**Parenting and Gender Socialization in Children: A Scoping Review**

**Abstract**

Gender socialization begins early in childhood, with parents playing a crucial role in shaping children's gender-related beliefs and behaviors. This review examines how parenting styles, parental gender attitudes, and parental reinforcement practices contribute to the development of sexist beliefs and gender stereotypes in children. Following the PRISMA framework, a systematic search of Scopus, PubMed, and APA PsycNet databases was conducted for peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2023. Studies were included if they empirically examined parental influences on children's gender socialization and were published in English. A total of 23 studies met the inclusion criteria and were thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that parenting styles significantly shape gender socialization, with strict and authoritarian parenting being associated with stronger adherence to traditional gender roles, while indulgent and egalitarian parenting approaches were linked to more gender-equitable attitudes in children. Regarding parental gender attitudes, parents who held traditional gender beliefs were more likely to reinforce gendered expectations in their children, leading to the internalization of sexist beliefs. In contrast, parents with egalitarian attitudes fostered more flexible gender norms and reduced gender bias in their children. Additionally, parental reinforcement practices played a crucial role, as parents who actively encouraged gender-conforming behaviors reinforced stereotypical gender roles, whereas those who provided diverse play opportunities and non-stereotypical role models supported a broader spectrum of gender expression. Despite the global relevance of gender socialization, most included studies were conducted in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) nations, underscoring the need for further research in non-WEIRD contexts. The review highlighted the critical role of parenting in shaping children's gender ideologies and calls for interventions that promote gender-equitable attitudes. Future research should explore diverse socio-cultural perspectives, including socioeconomic status, parental education, and dual-income households, to develop a more nuanced understanding of how parenting influences gender socialization among children.

*Keywords:* gender, stereotype, sexism, child development, parenting

**Introduction**

Parents are integral figures in children's lives, holding significant influence over their development. The relationship between a parent and child is one of the earliest and longest-lasting interactions in a person's life. Children depend on their parents from infancy for protection, nurturing, and direction. As primary caregivers, parents play a pivotal role in shaping a child's early experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about the world. This influence extends beyond direct caregiving to the transmission of cultural and societal values, including gender norms and expectations (Halim et al., 2023).

**Parenting and child development**

Parenting styles refer to a constellation of attitudes or a pattern of parental authority towards the child and characterize parent-child interactions across different settings and situations (Leung & Tsang Kitman, 2014). Parenting styles significantly impact child development and socialization (Yadav, 2021). They are predominantly of three types; authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive styles (Baumrind, 1971). The authoritarian style is characterized by low support and high demandingness from parents. They expect and demand obedience because they are “in charge” and do not explain their actions. On the other hand, the authoritative parenting style is characterized by reasonable and consistent expectations from the child, communicating well with them, being warm and responsive, and using reasoning rather than coercion to guide the child’s behaviors. The permissive style is one in which parents are lenient, do not expect their children to adhere to boundaries or rules, and completely avoid confrontation. However, the effectiveness of these parenting styles is contingent upon multiple factors, including the child’s developmental stage (Baumrind, 1978), cultural background (Bornstein, 2012), and the intersectionality of other social identities such as race, class, and gender (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Parenting styles significantly impact children’s development across various domains, such as mental health, behavior, identity, social skills, academic achievement, language, and personality (Lari, 2023; Vasiou et al., 2023).

While parenting styles broadly shape children's development, specific parental gender attitudes and behaviors directly influence the formation of sexist beliefs and behaviors. Parental gender attitudes and gendered messages also play a significant role in shaping children's beliefs about gender roles and expectations (Halpern & Perry-Jekins, 2017; Krishna et al., 2024). Krishna et al (2024) further emphasize that parents and families influence children's gender development primarily through role modeling and reinforcing distinct gendered behaviors. Moreover, parents transmit and reinforce gendered messages through everyday interactions, such as the toys they provide, the activities they encourage, and the language they use to describe emotions and abilities (Hussain et al., 2015; Boe & Woods, 2020; Nair et al., 2023). Existing literature suggests that children’s gender attitudes are also shaped by parental modeling of behaviors, explicit instruction, and reinforcement of certain gender norms (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002; Endendijk et al., 2018). Recent research also underscores that parenting influences gender typicality, which in turn shapes children’s sexist attitudes (Egan & Perry, 2001; Leaper, 2015).

**Sexism and gender stereotyping**

Sexism is the term used to describe long-standing prejudice, hostility, or discrimination against an individual on the basis of their sex or gender. It is rooted in the belief that one gender (typically males) is inherently superior to the other (typically females), justifying the oppression (Lorenzi-Cioldi & Kulich, 2015). This kind of sexism, also called misogyny, often reduces women’s autonomy and denies them equal opportunities, reinforcing patriarchal notions (Bell & Blumenfeld, 1995). This discrimination can be overt or subtle, influencing various aspects of life (Lee, 2024). A very extreme form of sexism is violence against women, ranging from domestic abuse to femicide. Sexism, however, can also manifest subtly, such as when women are expected to fit into predetermined gender roles or through hostile jokes at the expense of women; the objectification and sexualization of women in literature, art, film, and the media, animosity towards women in positions of authority, and using sexist language that perpetuates gender differentiation and inequality.

