

Gender Stereotypes and Health of Individuals in China: The Role of Education and Gender

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ABSTRACT

Existing literature highlights the impact of traditional gender dynamics and stereotypes on individuals worldwide, yet their connection to health, particularly for individuals with different education levels and genders within China, remains unexplored. This study aims to examine the mental and physical health effects of gender stereotypes on diverse genders and social classes in China. It builds on previous research's insights and addresses questions about the extent of these impacts and their variations across education levels and genders. The study utilizes the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey data to explore the relationship between acceptance of gender stereotypes and health status, specifically among married individuals. The findings reveal a negative correlation between gender stereotypes and individual well-being, particularly impacting women and varying across education levels and genders. Educated women in China show increased resistance to stereotypes and challenging traditional roles, while men's attitudes are less influenced by education. These insights emphasize the importance of education in disrupting traditional gender norms and promoting well-being. Further research is recommended for cross-country comparisons and greater involvement of unmarried individuals' perspectives.

Introduction

In a recent Chinese study spanning eight major cities, 44.2% of adolescents experienced depressive symptoms on a weekly basis—significantly surpassing international figures. According to the data extracted from the CFA model, a powerful revelation emerged through MANOVA analysis: Girls, when contrasted with boys, were found to grapple with a heightened burden of depressed mood, presenting gender disparities (Chen et al., 2021). This data vividly illustrates the detrimental effects that gender stereotypes can exert on individuals in China, particularly affecting girls, the major victims. In a landscape characterized by evolving societal norms, a body of previous research sheds light on the intricate relationship between traditional gender stereotypes and their multifaceted impact on individuals across different countries. Nevertheless, there is a significant gap in our understanding of how these stereotypes affect individual health, particularly among different education levels and genders within the Chinese context.

The persistence of traditional gender stereotypes in China, influenced by shifts in societal changes, dynamics and consumer culture and reinforced by legal, social, and educational spheres, highlights the imperative of investigating their impact on women's roles, relationships, and mental well-being. In literature today there is a lacking examination of their implications on women's roles, relationships, and mental health. Thakur, Yang, and Neal (2006) examine how China's societal changes, influenced by factors like consumer culture, led to a resurgence of traditional gender dynamics. They highlight the impact on women due to the dismantling of the public sector. Zhou, Feldshuh, and Li (1989) focus on challenges within relationships and traditional stereotypes women face related to marriage. Through a discussion of common stereotypes like "leftover women," Zhou et al. (1989) demonstrate the double standard women face in their marital relationships. He and Ng and Li (2013, 2015) reveal enduring gender stereotypes in the Chinese legal system, while Fang (2021) uncovers

analogous biases rooted in Confucian values within education and employment, collectively highlighting a consistent argument about the persistence of gender biases across legal, social, and educational spheres in China (He & Ng, 2013). Furthermore, research demonstrates that gender inequality affects women's mental health and the stress on their brain regions around the world (Zugman et al., 2023). Despite widespread discussions of global and Chinese gender stereotypes, the connection between them and individual health, specifically their impact on people across different education levels and genders in China, remains unexplored.

My study aims to examine the health impacts, both mental and physical, of gender stereotypes on people in China, considering diverse genders and social classes. Existing literature falls short due to outdatedness, lacking specific focus on the Chinese context, and is limited in scope regarding stereotypes' relation to health. Zugman's study holds valuable implications for the Chinese context (Zugman et al., 2023). This study builds on Zugman's insights into brain differences between genders, elaborating on their manifestation in distinct mental health challenges for Chinese women and men while exploring education's role.

This study addresses the following research questions: To what extent do gender stereotypes impact the health of individuals? How does the effect of gender stereotypes differ by education level and gender?

This paper begins with a review of previous studies on gender roles and stereotypes, followed by an outline of the study's methodology investigating the relationship between gender stereotypes and mental health using data from CGSS 2017. The findings reveal education-driven shifts in gender role acceptance, particularly among women and those with limited education, and a negative connection between stereotypes and health for married individuals. Education empowers women to reject stereotypes, improving well-being and relationships for both genders. I conclude by summarizing these insights and providing recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Recently, gender roles and stereotypes in China are under intense debate. Many women are becoming increasingly aware of the numerous inequalities and traditions norms that govern their lives. However, the gap between the treatments women and men received from society remains (Attané & Guill, 2012). Traditional Chinese notions that assign women to primarily domestic responsibilities and men to the economic sector are gradually replacing modern concepts that emphasize equal responsibilities for both genders within the family. Concerns about how these evolving gender roles may impact the health of citizens in China is gaining traction in scholarship (Hori & Kamo, 2018; Qian & Sayer, 2016; Zhang & Liu, 2022). This paper aims to explore five key themes related to gender stereotypes in China, including:

- (1) The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment
- (2) Gender Stereotypes Prevalent in the Workplace
- (3) The Role of Gender in Family Dynamics
- (4) The Impact of Gender Stereotypes of Individual's Health
- (5) Gender Discrimination Embedded in Culture and Tradition.

