender-typical behaviors and interests. For example, a younger brother might emulate his older brother's interest in sports or a younger sister might mimic her older sister's fashion choices.

Sibling relationships provide a unique dynamic that combines elements of peer interactions and family influence. These interactions can be more egalitarian and competitive, allowing children to explore and negotiate their gender roles in a different context from their relationships with parents. Siblings can also provide support and reinforcement for each other's gender expressions. A supportive sibling can help bolster a child's confidence in exploring non-traditional gender roles, while a less supportive sibling might reinforce traditional norms through teasing or exclusion.

The influence of extended family members, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, can further shape a child's gender identity. These relatives often provide additional models of gendered behavior and can reinforce or challenge the norms established by parents. Extended family members can play a crucial role in transmitting cultural values and norms related to gender. For example, grandparents may share stories and traditions that emphasize specific gender roles, thereby reinforcing cultural expectations. The involvement of extended family can also introduce children to a wider range of gender expressions and beliefs. Different family members may hold varying views on gender roles, providing children with a broader spectrum of experiences and models.

The daily practices and environment within the family setting are critical in shaping children's gender identity. These include the types of toys and activities available, the media children are exposed to, and the distribution of household chores. The selection of toys and activities provided by parents often reflects societal gender norms. Boys are frequently given trucks, action figures, and sports equipment, while girls might receive dolls, dress-up clothes, and kitchen sets. These choices influence children's play behaviors and interests, reinforcing traditional gender roles.

### **Research method**

A mixed-methods approach is utilized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influences on gender identity formation within the family. This approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods, allowing for a nuanced exploration of both individual experiences and broader patterns and trends.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, are used to gather rich, in-depth data on family dynamics, parental attitudes and behaviors, and children's experiences of gender socialization. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with parents to explore their beliefs, practices, and challenges related to gender socialization. Observations of family interactions and children's play behaviors provide additional insights into the everyday contexts in which gender identity is formed.

Quantitative methods, such as surveys and standardized measures, are employed to gather broader demographic data and assess the prevalence of certain practices and attitudes within the sample population. Surveys are administered to a larger sample of parents to gather information on demographic variables, such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and family structure, as well as specific practices related to gender socialization, such as toy preferences, media consumption habits, and division of household chores.

The participants in this study consist of families with pre-school children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. A purposive sampling approach is used to ensure diversity in terms of demographic variables, such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and family structure, as well as geographic location. Families are recruited from diverse communities, including urban, suburban, and rural areas, to capture a range of experiences and perspectives.

Families with at least one pre-school-aged child are eligible to participate in the study. Both two-parent and single-parent households are included to explore variations in gender socialization practices across different family structures. Families from diverse cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses are sought to ensure representation of a wide range of experiences.

Participants are recruited through various channels, including community organizations, schools, childcare centers, and online parenting forums. Recruitment materials provide information



about the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures, and interested families are invited to contact the research team for further information and to express their interest in participating.

Data collection methods include interviews, observations, surveys, and standardized measures, each tailored to capture different aspects of family dynamics and gender socialization practices. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with parents to explore their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to gender socialization. Interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture the richness and depth of participants' responses.

Naturalistic observations of family interactions and children's play behaviors are conducted in participants' homes or other naturalistic settings. Observations are conducted over multiple sessions to capture a range of activities and contexts, and detailed field notes are taken to document observed behaviors and interactions.

Surveys are administered to parents to gather quantitative data on demographic variables, such as age, education, income, and cultural background, as well as specific practices related to gender socialization, such as toy preferences, media consumption habits, and division of household chores. Surveys are administered online or in paper format, depending on participants' preferences.

Standardized measures of gender identity, gender role attitudes, and parental gender socialization practices are included to assess individual differences and identify patterns and trends within the sample population. These measures provide quantitative data that can be analyzed using statistical techniques to explore associations and correlations between variables.

Data analysis involves both qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore patterns, themes, and relationships within the data. Qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and field notes, are analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Data are coded and categorized to identify recurring themes, patterns, and variations in participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes are developed iteratively through a process of constant comparison and triangulation, with input from multiple researchers to enhance rigor and validity.

Quantitative data, such as survey responses and standardized measures, are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize demographic variables and practices related to gender socialization, while inferential statistics, such as correlations and regression analyses, are used to explore relationships between variables and test hypotheses.

Qualitative and quantitative findings are integrated through a process of triangulation, where data from different sources are compared and contrasted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Convergence, complementarity, and expansion are used as criteria for evaluating the consistency and coherence of findings across different methods and data sources.