Scholars have distinguished two key forms of sexism: benevolent and hostile (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Benevolent sexism reflects seemingly positive attitudes towards women who conform to traditional expectations. This includes a desire for closeness with them, a tendency to see women as needing protection, and even idealization. On the other hand, hostile sexism expresses negativity on these same dimensions. It manifests as controlling paternalism, derogatory beliefs about women, and hostility towards heterosexual relationships. Importantly, both forms of sexism ultimately serve to reinforce the patriarchal system and traditional gender roles. Hostile sexism protects a man’s power, while benevolent sexism guards traditional gender roles (Bareket & Fiske, 2023). These forms of sexism are learned and internalized early in life, often through parental attitudes and behaviors (Perry & Pauletti, 2011; Leaper & Brown, 2014).

Gender stereotyping is a prevalent issue that has been the subject of extensive research and discourse in various academic and social contexts. At its core, gender stereotyping involves the oversimplified and overgeneralized beliefs, expectations, and assumptions made about individuals based solely on their perceived gender identity. These stereotypes can manifest in a range of ways, from the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and norms to the perpetuation of harmful biases and prejudices that limit individuals' opportunities and self-expression. One of the primary concerns with gender stereotyping is its ability to shape societal attitudes and behaviors, often in detrimental ways (Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019). Research has shown that gender stereotypes can have far-reaching consequences, particularly for women, as they can lead to discrimination, inequality, and the limitation of educational and career opportunities (Silberstang, 2011). However, gender stereotyping does not solely disadvantage women; it also imposes rigid expectations on men, such as discouraging caregiving roles and limiting their career choices to traditionally masculine professions (Bem, 1981; Weisgram et al., 2014).

**Rationale and Objectives**

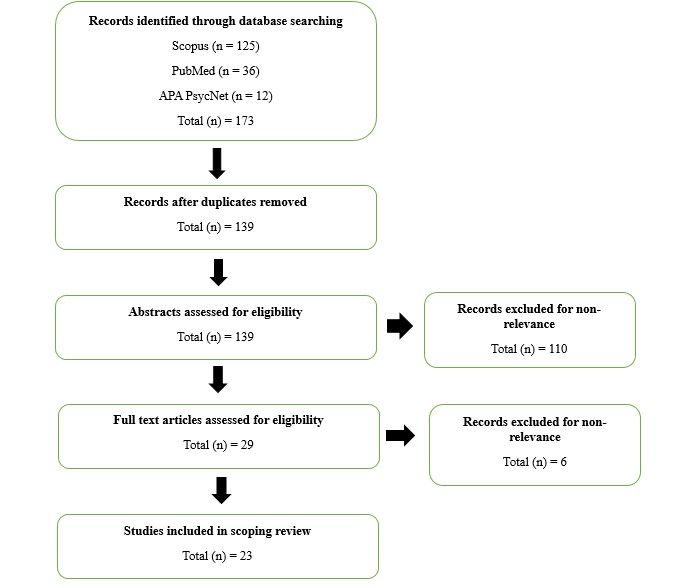
As established earlier, parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping children’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Sexist attitudes or beliefs formed during childhood may contribute to gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence later in life. Although previous review studies (Endendijk et al., 2018) have examined gender socialization in the family context, there is a gap in synthesizing how different parenting styles and parental gendered attitudes and behaviors contribute to the development and reinforcement of sexist attitudes in children, particularly in diverse cultural contexts (Pahlke et al., 2014). Understanding how different parenting approaches, attitudes and behaviors contribute to the development and reinforcement of sexist attitudes in children contributes to broader efforts to create a more equitable and just society. Therefore, a scoping review of the literature was conducted to identify the nature and extent of the available scholarship in this area.

This review aims to examine how parental influences contribute to gender socialization in children, with specific objectives as follows –

1. To understand the impact of different parenting styles on the development of sexist beliefs and gender stereotypes in children.
2. To understand how parental gender attitudes shape children's perceptions of gender roles.
3. To examine the role of parental reinforcement practices in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms.

**Method**

A scoping review was conducted to explore the extent of published literature on parenting approaches that contribute to the development or reinforcement of sexist beliefs and attitudes among children. A scoping review is a form of knowledge synthesis that maps key concepts, types of evidence, and research gaps in a defined area through a systematic search, selection, and synthesis process (Colquhoun et al., 2014). This study adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to ensure a rigorous and transparent article selection process, enhancing reproducibility and methodological clarity. The PRISMA flowchart in figure 1, illustrates the selection process, detailing how articles were identified, screened, and included in the final review.