Despite the diverse contexts of these studies, this study examines the relationship between the acceptance of these stereotypes and the health status of individuals in China.

In most countries, women continue to grapple with gender stereotypes. China's gender role for women is a unique combination of traditional and modern concepts. Thakur (2006) argues that China is undergoing rapid transformation due to the flourishing consumer culture, contributing to the resurgence of traditional gender dynamics.

Throughout history, there are numerous instances of stereotypes that women may face in Chinese tradition. During the 1950s in China's socialist era, many middle-aged women faced unemployment due to the quickly changing economic reforms. When the socialist era ended, women's independence and place in the workforce diminished (Yang & Neal, 2006). Zhou (1989) suggests that traditionally, a woman's power derives from her virginity and her ability to resist early marriage. However, this power was limited to younger women

under thirty. Such discriminatory traditions created the unique phenomenon of “left-over” women in China. Society rejects and outcasts unmarried women in their late 20s and older, leading to further discrimination and stereotyping of women in Chinese tradition (Zhou, 1989). Feldshuh (2017) and Li (2021) expand on women's suffering in sexual and marital relationships. The One Child Policy in China resulted in an unequal gender distribution and unjustly, women were often blamed for difficulties in the marriage market due to biased narratives.

Likewise, in Turkish, American, and Black Bermudian families, specific traits are associated with genders. Uğurlu et al. research (2018) suggests that within Turkish culture, certain traits are attributed to both genders. However, challenging the patriarchal gender hierarchy can have detrimental consequences for women, leading to psychological and physical bias (Uğurlu et al., 2018). In the United States, studies (Jethwani, 2014; Wood et al., 2023) find that personality traits linked to gender lead African American mothers to have different expectations for their sons and daughters. Wood et. al (2023) and Jethwani (2014) state that a mother's level of agreement with stereotypes regarding gender disparities in academic abilities significantly correlates with their expectations for their children's educational achievements. Specifically, mothers who embraced stereotypes about gender differences in academic abilities tended to exhibit a negative bias toward their sons. They highlight how boys may be less motivated to invest in education if they perceive a gender bias against them in school and have a reduced tendency to interact with adults in American and Black Bermudian families (Jethwani, 2014; Wood et al., 2023). By exploring gender-related societal expectations worldwide, we can closely analyze the distinct circumstances in China and draw meaningful comparisons.

Similarly, the manifestation of gender stereotypes in educational settings exhibits notable disparities across different regions and historical periods. Wang argues that Chinese women encounter a twofold challenge due to traditional and contemporary gender role expectations. These expectations demand their active involvement in professional careers while managing household responsibilities (Wang, 2020). Fang suggests that the presence of implicit biases in educational materials contributes to reinforcing existing biases aligned with Confucian values (Fang, 2021). Zeng elaborates on the stereotypes hidden in traditional culture and examines the development of women's education in modern society, which closed the educational gender gap. The advancement of girls' educational opportunities witnessed significant progress during China's economic growth in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Today, the gender disparity in educational achievement varies between urban and rural areas. In urban regions, gender inequality has substantially reduced and is nearly non-existent. On the other hand, in rural areas, the educational expenses for girls are notably higher compared to boys (Zeng et al., 2013).

Gender Stereotypes in the Educational System

Gender stereotypes are pervasive in many aspects of Chinese culture and society, including in the educational system. In a collective society like China, parental support for academic gender stereotypes can steer boys and girls towards paths that align with prevailing stereotypes, affecting enrollment and educational outcomes that display gendered patterns (Li et al., 2022). According to social role theory, gender stereotypes arise from the different material roles occupied by people, leading to the association of schooling and school effort with femininity over time (Boutyline et al., 2023). However, contrary to parents' expectations, intelligence has increasingly become associated with masculinity. The emergence of these contrasting associations may be linked to transformations, where gender stereotypes reinforce inequality by categorizing men and women as distinct and hierarchically stratified, with men enjoying higher status. The perception that effortless intelligence is more desirable than effort-based achievement contributes to this hierarchical ranking (Boutyline et al., 2023).

Even as women's education has made considerable strides, society has observed the rise of a fresh cultural meaning system. Men's performance is often portrayed as effortless intelligence, allowing them to

maintain higher social standing and confidence. These complex factors contribute to the persistence of gender inequality throughout various stages of life, spanning from education and employment to divorce proceedings.

Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace

Gender inequality is woven into the Chinese education and employment system by traditional Confucian values (Cartwright, 2017). Fang's research (2021) uncovers the gender inequality rooted in Confucian values in Chinese education and employment systems. "The Book of Changes," the Confucian book of philosophy, describes men as superior to women. Specifically, the concept of the inferiority of mother to father is the foundation of the male Superiority complex and contempt for women, which is contempt for women's status. Teaching materials often contain implicit biases that reinforce existing gender biases derived from Confucian teachings. Gender biases are prevalent in the examination of women in managerial positions, permeating the workplace and legitimizing gender bias practices. Such biases achieve legitimization by internalizing the notion that females in such roles are unnatural. This results in the marginalization and exclusion of women from positions of power, hindering their professional growth and perpetuating gender inequality (Fang, 2021). The unintended reinforcement of patriarchal norms through the influence of Confucian values on education and employment practices contributes to the persistence of gender inequality.

