

## *Gender Roles Perceptions Among Preteen in Bali: A Phenomenological Study*

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### **Abstract**

Gender roles are one of the constructs within gender that are typically socialised during childhood through various sides such as family, social environment, culture and media. Balinese culture holds distinctive concepts of gender roles known as *purusa* and *pradana*, where a misunderstanding of these constructs has led to a perception that males are more dominant than females in their cultural and social environment. The preteen stage marks the transitional phase from childhood to teenage, which involves biological, psychological, and social shifts. Due to the limited research focusing on preteens in Indonesia, this study aims to explore the preteens' understanding of gender roles within the context of Balinese culture. This research employs qualitative methods, using interviews with drawing instructions assigned to four preteens born into Hindu-Balinese families. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is used to analyse the findings. This study finds diverse perspectives on gender roles among preteens influenced by their environment. The influence of parents was the most dominant in shaping the views and experiences of preteens, although peer socialisation also played a role in shaping gender role perceptions. Besides that, preteens hold their views on gender roles that are different from their environment, and they interpret their cultural tasks as a duty and identity. In conclusion, parents have the most dominant influence on how preteens shape their perceptions of gender roles. However, each preteen has and already holds their own beliefs on gender roles and actively engages gender roles in their daily, social, and cultural lives.

Keywords: Balinese, Cultural Role, Puberty, Psychosexual, Psychosocial

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## Introduction

Gender role is a construct that addresses how individuals behave based on their biological sex (Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). Gender roles are usually socialised to individuals through family, peers, schools, culture, and media from childhood. Balinese culture has a distinctive concept of gender roles called *purusa* and *pradana*. *Purusa* and *pradana* are concepts the Balinese use as the basis of kinship, marriage, and inheritance (Wedanti et al., 2023). The preteen phase marks the transition of children to teenagers, which is a phase where individuals start to explore their sexuality and gender, and influences their identity. Based on the following explanation of how preteens start to develop their view on gender, how the gender role concept is socialised, and how Balinese culture has a concept similar to gender roles, this study aims to research how Hindu-Balinese preteens perceive gender roles on a daily basis.

## Theoretical Perspective

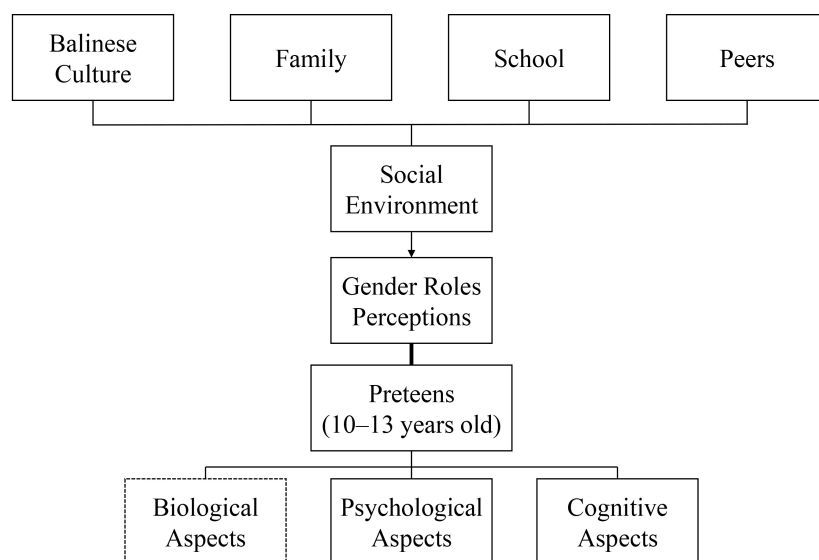


Figure 1: Research's Theoretical Framework

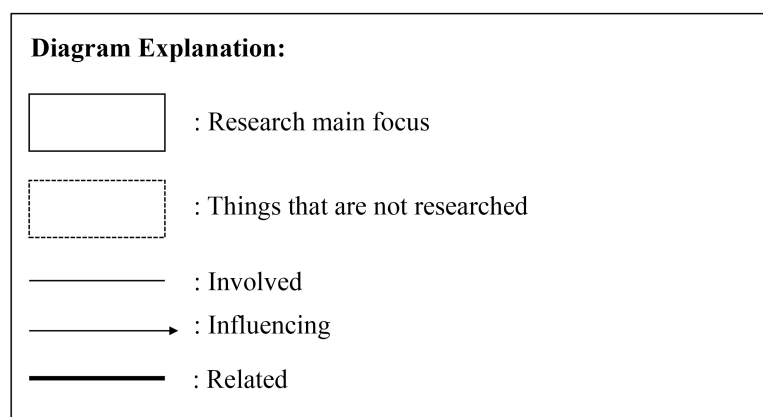


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework Explanation

## ***External Factors***

- ***Balinese Culture***

Culture has an impact on how individuals understand gender roles concept. In the Balinese culture, *purusa* and *pradana* refer to someone who becomes the successor of their own family line. In contrast, *pradana* refers to someone who leaves their own family to join *purusa*'s family through marriage and perform their duties as part of *purusa*'s family. Because of the patrilineal kinship that Balinese adheres to (Ayu et al., 2022), the *purusa* role is usually given to a man while the *pradana* role is given to a woman. However, it is possible to give the *purusa* role to a woman through *sentana rajeg* marriage. There is misconception about *purusa* and *pradana* is that the *purusa* role refers to boys, and *pradana* role refers to girls. While after marriage or *sentana rajeg* marriage, both man and woman do their own role according to the Balinese society.