***Fig. 1: PRISMA flowchart for article selection***

**Search Strategy and Selection Process**

A structured search strategy was developed using predefined search terms and Boolean operators: (“parenting” OR “parenting style” OR “parental gendered attitude” OR “gendered beliefs” OR “gendered behaviors”) AND (“sexism” OR “sexist beliefs” OR “sexist attitude” OR “gender stereotype”). The search was conducted in three databases—Scopus, PubMed, and APA PsycNet—and was limited to articles published between 2013 and 2023 to ensure the inclusion of recent and relevant literature, considering evolving cultural norms, gender discourse, and shifts in parenting practices over the past decade. However, seminal works published before 2013 have been referenced where necessary to provide theoretical grounding.

The initial search yielded 173 articles, which were screened for relevance based on the title and abstract. After removing duplicates (n = 34), a total of 139 unique records remained for abstract screening. Following this, 110 records were excluded due to non-relevance. The remaining 29 full-text articles were further assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of six additional articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Consequently, 23 studies were included in the final scoping review.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

To ensure relevance, studies were screened using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2013 and 2023, focused on empirical, review, or theoretical work related to parenting practices and sexist beliefs in children, examined how parenting behaviors, communication, or discipline strategies contribute to gender socialization, were conducted in any country but published in English, and employed quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches.

Studies were excluded if they focused solely on gender role attitudes without reference to parenting, examined sexism only in adult populations (e.g., workplace sexism, gender bias in education), addressed general child development without specific reference to sexist socialization or parenting, were opinion pieces, editorials, or non-peer-reviewed literature, or were published in languages other than English.

**Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Key information was systematically extracted from each included study and organized into a charting table (Table 1). The extracted data included the following details: first author and year of publication, country of study, study design, sample size and participant characteristics and lastly, findings related to the transmission of sexist beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors from parents to children

Since PRISMA primarily provides guidelines for reporting rather than conducting the review process, thematic analysis was employed to synthesize findings across studies. This approach allowed for identifying recurrent themes and patterns in parenting practices associated with sexist socialization. To maintain the integrity of the findings, studies were critically appraised to ensure that conclusions were supported by appropriate statistical methods and research designs, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the synthesized results.

**Results**

A total of 173 articles were identified across three databases, Scopus, PubMed, and APA PsycNet, following our search within the specified time period (2013 to 2023), to ensure recency and relevance of articles included. These articles were then reviewed based on their titles and abstracts in accordance with the exclusion and inclusion criteria, resulting in 23 full-text articles, explicitly addressing parenting and the development of sexist beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in children.

**Sample Characteristics**

A substantial number of studies included in this review were conducted in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) countries, such as the U.S.A., Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Only three studies were conducted in non-WEIRD contexts, including two from China (Chen & Chen, 2023; Qian et al., 2023) and one from India (Dulla, 2021). Most studies included samples composed predominantly of individuals native to the country of study. For instance, a study conducted in the Netherlands focused on Dutch parents and their children (Endendijk & Portengen, 2021), while another study conducted in Spain examined Spanish parent-child dyads (Alcaide et al., 2023).

Among the 23 studies considered in this review, 16 predominantly included parent-child dyads, offering valuable insights into the direct influence of parenting on the development of children's gender attitudes and beliefs. The remaining seven studies focused solely on children and adolescents, providing a perspective on the manifestation of sexist attitudes independent of parental self-reports. Only one study (DeMayo et al., 2022) included gender-diverse (trans or nonbinary) adolescents, and one study (Chen & Chen, 2023) explored the impact of single parenting on children's gender socialization.

**Study Design and Methodology**

The 23 studies included in this review employed a variety of research methodologies to explore the complex and multifaceted nature of parenting and gender socialization. The majority (19/23) were cross-sectional studies, primarily using survey-based approaches to assess parenting practices, gender beliefs, and attitudes in children and parents. One study (Qian et al., 2023) utilized a comparative model, examining implicit gender stereotypes among children from Canada, China, and Thailand. Most studies (19/23) compared two or more groups based on parenting strategies, cultural differences, or the development of sexist beliefs among children and adolescents.

In addition to the cross-sectional studies, this review included one experimental study (Block, 2022), which exposed children to stereotypical, counter-stereotypical, and neutral study conditions to assess the internalization of gender roles. Two qualitative studies (Fitzpatrick, 2022; Chen et al., 2023) provided rich, contextualized insights into parenting and gender socialization. Lastly, the study by Mesman (2018), a theoretical paper outlining key mechanisms of gender socialization through parental attitudes and implicit messaging.

**Categorization by Child Age Group**

To provide a more nuanced understanding of how parenting styles influence gender-related attitudes across different developmental stages, the studies reviewed were categorized by the age of the children included.

***Early Childhood (3–6 years)*** studies by Overall (2023), Del Rio (2019), and Qian et al. (2023) examined how early parental reinforcement of gender stereotypes shaped young children's beliefs about gender roles. In fact, Del Rio (2019) found that by age five, children had already formed gendered beliefs about math, heavily influenced by parental attitudes and Kollmayer (2018) showed that parents preferred gender-neutral or same-gender-typed toys for their children.