Gender Stereotypes and Family Construction

The construction of family dynamics in China is influenced by gender roles and gender inequalities. Zuo highlights the male dominance culture that diminishes women's decision-making power despite their increased participation in household duties in Chinese families (Zuo & Bian, 2005). Expanding on the gender division of labor model in Chinese families, Xu (2022) reveals the persistence of traditional gender roles. In the study, wives express satisfaction with the current gender division of labor and marital status. Xu finds that a wife's satisfaction with her husband's economic contribution has a stronger impact on marital satisfaction than household contributions. While modern women express dissatisfaction with their husbands' limited involvement in household chores, their expectations for sharing housework are based on the traditional role of the husband as the provider. Thus, the ideal husband role in Chinese families combines traditional and modern elements. This integration of tradition and modernity in the current gender division of labor model reflects China's unique modernization process (Xu, 2022).

Overall, gender roles in family construction in China are influenced by a male-dominated culture (Cartwright, 2017) and a persistent adherence to traditional gender divisions.

Gender Stereotypes and Impact on Mental Health

Gender stereotypes have significant implications for mental health, affecting both women and men. Zugman et al. (2023) explores the link between gender inequality and women's mental health, supporting the argument that gender stereotypes also impact the mental health of individuals. The study reveals that in countries with gender inequality, specific brain regions, including the right caudal anterior cingulate, tend to have thinner structures. Zugman argues this could be influenced by early life stress and may impact future stress responses, highlighting the enduring effect of gender inequality on mental health. Furthermore, Barrett and White (2002) suggest that when it comes to mental health outcomes, it is the content of gender role orientations that matters more than how closely they align with the biological sex. The study discovered that the trajectory of masculinity during adolescence had a similar effect on depressive symptoms in early adulthood for both males and females. It is interesting that traits traditionally linked to masculinity were observed to decrease depressive symptoms in individuals of both genders. Interestingly, characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity were found

to reduce depressive symptoms for both genders. However, females face conflicting societal expectations concerning their self-identities. While qualities that mitigate depression may not be anticipated or highly esteemed in females, they are still sought after due to the rewards associated with possessing them (Barrett & White, 2002).

The observed connections highlight the long-lasting impact of gender inequality and stress on individuals' well-being. Gender stereotypes contribute to disparities in mental health outcomes, creating conflicting expectations and pressures for both men and women.

Previous research has explored the influence of gender stereotypes on health. Yet, there remains a gap in the literature when it comes to examining this impact specifically within the context of China. This paper addresses this gap by delving into the consequences of gender stereotypes on individuals' health in China. To achieve this objective, the paper will utilize data from a comprehensive household survey conducted among married couples. By focusing on married couples, the study explores the role that gender stereotypes play within the context of marital relationships and household dynamics. Through the analysis of this data, the paper intends to shed light on the specific ways in which gender stereotypes in China affect the health and well-being of individuals. By uncovering these insights, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge while providing valuable insights that can inform future research and promote a better understanding of this complex issue in the Chinese context.

Methods

In this study, our primary objective was to investigate the relationship between acceptance of gender stereotypes and its impact on mental health. Our focus was to understand how attitudes influence individuals' health status. Recognizing the significance of sociodemographic factors, specifically education levels, and gender, I examined their influence on the outcomes. By incorporating education and gender into our analysis, I aimed to enhance the comprehensiveness of our research. I chose not to consider other detailed factors, such as ethnicity, religion, political stance, and salary level, as they have minimal impact on the desired outcome.

The paper uses high-quality secondary household survey data from the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS 2017). CGSS is a well-recognized representative national survey and has been widely used by existing research on Chinese society for its data. The CGSS data collects public opinions and attitudes towards gender-related issues, so this data is useful for connecting such information to respondents' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics such as education. Starting in 2003, sampling surveys were conducted annually at 10,000 households around the country in rural and urban settings. The targeted population of the CGSS were civilian adults aged 18 and above. To examine the health consequences of gender stereotypes on both women and their partners, the analytic sample includes those who are married.¹

Materials and Instruments

To analyze this data, I used Stata software. I used Stata to conduct the statistical analysis required to answer my research question and visualize the data; as a result, Stata proved to be an invaluable tool, as it offered a wide range of built-in graphing and visualization tools. These features enabled me to effectively examine and present the data I had selected from CGSS 2017. Stata allowed me to generate high-quality graphs, including scatterplots, bar charts, line graphs, box plots, and more. These visualizations played a crucial role in exploring the data and presenting my findings comprehensively.

¹ Given China's laws forbidding gay marriage, the sample only pertains to heterosexual married couples.

Procedure and Variables

We defined health status as the dependent variable, while stereotypical gendered attitudes were identified as the independent variable. I used bar and line graphs to compare the relationship between acceptance of different gender stereotypes and the individuals' and their spouses' health status (both genders and different educational levels). These two kinds of graphs present the data most clearly and are convenient for comparison.