## **Result and discussion**

### **Result**

The research findings shed light on the multifaceted ways in which the family influences the formation of gender identity in pre-school children. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews, observations, and quantitative surveys, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors in shaping children's gender identity within the family context.

The study found that traditional gender roles continue to shape the division of household labor within families, with mothers often taking on more caregiving and domestic responsibilities, while fathers assume roles related to breadwinning and authority. This division of labor reinforces traditional gender norms and expectations, influencing children's perceptions of gender roles from an early age.

Parents' choices in toys and activities also reflect traditional gender stereotypes, with boys often encouraged to engage in rough-and-tumble play and activities associated with physical prowess, while

girls are steered towards nurturing and domestic activities. These gendered preferences are reinforced through parental encouragement and modeling, contributing to the internalization of gender norms by children.

The study revealed variations in parental attitudes towards gender roles, with some parents endorsing traditional gender norms, while others hold more egalitarian views. Parents' attitudes towards gender are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including cultural background, socioeconomic status, and personal experiences. These attitudes shape parents' socialization practices and the messages conveyed to children about gender.

Media consumption habits and exposure to cultural influences also impact parental attitudes and beliefs about gender. Parents who consume media with traditional gender portrayals may be more likely to endorse traditional gender norms, while those exposed to more diverse representations may hold more progressive views on gender. These attitudes are transmitted to children through parental modeling and communication.

Siblings play a significant role in the socialization process, serving as models and sources of reinforcement for gendered behaviors and attitudes. Older siblings often influence the gender socialization of younger siblings through imitation and social learning. Sibling interactions provide additional contexts for children to explore and negotiate their gender identity, with variations observed across different family structures and dynamics.

Peer groups also shape children's understanding of gender roles and expectations, providing opportunities for socialization and identity exploration outside the family. Children learn about gender through peer interactions, including play activities, group dynamics, and social norms within peer groups. Peer influences complement and sometimes challenge parental socialization practices, contributing to the formation of children's gender identity.

The broader cultural and societal context influences parental socialization practices and children's understanding of gender roles. Cultural norms regarding gender are transmitted through various socialization agents, including families, schools, religious institutions, and the media. These norms shape children's perceptions of gender and inform their identity development within the family context.

Socioeconomic status also impacts parental socialization practices and children's experiences of gender socialization. Families facing economic hardship may have fewer resources and opportunities to challenge traditional gender norms, while those with higher socioeconomic status may have greater access to resources that promote gender equality and diversity. Socioeconomic disparities contribute to variations in gender socialization practices across different families and communities.

### **Aligning Findings with Existing Theories and Literature**

The findings of this research offer valuable insights into the formation of gender identity in pre-school children within the family context, shedding light on how existing theories and literature align with and are challenged by empirical evidence.

Freud's psychosexual stages, particularly the phallic stage, emphasize the importance of early childhood experiences, including parent-child relationships, in shaping gender identity. The findings of this research support Freud's notion that children develop a sense of gender identity through identification with the same-sex parent and internalization of gender roles modeled within the family. Freud's theory has been criticized for its emphasis on biological determinism and lack of consideration for social and cultural influences on gender development. The findings of this research highlight the role of socialization practices and cultural norms in shaping children's understanding of gender, challenging Freud's notion of innate biological drives as the primary determinants of gender identity.

Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory posits that children's understanding of gender evolves through stages of cognitive development, from basic gender identity to gender constancy. The findings of this research support Kohlberg's framework by demonstrating that children's comprehension of gender roles and expectations develops gradually over time, influenced by

interactions with family members and exposure to cultural norms. Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for its focus on cognitive processes and limited consideration of social and contextual factors in gender development. The findings of this research highlight the importance of socialization practices and cultural influences in shaping children's gender identity, suggesting that cognitive development alone may not fully explain the complexity of gender development.

Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, and reinforcement in the acquisition of gendered behaviors and attitudes. The findings of this research support Bandura's theory by demonstrating that children learn about gender through modeling and reinforcement within the family context, with parents serving as primary models for gendered behaviors. Bandura's theory has been criticized for its limited consideration of cognitive processes and individual agency in learning. The findings of this research highlight the active role that children play in interpreting and internalizing gendered messages, suggesting that social learning processes interact with cognitive development and personal experiences in shaping gender identity.