***Middle Childhood (6–12 years)*** Research in this category examined parental influence on gender identity and academic self-concept. Endendijk & Portengen (2021) reported that mothers' career and family involvement shaped children's own gender-typical career aspirations. Other studies (Thomassin, 2019; Gerdes, 2021; Block, 2022; Hildebrand, 2023) further highlighted how parental reinforcement of gendered emotional expression and academic preferences shaped children's self-perceptions and behavior.

***Adolescence (12–18 years)*** Studies focusing on adolescents explored parental influence on sexism, risk-taking behaviors, and dating violence. Alcaide (2023) and Gimenez-Serrano (2020) reported that adolescents raised in indulgent (warm, non-strict) households exhibited lower levels of hostile sexism than those raised in authoritative families. Fitzpatrick (2022) highlighted the role of parental gender modeling in shaping teenage girls' perceptions of dating violence. Additional studies included in this category examined gender-stereotyped academic preferences (Chaffee & Plante, 2022), risk-taking behavior (Jimenez-Barbero, 2016), and the impact of parental gender stereotypes on adolescents’ career choices (Mastari, 2019).

**Key Findings**

This scoping review provides critical insights into how parenting styles, parental gender attitudes, and reinforcement practices shape children's gender socialization. The findings are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study.

***The Impact of Parenting Styles on the Development of Sexist Beliefs and Gender Stereotypes*** Parenting styles play a significant role in shaping children's perceptions of gender roles, with different approaches leading to varying degrees of sexism. While some studies suggest that authoritarian parenting (strict and low warmth) is associated with the endorsement of hostile sexism (Overall, 2023), others indicate that authoritative parenting (high warmth, reasonable strictness) may contribute to increased aggression and sexist attitudes (Giménez-Serrano, 2020; Alcaide et al., 2023). In contrast, indulgent parenting (high warmth, low strictness) has been linked to lower levels of hostile sexism, as it fosters emotional security and openness to egalitarian values (Alcaide et al., 2023). These findings suggest that warmth and positive reinforcement, rather than strict control, may be more effective in reducing hostile sexist attitudes in children.

***The Influence of Parental Gender Attitudes on Children's Perceptions of Gender Roles*** Parents' gender attitudes significantly shape their children’s beliefs about masculinity and femininity, both directly and indirectly. Chen and Chen (2023) highlight that children learn gender norms not only through explicit parental instruction but also through subtle, everyday interactions. Parents reinforce traditional gender roles by exposing children to gendered products (e.g., dolls for girls, trucks for boys) and responding differently to children's behaviors based on gender (Mesman et al., 2018). Additionally, indirect socialization occurs through parental modeling of gendered household roles, which reinforces traditional power dynamics (Dulla, 2021).

***The Role of Parental Reinforcement Practices in Either Reinforcing or Challenging Traditional Gender Norms*** Parental reinforcement practices—whether intentional or unintentional—play a crucial role in either perpetuating or challenging traditional gender norms. Parents who reinforce gender stereotypes through differential encouragement of academic subjects contribute to the development of gendered career aspirations. For instance, Del Rio (2019) found that by age five, children internalize culturally reinforced beliefs about gender and math ability, largely influenced by parental attitudes. Block et al. (2022) further demonstrate that exposure to stereotypical narratives about math reinforces implicit math-gender biases in children. Similarly, Hildebrand (2023) found that fathers and sons were more likely than mothers and daughters to express enjoyment in math, reinforcing gendered preferences in STEM fields. In contrast, parental stereotypes about language abilities discouraged boys from pursuing a career in language and arts, while simultaneously boosting girls’ motivation in these subjects (Chaffee & Plante, 2022). These findings indicate that parental reinforcement can either sustain or challenge traditional gender norms, shaping children’s self-perceptions and academic trajectories.

**Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of the current study in the context of previous and more recent research, the strengths and limitations of this review, and practical implications. In this scoping review, 23 articles retrieved from Scopus, PubMed, and APA PsycNet databases, published between 2013 and 2023, were included. The PRISMA framework was used to identify these articles, and thematic analysis was employed to synthesize the information thereafter.

A central theme that emerged from the literature is the pivotal role that parents play in shaping their children's gender-related attitudes and behaviors. Consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), parents serve as influential models, with their own gendered attitudes and practices being internalized by their offspring. The findings also align with the Gendered Family Process Model (Endendijk et al., 2018), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding gender socialization mechanisms within the family. This model highlights how parental beliefs, behaviors, and reinforcement practices contribute to the internalization of gender norms in children.