Dependent Variables: Health and Spouse's Health

The outcomes of interest in this study are respondents' self-reported health and their spouse's health. To evaluate their spouse's health conditions, respondents report their general health and their spouse's general health status on a five-point Likert scale. Options range from very unhealthy (1), relatively unhealthy (2), normal (3), relatively healthy (4), to very healthy (5).

Regarding respondents' health, 17.38% of the sample rate themselves as very healthy, 35.79% say relatively healthy, 26.41% report healthy, while 16.11% and 4.31% of them report relatively unhealthy and very unhealthy, respectively. As for their spouses, 19.07% of the spouses are very healthy, 50.36% of the spouses are said to be relatively healthy, 9.76% of them are healthy, 18.05% of the spouses are relatively unhealthy, and only 2.75% of the spouses are being rated as very unhealthy.

Independent Variables: Stereotypical Gendered Attitudes

The 2017 CGSS provides two broad indicators to measure gender stereotypes. Both categories of indicators ask individuals to rank their responses using a 5-point scale (from "strongly agree," "agree," "indifferent," "disagree," to "strongly disagree") on how much they agree with each of the statements on gender stereotypes.

The first category reflects to what extent the respondent holds stereotypical values of gender division of labor. Specifically, the first is a statement about the traditional role of division of labor within the household – "*Women should always prioritize family duties while men should focus on their occupational development (女人以家庭为重, 男人以事业为重)*." 52.94% of our sample agree with this statement, 38% disagree, and 9.052% selected indifferent.

The second category in this category asks respondents to evaluate to what extent they agree with the following statement – "*For women specifically, having a good career is not as good as marrying a good husband (干得好不如嫁得好)*." A majority of the respondents (45.51%) agree with this statement, while 38.98% of them strongly disagree, and 15.52% selected indifferent.

The second category speaks to the degree of gender discrimination. We measure this by using two statements. The first one asks to assess "*Men are naturally more talented than women. (男性能力天生比女性强)*". For this statement, most respondents (47.91%) disagree, while 40.202% agree and 11.89% selected indifferent.

The second statement in this category is about gender discrimination in the workplace. It asks whether "*the company should prioritize dismissing female employees during economic depressions (在经济不景气时应该先解雇女性员工)*." Similarly, most respondents (74.42%) strongly disagree, only 10.932% agree and 14.65% selected indifferent.

Sociodemographic Variables

Other important study variables include respondents' age, gender, and educational attainment. We pay particular attention to the role that different levels of education and gender play in leveraging respondents' self-rated

health and spouses' health status. Gender is considered as an indicator variable (male/female). Education is entered as the following categories: no education, less than high school, high school or equivalent, some college, college degree and graduate degree.

Positionality

As a high school student, I undertook this research project with the guidance of a tutor. Having grown up in China, I have had the opportunity to observe various instances of potential gender discrimination while interacting with others. Despite coming from an open-minded family, I encountered situations that highlighted such discrimination. For instance, during holiday gatherings, it was customary for women to be occupied with kitchen duties while the men enjoyed the meal. Additionally, relatives often praised me for being quiet and conforming to traditional gender norms, which, while seemingly complimentary was based on insidious gender stereotypes. These experiences inspired my curiosity about gender discrimination in China and its impact on individuals.

Limitations

This study centers on household data from married couples, specifically heterosexual ones, due to the absence of legal recognition for same-sex marriage in China. Notably, the correlations and responses within this dataset could be different if unmarried or single individuals were considered.

Moreover, the sample only encompasses data from 2017, potentially limiting the applicability of the results over time. It is important to underline that participants under 18 were excluded from the study, omitting any insights into teenagers' experiences. While our findings shed light on married couple dynamics in 2017, changes in societal norms could impact the outcomes in subsequent years. Furthermore, the research does not encompass unmarried individuals, adolescents, or couples beyond the heterosexual scope, necessitating caution in generalizing the findings.

Findings

Differences in Gender Stereotypes by Gender and Education

This section addresses how education level and gender make differences in accepting various gender stereotypes. Figure 1 presents a decreasing trend for both genders' acceptance of the idea of this traditional gender role – *“Men are responsible for going out to work, and women are responsible for staying home to take care of the family 男人以事业为重, 女人以家庭为重”* (illustrated the blue bar) – as they become more educated. Figure 1 demonstrates in the first panel that the listed gender stereotypes are especially favored by those with low educational attainment.