- ***Social Environment***

Family, peers, and school strongly influence individuals' perceptions of things. Family is an individual's first place in learning societal values and norms (Roostin, 2018). Preteens spend most of their time in school while they learn how to behave based on their school's habits. Preteens mostly spend time with their peers in or outside school, and they can see their peers as role models in how to behave in the social environment. Peers can also influence an individual's views and perceptions.

## ***Internal Factors***

- ***Biological Aspects***

Preteen's biological transformation can be seen through an individual's physical and hormonal changes, affecting emotion and self-identity (Özdemir et al., 2016). There are increasing changes in testosterone and estrogen hormones in preteens.

- ***Psychological Aspects***

Psychological changes can cause decreased self-esteem because of unstable emotions, but it also affects how preteens think. There are changes in the neurocognitive function that cause preteens to be emotionally unstable (Goddings et al., 2012). Based on Freud's psychosexual developmental theory, preteens are in the latent phase (6-12 years old), in which they start to develop an interest in the opposite sex (Lantz & Ray, 2023). Based on Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory, preteens are in the competency phase (5-12 years old), in which peers significantly influence an individual's self-confidence (McLeod, 2018).

- ***Cognitive Aspects***

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, preteens are in the formal operational stage, where they start to think deductively and inductively, think hypothetically, and do scientific reasoning. Preteens start to absorb memory and process information quickly. Preteens think more reflectively about their social environment, which affects how they see themselves (Diananda, 2018). According to Huttenlocher (in Latif, 2021), preteens develop their social cognitive function in how they start to develop self-awareness.

Based on the explanation and framework figure, this research focuses on how external factors (Balinese culture, family, school, and peers) and internal factors (psychological and cognitive aspects) influence preteens' perceptions of gender roles.

### Data Collection

This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. The instruments are semi-structural interview guidelines and a few art-based tools. The data is collected by interviewing while using an art-based approach to collect more data. The art-based approach is used to make the participants feel at ease when being interviewed. Four participants were interviewed: two boys and two girls. Two participants live in Mengwi Regency, while two live in Gianyar Regency.

### Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is used to gather data for the research. The purpose of this analysis is to understand each participant's interpretation and experience of gender roles. The result from this analysis is a report on how each participant's experience is connected to each other. This method also reviews the uniqueness of each participant's interpretation and experience.

### Results

This study found six themes that could be categorized as external and internal factors interrelated with the view of gender roles in Balinese Hindu Preteens. The six themes are family relations, peer relations, cultural values, gender role values, gender stereotypes, and cognitive processing. The external factors are family relations, peer relations, and cultural values, while the internal factors are gender role values, gender stereotypes, and cognitive processing. The following table describes each theme found.

Table 1: External Factors Results

External Factors	Descriptions
Family Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The close-knit between preteens and their parents affects their views on gender roles. The parents were their role models in daily activities. They also listened to their parents' advice and did that daily.</li> <li>• The relationship between preteens and their siblings affects how they see gender roles. If the preteens have siblings of the opposite sex, they have always been told that they have the same equality as a boy and girl.</li> <li>• Both of the female participants have house chores at home. While, among the males, only one boy has his house chores, while the others do not have to do house chores.</li> <li>• One of the participants felt a different treatment from their parents between her and her brother, while others felt both parents treated all of their children equally.</li> <li>• The female participants have been told by their caregivers to know how to behave in public and to protect themselves in public. The male participants are taught to be responsible and know their duty as part of Balinese society. They have also been told not to be rude or harsh to girls.</li> </ul>

Peers Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In socialising, the female participants tend to have a smaller group of friends. They said they only have two closest friends. While the male participants tend to have a bigger group of friends, they said they can play with everyone in the class.</li> <li>• All of the participants do not like to play with their opposite-sex peers. They feel uncomfortable to socialise with opposite-sex peers, and they tend to have a negative opinion of their opposite-sex peers.</li> </ul>
Cultural Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants have been socialised with their cultural duties since they were children (4-6 years old). The feminine figure socialised the cultural duties to the female participant, while the masculine figure socialised the cultural duties to the male participant.</li> <li>• Both female participants felt content when they were doing their cultural duties. The duties that the girls usually do is <i>metanding canang</i><sup>1</sup>, in which they use for prayers. They also do the ritual prayers every day. The male participants were mainly involved in their cultural duties by following their fathers and socializing with others in a <i>banjar</i><sup>2</sup>. Sometimes they helped their mother by doing the prayers and <i>mentading canang</i>.</li> </ul>