**Parenting and Gender Socialization in Children**

The development of gender stereotypes in children is a complex and multifaceted process, influenced by various factors including parenting practices. Research suggests that parents' gender ideologies and gendered behaviors play a significant role in shaping children's gender-role attitudes (Lipowska et al., 2016; Mesman et al., 2018). In fact, Li et al. (2024) found that parents’ explicit beliefs about gender equality significantly influenced their children’s consciousness of gender equality, but this effect varied across cultural contexts. In families with strong patriarchal values, children's awareness of gender equality was more likely to be shaped by indirect socialization processes, such as observed parental interactions, rather than direct instruction. These findings highlight the interplay between parental modeling and broader socio-cultural influences in shaping children’s gender beliefs. Another prominent finding was the strong association between parents' endorsement of traditional gender roles and the development of sexist and stereotypical beliefs in their children (Spees & Zimmerman, 2003; Chen & Chen, 2023), with the intensity of a parent's sexism influencing their expectations and responses to their child's gender-typical or atypical behaviors (Lipowska et al., 2016).

Although parenting styles employed are heavily influenced by culture, context, and the child’s developmental stage, recent studies challenge the traditional view of parental strictness as a necessary component for positive adjustment in children, i.e., lowered aggression and hostile sexism. Alcaide et al. (2023) conducted a study with a Spanish sample, revealing that adolescents raised in indulgent households (characterized by warmth without rigid control) exhibited greater self-esteem, emotional well-being, empathy, and lower levels of aggression and hostile sexism compared to those raised in authoritative environments (which combined warmth with reasonable rules). These findings challenge earlier studies that emphasized the benefits of an authoritative approach in fostering positive adjustment. Similarly, Gimenez-Serrano (2020) found that indulgent parenting was associated with lower levels of hostile sexism in adolescents. However, while some studies suggest that indulgent parenting reduces hostile sexism, others highlight how strict parental control is linked to higher levels of benevolent sexism (Martinez-Escudero et al., 2023). These conflicting findings indicate the need for a nuanced understanding of how parenting styles shape sexist attitudes in children and adolescents. Traditional developmental psychology perspectives often associate authoritative parenting with positive outcomes and indulgent parenting with negative effects such as poor self-regulation (Baumrind, 1971). However, there are studies that challenge these assumptions, particularly in the context of gender socialization. One possible explanation for these inconsistencies lies in cultural variations in parenting norms. The meaning and effects of indulgent or authoritative parenting may differ across Western and non-Western contexts. In individualistic cultures, authoritative parenting is often associated with autonomy and self-confidence, while in collectivist cultures, indulgent parenting may align with family cohesion and emotional warmth, influencing children's development differently (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009; Yaman et al, 2010). Additionally, measurement variability across studies could contribute to these discrepancies. Differences in operational definitions of parenting styles, reliance on self-report measures, and variations in sample characteristics may shape the observed relationships between parenting and gender beliefs (Power, 2013; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Another important consideration is the distinction between benevolent and hostile sexism. While indulgent parenting may be linked to lower levels of hostile sexism, it may still reinforce benevolent sexism by emphasizing traditional gender roles in caregiving and protection (Glick & Fiske, 1997). For instance, children raised in indulgent households may develop egalitarian views about women's abilities in professional settings while still endorsing protective or complementary roles for men and women in relationships.

Studies have further revealed that parents' gender ideologies and gendered behaviors can have differential effects on boys and girls. For instance, Albertos (2016) suggest that parents may enforce more rigid gender boundaries and have higher expectations for gender-conformity in their daughters compared to their sons. The impact of parenting practices on the development of sexism and gender stereotypes in children goes beyond just the direct influence of parental attitudes and behaviors. It extends to the socialization processes within the family dynamic, in schools and so on, where children learn about gender roles, expectations, and behaviors through interactions with their parents, other family members, teachers, and friends (Endendijk & Portengen, 2021; Chen & Chen, 2023; Callaghan et al., 2024). Additionally, the role of communication and discourse within the family environment is crucial in shaping children's understanding of gender (Epstein & Ward, 2011; Dulla et al., 2021). These studies have shown that the language used by parents in the presence of children, the reinforcement of certain activities based on gender, and the way conflicts are resolved within the family can all contribute to the internalization of gender stereotypes in children.

**Challenges Related to Parenting and Gender Socialization**

Parenting and gender socialization present unique challenges, particularly in navigating traditional expectations and evolving societal norms. Parents often face tension between promoting gender equality and adhering to culturally ingrained gender roles. Li et al. (2024) emphasize that even when parents explicitly endorse gender equality, their implicit behaviors and societal norms can inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles.

Another challenge is the intersection of gender socialization and socio-economic factors. Families from lower socio-economic backgrounds may experience additional constraints in challenging traditional gender roles due to economic pressures and limited access to progressive educational resources (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Moreover, single parents may encounter difficulties in balancing gender-neutral parenting with practical considerations, such as access to childcare and financial stability (Chen & Chen, 2023). Furthermore, children who do not conform to traditional gender norms may face social ostracization, making it challenging for parents to fully support gender-expansive identities without fear of societal repercussions. Callaghan et al. (2024) highlight that many LGBTIQ+ children experience psychological distress when their gender identities are invalidated at home and schools, underscoring the need for parental support in fostering gender inclusivity.