Differences in Gender Stereotypes by Gender and Education

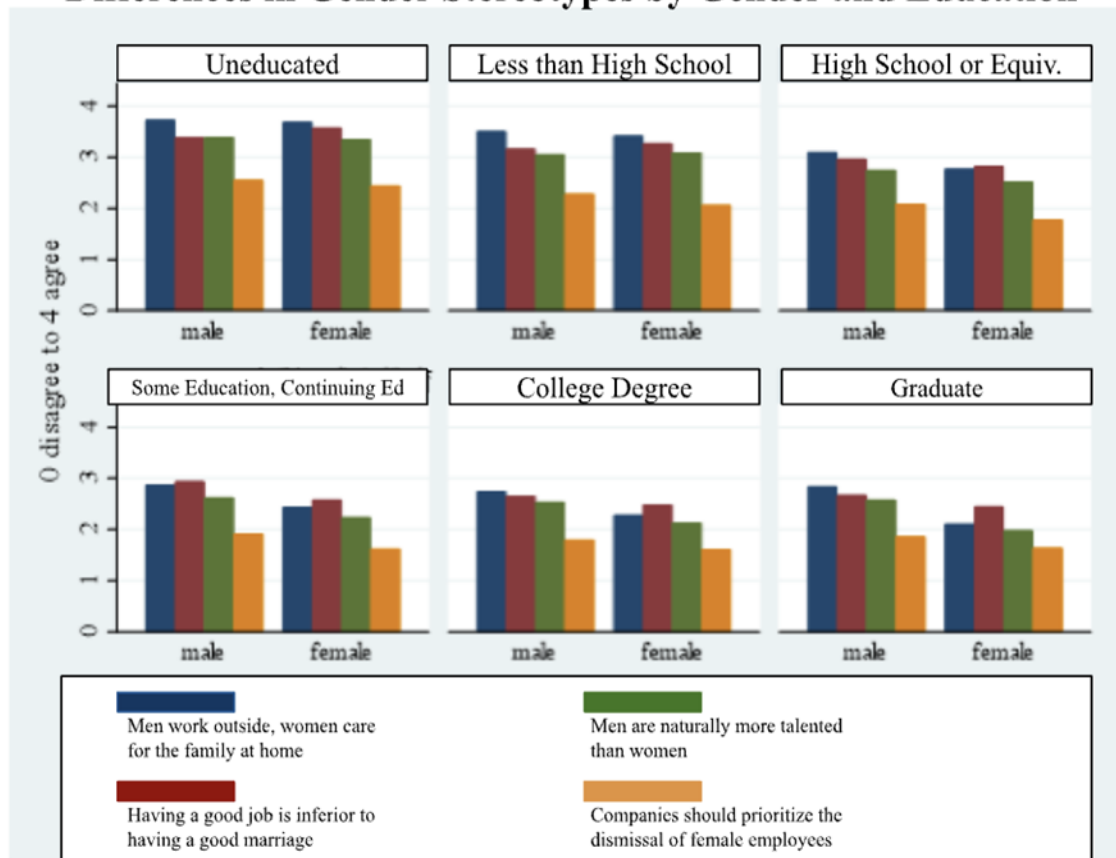


Figure 1. This figure shows the patterns of gender stereotypes and how they can differ across gender groups and education levels.

In comparison, respondents agree less with the statement: “*Having a good job is inferior to having a good marriage* 干得好不如嫁得好” (as demonstrated by the red bar in Figure 1). Figure 1 illustrates that the scale dramatically decreases for females whose educational attainment is less than a high school education compared to those whose attainment is beyond high school or equivalent.

In addition, the idea that “*Having a good job is inferior to having a good marriage* 干得好不如嫁得好” was developed under the social context of 1988. In 1988, enterprises began to optimize the labor force. To reduce costs and maximize profits, numerous layoffs were made. Initially, women were targeted for layoffs because they were perceived as an inefficient labor force due to their reproductive duties in the workforce. This raised questions and discussion about whether women’s role was in the workforce or at home. Moreover, companies prioritized hiring men and offering them higher salaries, creating significant employment difficulties for women in the workplace (Jacka, 1990; Thakur, 2006).

When respondents answered the statement “*Men are naturally more talented than women* (男性能力天生比女性强)” (as demonstrated by the green bar in Figure 1), we find that an individual’s educational attainment is correlated to a decreasing trend for both genders’ acceptance of the saying.

Similarly, when responding to the phrase “*The company should prioritize dismissing female employees during economic depressions* (在经济不景气时应该先解雇女性员工)” (as demonstrated by the orange bar in Figure 1). These respondents agree with this idea, and the former only account for a small proportion, and there is little change in respondents’ views as educational attainment increases.

Health Differences by Gender and Gender Attitudes

To answer my first research question about how gender stereotypes impact the health of individuals, I examined the data of self-evaluated individuals' health, their spouses' health, and their acceptance of gender stereotypes. Figure 2 shows that all gender stereotypes negatively correlate to the married respondents' health. There is a stronger effect on health among female respondents and their husbands and a lighter influence among male respondents and their wives.

As far as we can see, the health status of females is a linear function of their attitude towards the statement: "Men are responsible for going out to work, and women are responsible for staying home and taking care of the family 男人以事业为重，女人以家庭为重." As their attitude changes to support the saying, their health status decreases at a constant rate.

In comparison, for males, Figure 2 illustrates the same pattern as for females: the only difference is there is a smaller change in their health status. Patterns of responses to the statement "*Having a good job is inferior to having a good marriage 干得好不如嫁得好*" are different between females and males. As females attain higher levels of education, their decline is steeper, while for males, the decline is only minimal as their educational attainment increases.