Table 2: Internal Factors Results

Internal Factors	Descriptions
Gender Role Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preteens already hold their values as girls or boys. The female participants think girls must be independent, not rely on others, and perform their cultural duties. The male participants think boys must be responsible, earn money, and be decisive.</li> <li>• Preteens already hold their own cultural values and duties. The female participants think their duties as Balinese women are cooks, <i>metanding canang</i>, and <i>mebanten</i><sup>3</sup>. The male participants think that their duties as Balinese men are making <i>lawar</i><sup>4</sup> and making <i>penjor</i><sup>5</sup> and <i>canang</i> (both used for prayer purposes), and they must be diligent.</li> <li>• Preteens have their aspirations, which are influenced by figures around them.</li> </ul>
Gender Stereotype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Games:</b> Some of the preteens think that there are toys that are not suitable for each sex. One of the participants thinks that online games are not suitable for girls. One of them also stated that boys are not suitable for playing with dolls.</li> <li>• <b>Profession:</b> Some of the preteens have gender stereotypes toward the profession. They stated that women are not suitable for entering the military.</li> <li>• <b>House chores:</b> All preteens do not have stereotypes about house chores. They all help their parents by doing the house chores. They think house chores is an essential human activity.</li> <li>• <b>Emotions:</b> All preteens do not have stereotypes about specific emotions. They think boys can cry because it is a way to express and let out sadness. They also think girls can be mad because it is a form of correcting people's wrongdoings.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Assembling a little traditional Balinese Hindu offering that contains flowers and a young coconut leaf.

<sup>2</sup> A local community organisation in each area in Bali

<sup>3</sup> In a Balinese Hindu tradition, it is a process of praying the offering they have made before.

<sup>4</sup> A traditional Balinese food that mixes vegetables and meat with a traditional Bali seasoning.

<sup>5</sup> A traditional craft often made from bamboo with a curved tip decorated with young coconut and palm leaves, it is often used for big days.

Cognitive Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male preteens tend to understand numerical subjects quickly but think it is hard to understand linguistic subjects.</li> <li>• Female preteens tend to understand linguistic subjects quickly but need help understanding numerical subjects.</li> </ul>
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## Discussion

This study aims to understand how Hindu-Balinese preteens perceive gender roles daily. It was found that parents are the most influential figures in their preteens' view on gender roles, as they become role models and provide advice. It also found that even though siblings do not have any significant influence on preteens, opposite-sex siblings could affect preteens' behavior. It is found that peer socialization could affect how gender stereotyping and gender behavior are formed in preteens (Fabes et al., 2014). At this age, the preteens still show signs of gender segregation, whereas the preteens tend to be comfortable with same-sex peers. However, as a result of the study, it is found that preteens have already done their cultural role at this age where they are doing *metanding canang*, *mebanten*, making *penjor*, and many more.

Based on the internal factors, it found that preteens already hold their views towards gender and cultural roles (Kågesten et al., 2016). It is also shown in how the preteens think they do not have any differences between themselves and their opposite-sex siblings and peers. Some preteens have gender stereotypes regarding things such as professions and toys. They still think some of the professions and toys do not go well together with a particular sex. It is also found that there is a difference in cognitive processing between girls and boys, where girls tend to be easier to understand linguistic subjects, and boys tend to be more understanding of numerical subjects. Meanwhile, the girls have the most challenging time learning to understand numerical subjects, and the boys have difficulty understanding linguistic subjects in school.

## Conclusion

Relationships with the family have an essential role in shaping preteens' views on gender and cultural roles. Both parents have the most dominant effects on preteens. However, this does not affect preteens' personalities and identities. Peer relationships affect the preteens' view of gender stereotypes daily. It can be seen that boys and girls have different patterns in peer relationships, where boys tend to have a bigger group of friends, and girls have smaller groups of friends.

All preteens have been socialised about their cultural duties since they were in kindergarten (4-6 years old) through their parents, grandparents, and school. During this stage, they already know their identity as a part Balinese Hindu, so they do many cultural rituals to fulfil their part in the Balinese Hindu society. The Preteens have their own view on their gender identity, gender roles, and gender stereotypes, and they already know how to fulfil their cultural duties and how they are assigned to each cultural duty as a boy and a girl. The preteens stated that they feel content and enjoy doing their cultural duties. All preteen participants stated that boys and girls have the same equality in every aspect.

## **Recommendations and Suggestions**

For further studies, it is recommended that the interview session be conducted in a quieter situation with the preteens to increase their focus and prevent them from being distracted by their environment. It is also recommended that they have deep knowledge about the culture that was assigned to be the topic. It is highly recommended that parents and educational institutions give preteens proper sex and gender education. This study's purpose is to help people understand how culture could affect a person's mind, so it is important to have gender education from the early phase and raise awareness of people's understanding of the importance of gender concepts in our daily lives.

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