**Influence of Culture and Media**

Understanding gender roles and identities is a crucial aspect of child development, which is heavily influenced by the cultural context in which children are raised (Nartey, Bahar & Nabunya., 2023). Cultural norms, values, and practices can profoundly shape children's perceptions of gender, their own gender identity, and their beliefs about appropriate behaviors and expectations for individuals of different genders. The findings from this review align with previous research (Lawson et al., 2015; John et al., 2017; De Vries et al., 2022), which emphasizes that exposure to different cultural norms and media representations can influence children's reasoning about gender roles and stereotypes.

One key aspect to consider is how cultural flexibility around gender norms can impact children's reasoning about gender-related preferences and behaviors (Marks et al., 2009). For instance, in cultures where there is greater fluidity and acceptance of non-binary gender identities, children may be less likely to develop rigid stereotypes or to make strong associations between certain activities, traits, or occupations and specific genders. Conversely, in cultural contexts that promote more traditional, binary notions of gender, children may be more prone to developing sexist attitudes and beliefs and may have a more limited understanding of the range of possibilities for how individuals can express their gender (Shafer & Malhotra, 2011; Ward & Grower, 2020; Trautner et al., 2022).

**Consequences of Sexism and Gender Stereotyping in Children**

Sexism and gender stereotypes can have profound and wide-ranging consequences on children's development (Brown & Stone, 2016). One of the primary concerns is the way in which gender stereotypes can constrain children's exploration of diverse interests and activities. Girls, for instance, may be discouraged from pursuing "masculine" careers such as those in STEM fields, while boys are steered away from "feminine" professions like caregiving and early childhood education. The underrepresentation of men in care-oriented professions (e.g., nursing, teaching, social work) is also a consequence of gender stereotypes, which discourage boys from pursuing careers perceived as "feminine" and devalue professions traditionally associated with women (De Vries et al., 2022). Since these professions are often underpaid, this cycle reinforces gendered economic disparities.

Beyond academic and career trajectories, gender stereotypes contribute to behavioral and developmental disparities, with boys often discouraged from emotional expression and caregiving roles, while girls face barriers in leadership and STEM fields. Children who do not conform to traditional gender roles are at an increased risk of harassment, social exclusion, and even violence (Roberts et al., 2012). This exposure to discrimination and hostility can have long-lasting impacts on children's mental health, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. Moreover, sexist attitudes and the objectification of women in media and culture can profoundly influence how children view themselves and others. Internalized sexist beliefs may lead girls to prioritize physical appearance over other pursuits, and can foster unhealthy attitudes about sexuality and relationships (Silberstang, 2011; Olsson & Martiny, 2018; Ward & Grower, 2020).

**Strengths and limitations**

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this is the first scoping review to map the research landscape on parenting styles, parental gendered attitudes and beliefs and their influence on the development of sexism and gender stereotypes in children. This review will act as a foundational resource for researchers interested in this area, identifying key themes, populations and methodologies. By systematically examining research in this area, this review can help clarify the conceptual understanding of how parenting styles, attitudes and behaviors interact with the development of sexism and gender stereotypes in children.

Despite its strengths, certain limitations of this review ought to be acknowledged. First, the time frame considered (2013–2023) may have excluded earlier foundational studies that contributed to the understanding of gender socialization and parenting. While this timeframe was chosen to reflect recent developments in the field, some influential theoretical frameworks and longitudinal studies predating 2013 may have provided additional insights. Future reviews could adopt a broader temporal scope to capture the evolution of research on this topic. Second, this review was limited to studies retrieved from three databases (Scopus, PubMed, and APA PsycNet). Although these databases provide a comprehensive collection of peer-reviewed articles, relevant studies indexed in other databases, such as Web of Science or ERIC, may have been overlooked. Expanding the database selection in future research could ensure a more exhaustive synthesis of existing literature.

Additionally, most of the included studies were cross-sectional in design, limiting the ability to infer causality between parenting practices and the development of sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes in children. Longitudinal research is needed to track how these attitudes evolve over time and how different parenting strategies influence gender socialization at various developmental stages. Moreover, the studies primarily relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly in assessing parental attitudes and behaviors. The inclusion of observational and experimental methodologies in future studies would enhance the reliability of findings.

Although this review aimed to explore gender socialization across diverse cultural contexts, most included studies were conducted in WEIRD nations, with limited representation from other regions. Given that cultural and socioeconomic factors significantly shape parenting as well as gender ideologies, future research should incorporate broader socio-cultural perspectives, including variations in socioeconomic status, parental education, and dual-income households. Expanding the geographic and demographic scope of studies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how parenting practices influence gender socialization globally.

**Conclusion**

This scoping review found literature on the impact of parenting on children’s gender socialization. Most of the 23 studies included in the final review were conducted in WEIRD countries, used cross-sectional methods, and employed a variety of measurement tools, mostly self-reports. This review has identified and discussed parenting practices that promote gender stereotyping in children, the influence of culture and media, the challenges related to parenting and gender socializing and consequences of parental gender biases on children’s play, risk-taking behavior, aggression, and choice of career. By addressing these biases and promoting more inclusive and equitable environments, we can empower children to freely explore their interests and cultivate healthy identities.