Health Difference by Gender and Responses to Gender Stereotypes

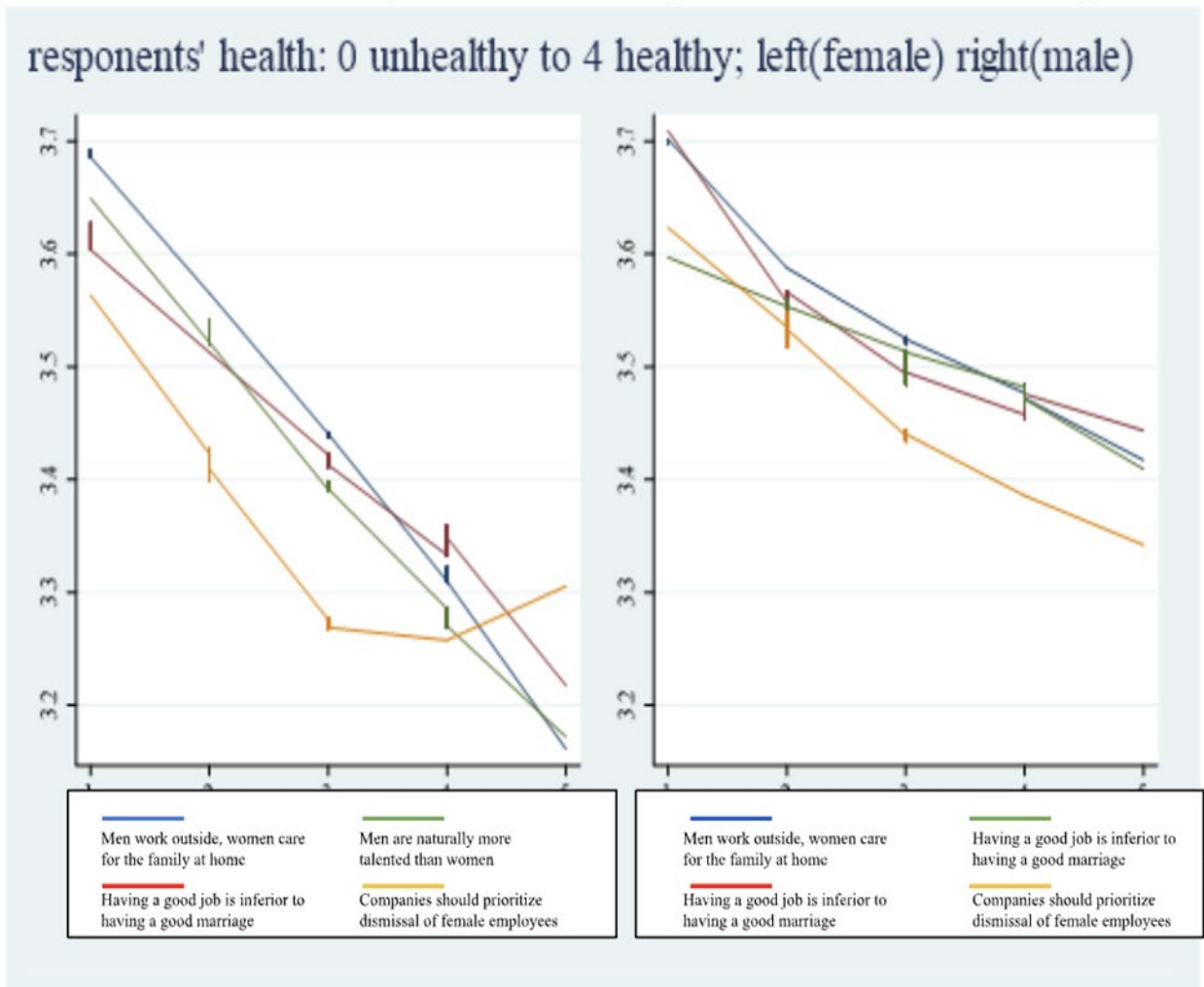


Figure 2. Left panel refers to female respondents' husbands; right panel refers to male respondents' wives.

Spouse Health by Gender and Gender Attitudes

Figure 3 shows a negative association between gender stereotypes and married respondents' health. Note that the CGSS survey only collects data based on heterosexual couples, so in this paper spouse of a female respondent refers to her husband (left panel), and the spouse of a male respondent refers to his wife (right panel).