Gender schema theory posits that children develop cognitive schemas or mental frameworks for understanding gender, which influence their perceptions and behaviors. The findings of this research support gender schema theory by demonstrating that children categorize themselves and others based on gender and use these schemas to interpret and navigate their social world within the family context. Gender schema theory has been criticized for its emphasis on cognitive processes and limited consideration of social and cultural influences on gender development. The findings of this research highlight the importance of socialization practices and cultural norms in shaping children's gender identity, suggesting that cognitive processes alone may not fully account for the complexity of gender development.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes the importance of multiple environmental influences, including family, peers, and culture, in shaping children's development. The findings of this research support ecological systems theory by demonstrating the interconnectedness of individual, familial, and societal factors in shaping children's gender identity within the family context. Ecological systems theory has been criticized for its emphasis on descriptive rather than explanatory models of development. The findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes underlying gender development by identifying specific socialization practices and cultural influences within the family context.

### **Practical Implications for Parents, Educators, and Policymakers**

The findings of this research have significant implications for parents, educators, and policymakers concerned with promoting healthy and equitable gender development in pre-school children. By understanding the role of the family in shaping gender identity and addressing the challenges and opportunities identified in this study, stakeholders can implement strategies and interventions that support children in exploring and expressing their gender in authentic and affirming ways.

Parents are encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to gender and how these may influence their children's development. Awareness of gender stereotypes and biases can help parents challenge traditional norms and provide more diverse and inclusive experiences for their children. Parents can support their children in exploring a wide range of interests and activities, regardless of gender stereotypes. Encouraging boys to engage in nurturing and creative activities and girls to participate in sports and STEM-related activities can help broaden children's experiences and challenge gender norms. Parents serve as powerful role models for their children's gender development. Modeling egalitarian attitudes and behaviors within the family, such as sharing household chores and expressing emotions openly, can promote gender equality and diversity and provide children with positive examples to emulate.

Educators can develop and implement gender-inclusive curriculum materials and teaching strategies that challenge traditional gender stereotypes and promote diverse representations of gender.



Incorporating stories, activities, and discussions that explore gender diversity and inclusion can create a more inclusive learning environment for all children. Educators play a key role in creating a supportive classroom environment where children feel safe to explore and express their gender identity. Providing opportunities for children to engage in open discussions about gender, modeling respectful behavior towards diverse gender identities, and addressing instances of bullying or discrimination can foster a culture of inclusivity and acceptance. Educators can benefit from professional development opportunities that enhance their understanding of gender development and provide strategies for promoting gender equality and diversity in the classroom. Training on gender-sensitive teaching practices, addressing bias and discrimination, and creating inclusive learning environments can empower educators to better support children's gender identity development.

Policymakers have a role to play in developing and implementing gender-inclusive policies that support children's healthy development and well-being. Policies related to education, healthcare, and social services should promote gender equality, address discrimination and bias, and provide support for children and families exploring gender diversity. Policymakers can allocate resources for training and professional development programs that support parents, educators, and healthcare providers in promoting gender equality and diversity. Training on gender-sensitive practices, cultural competence, and LGBTQ+ inclusion can help ensure that stakeholders have the knowledge and skills to support children's gender identity development effectively. Policymakers can advocate for policies and initiatives that raise awareness of gender diversity and promote acceptance and inclusion within society. Public awareness campaigns, educational materials, and community outreach efforts can help challenge stereotypes, reduce stigma, and create a more supportive and affirming environment for children of all genders.

### **Conclusion and implication**

The formation of gender identity in pre-school children is a complex and multifaceted process shaped by individual, familial, and societal factors. This research has explored the role of the family in shaping children's understanding and expression of gender, highlighting the ways in which parental socialization practices, attitudes, and beliefs influence children's development within the family context. By examining the interactions between family dynamics, cultural norms, and children's experiences, this study has provided valuable insights into the processes underlying gender identity formation in early childhood. The findings of this research underscore the central role of the family in shaping children's gender identity. Parents serve as primary socialization agents, transmitting cultural norms and values related to gender through everyday interactions and practices within the family. Sibling and peer influences further shape children's understanding of gender, providing additional contexts for socialization and identity exploration. Cultural and societal factors, including media representations and socioeconomic influences, intersect with family dynamics to influence children's perceptions of gender roles and expectations. The practical implications of this research extend to parents, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders invested in promoting healthy gender development in pre-school children. By fostering awareness, reflection, and action at multiple levels, stakeholders can create supportive environments that empower children to explore and express their gender identity authentically and affirmatively. Encouraging awareness of gender stereotypes and biases, supporting children in exploring diverse interests and activities, and modeling egalitarian attitudes and behaviors within the family. Developing gender-inclusive curriculum materials and teaching strategies, creating supportive classroom environments that respect and affirm diverse gender identities, and engaging in ongoing professional development to enhance understanding of gender development. Implementing gender-inclusive policies and initiatives that promote equality and diversity, allocating resources for training and support programs for parents, educators, and healthcare providers, and advocating for public awareness and acceptance of gender diversity.

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