To foster gender-equitable parenting practices, it is essential to enhance parental awareness through targeted educational programs that encourage critical reflection on gender biases and provide strategies for fostering inclusivity within the home environment. Parents and educators should actively encourage gender-neutral play and activities by providing children with a diverse range of toys, books, and learning experiences that challenge traditional gender norms. Schools play a crucial role in this process and should implement policies and curricula that promote gender inclusivity, while teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of fostering non-stereotypical gender socialization. Furthermore, parental engagement in media literacy is necessary to help children critically analyze gender representations in television, movies, and digital media, thereby mitigating the impact of stereotypical portrayals. Broader structural and policy changes, such as workplace policies that support shared caregiving responsibilities and parental leave policies that encourage equitable distribution of childcare, are also vital in reducing the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Additionally, fostering community-based initiatives, such as peer support groups and parenting forums, can create spaces for dialogue, resource-sharing, and collective action toward gender-equitable parenting.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1**

*Summary of characteristics of included articles*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First author & year** | **Country of study** | **Study design** | **Sample characteristics** | **Methods used** | **Key Findings** |
| Chen & Chen (2023) | China | Qualitative | 58 single parents and their children | Interview | In addition to direct verbal instruction, parents' expectations of their children's gender roles are implicitly conveyed through various parent-child interactions in daily life to affect the formation of their children's gender roles. Intergenerational transmission of gender roles is also affected by grandparents, teachers, and peers. |
| Alcaide (2023) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 2158 Spanish parents and adolescents | Warmth/Affection Scale, Parental Control Scale, Hostility/Aggression Scale (from PAQ), and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory | Adolescents raised in indulgent families (warmth without strictness) showed low aggression and hostile sexism. Authoritative parenting (warmth with strictness) is related to greater aggression and hostile sexism. |
| Mastari (2019) | Belgium | Cross-sectional | 755 parent-child dyads | Secondary data | Among girls, benevolent sexism is strongly tied to parents’ traditional gender beliefs and their being in a romantic relationship. Among boys, hostile sexism is related to being enrolled in technical and vocational education. |
| Endendijk (2022) | Netherlands | Cross-sectional | 142 Dutch families with a child between 6 and 12 years | Computer task to assess children’s gender stereotypes about toys, Dual Gender Identity Questionnaire | Parents,’ and especially mothers’, gender-typical career and family involvement is associated with children’s gender-typical views about future career and family involvement. |
| Qian (2023) | China | Cross-sectional and comparative | 1013 children (4 to 9 years) from Canada, China, and Thailand | A questionnaire was used to measure implicit gender stereotypes. | Gender stereotypes are relatively strong and stable across age groups among Thai children. Gender stereotypes are relatively weak and stable across age groups among Chinese children. Canadian 4- to 5-year-old children displayed weaker stereotypes, whereas 6- to 9-year-olds displayed stronger stereotypes. |
| Del Rio (2019). | Chile | Cross-sectional | 180 kindergartners (4 to5 years) and their parents of low and high SES | A questionnaire was used to measure implicit and explicit beliefs about mathematics. | By 5 years of age, children are already developing beliefs about “who does math” in their culture and that parental beliefs and practices are significantly linked to children’s stereotypes and self-concepts about mathematics before they enter formal schooling. |
| Hildebrand (2023) | U.S.A. | Cross-sectional | 6- to 10-year-old children and their parents. | Implicit Association Tasks | Males (fathers and sons) were more likely than females (mothers and daughters) to identify as someone who likes math (instead of reading), suggesting gender differences in academic preferences emerge early and remain consistent throughout adulthood. Girls may be especially sensitive to parental math attitudes and beliefs. |
| DeMayo (2022) | U.S.A. | Cross-sectional | 144 gender-diverse adolescents and their parents, and 174 cisgender adolescents and their parents | Survey | No significant differences between gender stereotype endorsement in gender-diverse and cisgender adolescents (or between their parents). A positive association between adolescents’ stereotyping and their parents’ gender stereotyping. |
| Block (2022) | Netherlands | Experimental | 336 six to eleven-year-old children | Children were exposed to three study conditions – stereotypical, neutral, and counter-stereotypical. | Children exposed to the counter-stereotypical stories showed significantly lower and non-significant stereotypes compared to children exposed to the stereotypical stories of ‘math = male.’ Exposure to stories that perpetuated ‘math = male’ stereotypes significantly increased math-gender stereotypes over and above baseline. |
| Overall (2023) | New Zealand | Cross-sectional | 95 mixed-gender couples and their 5-year-old children. | Questionnaires were used to assess parenting attitudes, parental sexism, and responsive parenting behavior. | Fathers higher in hostile sexism reported lower authoritative (warm, involved) and higher authoritarian (directive, controlling) parenting attitudes. |