Spouse Health by Gender and Responses to Gender Stereotype

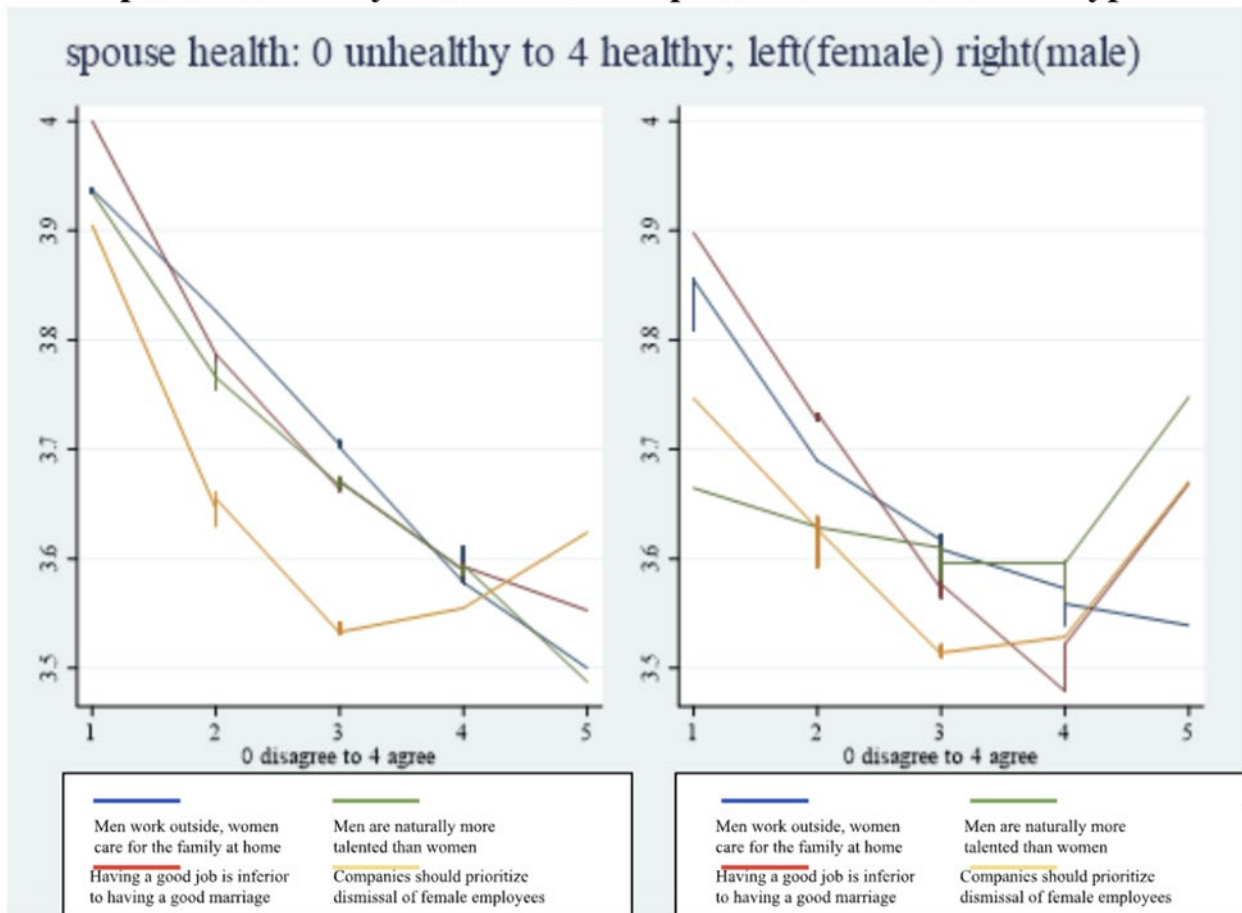


Figure 3. Left panel refers to female respondents' husbands; right panel refers to male respondents' wives.

Overall, the effect of gender stereotypes on males is smaller than that on females for both respondents and their spouses. For the four statements related to gender stereotypes listed in Figure 3, compared with the subjects themselves, the spouses' health status is similarly affected by the attitude towards the statements. However, for both the subjects their health status gradually decreases as they agree to more of these stereotypes.

The result indicates that both genders' acceptance of traditional gender roles decreases as their educational attainment increases, and the drop in number is more significant in women. Gender stereotypes negatively influence the health of both respondents and their spouses. Female respondents' health status is more strongly affected by their acceptance of traditional gender roles compared to male respondents.

Discussion

The findings exhibit a negative association between gender stereotypes and the well-being of individuals. This relationship varies significantly across genders and among individuals with disparate levels of education. Findings show a decline in traditional gender role acceptance with higher education for both genders. Stereotypes negatively influence the health of respondents and their spouses, with a stronger effect on female respondents.

In line with my findings, Zugman (2023) also supports the notion that gender stereotypes have a detrimental effect on women's brain structure. Moreover, women in countries with greater gender inequality tend

to experience more adverse consequences. My research establishes a connection between the acceptance of gender stereotypes and individuals' health status with a particular focus on the negative impact on women's health. The findings affirm that gender stereotypes negatively affect women's mental health.

My findings reveal a negative correlation between the acceptance of gender stereotypes and educational attainment, especially among girls. These findings align with Zeng's findings (Zeng et al., 2014) which indicate a substantial decrease in gender inequality within urban areas of China. Zeng argues that girls in metropolitan areas enjoy educational advantages such as wide-spread compulsory education policies and wealthier family backgrounds which allow the parents to be well-educated and open-minded. Conversely, a significant disparity in educational costs exists between females and males in rural regions, with the cost of education for girls being notably higher. The correlation between the attitude toward gender stereotypes and educational level in urban/rural areas demonstrates that education leads women to reject the stereotypes (Zeng et al., 2014). Further research could explore the underlying factors causing these disparities and explore strategies to address them effectively.