| Mesman (2018) | Netherlands | Theoretical | 67 Dutch children and their parents. | Interview | Although gendered socialization is rarely found in broad parenting styles or explicit parenting practices, it is present in implicit parenting practices. Such implicit practices can be directed to the child (direct messages), exposing children to different products and responding to children's behaviors differently depending on gender. Implicit gendered parenting practices can also be directed to others in the presence of the child (indirect messages); these can take the form of gendered evaluations of others’ behaviors in the child's presence and modeling gendered roles. |
| Dulla (2021) | India | Cross-sectional | 200 married men and women. | Questionnaire to measure gender stereotypes in parenting. | Despite being highly educated, the act of gender stereotyping continues into married life as parents are burgeoned under the reflection of gendered parenting. Parents may not have gendered parenting goals, but unconsciously, they convey the message of gender stereotyping through their actions and practices. Men are generally observed to exercise more power than women within the marriage relationship, which their child gradually understands, and the same is carried forward when the child grows up and enters the institution of marriage. |
| Gerdes (2021) | Germany | Cross-sectional | 38 mother-daughter (6 to 10 years) dyads | Questionnaires to measure maternal implicit and explicit gender stereotypes and child’s self-reported fearfulness. | Specific phobias are more prevalent in women than in men. Individuals with stereotypically feminine characteristics are more fearful than those with stereotypically masculine characteristics. Mothers' gender stereotypes significantly correlated with their daughters' self-reported fear. |
| Chaffee (2022) | Canada | Cross-sectional | 172 parent-child dyads | Survey | Parents’ ability stereotypes about language boosted girls’ motivation for language arts, nudging them away from STEM pathways. Parents’ language ability stereotypes were directly related to mathematical career aspirations for boys. Stereotypes that language arts are not for boys push them instead toward mathematics. |
| Thomassin (2019) | Canda | Cross-sectional | 591 parents of 8 to 12-year-old children. | Implicit association test focusing on children’s expression of sadness and anger. | Mothers show more favourable attitudes toward sadness and anger expression by girls versus boys. Mothers, but not fathers, may possess gender-related implicit biases about emotional expression in children. |
| Jimenez-Barbero (2016) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 252 adolescents from 12 to 15 years. | Questionnaires to measure externalizing behavior, impulsivity, and attitudes towards violence. | A significant association of externalization with high impulsivity, ingrained attitudes toward violence, and inconsistent parental styles was established. Gender stereotypes propagated by parents lead to the development of attitudes towards violence. |
| Albertos (2016) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 6208 adolescents | A questionnaire was used to assess risk behaviors and parental involvement. | The greater the degree of knowledge, the lower the frequency of risk behaviors among youth. The degree of knowledge was inversely associated with children's age, and we observed that being female was associated with a greater degree of parental knowledge. Parents' supervision criteria might be influenced by gender stereotypes, which would have a harmful effect on young males, as the lower degree of knowledge puts them at higher odds of risk behaviors. |
| Martinez-Escudero (2023) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 1125 adolescents | An ambivalent sexism inventory was used. | Parental strictness is detrimental as a predictor of higher benevolent sexism in adolescents. |
| Gimenez-Serrano (2020) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 2131 Spanish children, divided into adolescents (616), young adults (606), middle-aged adults (502), and older adults (407) | Warmth/Affection scale, Parental Control scale, Ambivalent sexism inventory. | Children from indulgent families scored lower on hostile sexism than those from authoritative families.  These findings seriously question whether the strict parenting dimension is necessary during parental socialization (for adolescent children) and beyond adolescence (for adult children) once parental socialization is over. |
| Kollmayer (2018) | Austria | Cross-sectional | 324 parents of 3 to 6-year-old children | Survey | Parents rated same-gender-typed and gender-neutral toys more desirable for their children than cross-gender-typed toys. Egalitarian parents permit a greater range of interests and behaviors in their children than traditional parents. Younger parents, parents with lower educational levels, and fathers reported more traditional gender role attitudes than did older parents, parents with higher educational levels, and mothers. |
| Rached (2021) | United Kingdom | Cross-sectional | 188 adults | Questionnaires to assess parental emotional abuse, control, trauma, misogyny, and perceptions of sexism | Misogynistic culture and male gender predicted hostile sexism, whereas emotional abuse predicted benevolent sexism in children. |
| Fitzpatrick (2022) | U.S.A. | Qualitative | Unavailable | Interview | Teen girls are at high risk for dating violence. Teen girls assign meaning to dating and abuse, which is often reflective of traditional gender stereotypes, through their interactions with their boyfriends. However, due to the life course, parents of teens are in a unique position to provide different meanings that foster healthier dating relationships – through modeling. |
| Malonda (2017) | Spain | Cross-sectional | 732 adolescents between 12 and 14 years. | Questionnaires to measure ambivalent sexism and physical/verbal aggression. | The division of housework and parenting styles were related to sexist attitudes.  This connection was especially strong for the division of housework according to traditional gender roles, which was found to lead to hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes.  Prosocial and aggressive behaviors were correlated with sexist attitudes. |