Implications of Gender Stereotypes on Well-being and Relationships in China

The prevalence of traditional gender roles, exemplified by the belief that "Men are responsible for going out to work and women are staying home to take care of the family" (indicated by the blue bar in the findings in Figure 3), remains deeply ingrained in Chinese societal consciousness. This enduring ideology has historical roots, tracing back to the Spring and Autumn periods (771 BC to 476 BC during the decline of the Zhou Dynasty) when women's roles centered on domestic care. At the same time, men provided for the family (Cartwright, 2017). While women are further integrated into society, eradicating this deep-seated notion proves to be challenging, underscoring the critical role of educational attainment in inspiring change.

My findings demonstrate an increased resistance to these stereotypes among educated women, which we can attribute to their improved independence through high school or equivalent education. The acquisition of self-sufficiency empowers them to reject dependence on others, contributing to their inclination to challenge traditional gender roles. Furthermore, the stereotype that "Men are naturally more talented than women" is also deeply rooted in Chinese culture. In China, the stereotype that only men "can" pursue their dreams significantly diminishes with higher educational attainment for both genders. Education fosters self-discovery and skill development, thereby dismantling the notion that disparities in ability are inherently gender-based. Interestingly, men's attitudes toward stereotypes appear less influenced by education, as shown in Figure 1. This disparity could stem from their relative benefit from these stereotypes, rendering them less motivated to challenge them than women.

As educational attainment increases globally, there is a notable escalation in health disparities driven by gender stereotypes. This phenomenon disproportionately negatively impacts women while concurrently yielding advantages for men. College completion exhibits a modest impact on reducing stereotypes, potentially due to increased awareness resulting from broadened horizons and exposure to various viewpoints during years of study.

Traditional gender stereotypes confine women to domestic roles, impeding their autonomy and potential. Education serves as a liberating force, allowing women to shed these constraints and thereby improving their well-being. In contrast, men, who historically bear the responsibility of earning for the family, experience a more subtle impact on well-being as stereotypes are questioned.

The implications of breaking free from traditional gender roles are profound. For women, this liberation leads to increased autonomy, reduced stress, and potentially better psychological and physical health. Men also benefit, as they encounter less pressure associated with societal expectations. Educated women challenge stereotypes and experience heightened well-being, while men enjoy reduced pressure. Emotionally stable part-

ners foster more harmonious relationships, highlighting the significance of these findings in promoting a healthier and more equitable society. In conclusion, dismantling gender stereotypes yields multifaceted benefits, transforming the well-being and relationships of both men and women.

Further research is essential for conducting comparative analyses between China's situation and other countries. This will help identify similarities and differences, providing a more comprehensive understanding of various cultural, societal, and economic factors influencing adolescents. Additionally, it is crucial to amplify the voices of adolescents, granting them greater representation and participation in research studies. Their perspectives and experiences can provide invaluable insights into their unique challenges, aspirations, and needs. Engaging adolescents in the research process can also foster more effective policymaking and interventions tailored to their circumstances.

Conclusion

The study examines gender stereotypes across genders and education levels, uncovering the differences in acceptance based on the individuals' backgrounds. Overall, higher education diminishes traditional role acceptance, and stereotypes detrimentally affect health, particularly for women. The study contributes to the discourse on gender roles and stereotypes in China, focusing on their impact on health. While existing research has explored the impact of gender stereotypes globally, this study uniquely centers on the Chinese context and focuses on the health-related impacts. The previous studies include the evolution of gender roles and their effects on individuals in countries such as Turkey, the United States, and Bermuda. This study employs the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) data, which reveals gender stereotype variations by education and gender, illustrating decreasing acceptance of traditional roles with education. This study also explored health differences by gender attitudes, showcasing negative correlations to health having a stronger impact on females. Spouse health also exhibits a negative association with gender stereotypes, highlighting that the detrimental influence of these stereotypes on health extends beyond individual targets to their close associates. This indicates a significant negative effect. These insights contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of gender stereotypes and their health implications in the Chinese context, bridging the gap in the existing literature.

The research findings carry practical implications, suggesting the necessity of targeted educational programs to challenge traditional gender roles, such as incorporating gender equality curricula in schools. Additionally, healthcare interventions could focus on promoting mental well-being by providing support systems for individuals affected by harmful stereotypes. For example, establishing mental health clinics and hotlines dedicated to addressing the psychological impacts of harmful gender stereotypes is important. Policy changes could involve workplace initiatives to counter gender biases, like implementing company-wide diversity and inclusion training. The study enriches theoretical frameworks by emphasizing intersectionality, showcasing how varying education levels intersect with gender stereotypes to impact health. For instance, women with higher education might challenge stereotypes more, leading to improved health outcomes.

In future research, adopting longitudinal designs could track changes over time, cross-cultural comparisons could highlight global patterns, qualitative approaches could unveil nuanced experiences, and policy evaluations could determine the effectiveness of interventions. Information gathered from individuals under the age of eighteen or those who are not married would greatly contribute to the pursuit of a more precise outcome. Encompassing a broader spectrum of participants could empower researchers to draw more substantial conclusions.

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