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Gendered Dimensions of Shadow Education: Examining Teacher's Role in Large - Scale Private Tutoring

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Abstract

The topic of gender has become a significant focus in political science literature. Numerous aspects have been explored, and this study investigates the gender imbalance in the professional role of teachers within large-scale tuition, an area that has received limited attention in the research literature in the Sri Lankan social context. As Wedikandage (2015) points out, unlike in the past, the teaching profession in Sri Lanka has become feminized, with social stereotypes playing a prominent role in this transformation. These stereotypes have fostered an environment where the role of the teacher in large-scale tuition classes, beyond the traditional government teaching profession, is predominantly filled by males. This research, which employed a quantitative dominant mixed method throughout the study, was conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 50 teachers involved in large-scale tuition in the Chilaw Municipal Council area of Puttalam District in the North-Western Province, reveals the gender division of labor, social stereotypes, and the marginalization of women within the household.

Keywords: gender, gender division of labor, gender roles, gender stereotypes

Introduction

Gender politics has become the most discussed topic across the world, with the growing scholarly attention on how gender identity operates within society. According to the World Health Organization, gender is a set of characteristics that separate society into women, men, girls, and boys. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research further analyzes gender identity and demonstrates that it is socially built, with roles, behavior patterns, and manifestations specifically created for men and women (2023). In the field of human studies, gender identity is defined as a person's self-representation as a woman or a man, based on how they respond

to social institutions, or as an identity constructed (Mazure.C.M.,2021). From this point of view, it is clear that gender is a concept that is not based on biological factors but is built on the intervention of society.

This article explores the gender homogeneity of teachers' roles in large-scale tutoring classes, particularly in Sri Lanka's competitive supplementary education sector. In Sri Lanka, the unemployment rates for women and men were 3.3% and 6.2%, respectively, in 2021. However, to fill the gap that has arisen, women have to face certain problems in finding jobs, so in the Sri Lankan context, it can be seen that women have chosen to enter the teaching profession (in the government) as a solution (Wedikandage,2024). Accordingly, since society has stereotyped men as a group with the ability to create their jobs in financial sectors, advertising sectors, medical sectors, etc., in a stronger way (Wedikandage,2021), an attempt has been made to reveal whether society itself has decided and socialized that men are fit to engage in large-scale teaching institutions through this research.

Literature Review

This study examines the "Gender Homogeneity of the Teacher's Role in Large-Scale Support Classes," concentrating on the evolution of the teaching function historically linked to women. Despite statistical evidence indicating a predominance of women in Sri Lanka's teaching profession, this research aims to delve into the evolving perceptions of the teacher's role within the context of tuition. A comprehensive literature review based on three major subtopics will be conducted to support this inquiry.

1. How gender roles operate in society
2. Identity constructed through the concept of gender division of labor towards the teacher's role
3. The Sri Lankan tuition sector and the role of the teacher

1. How do gender roles operate in society?

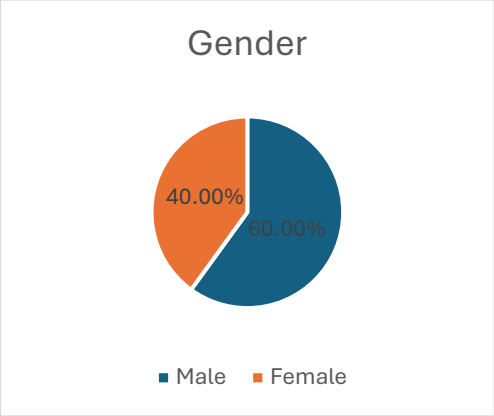
According to the European Organization for gender equality, gender roles are defined as socially accepted norms based on sex, shaping behavior within a culture. E.R. Greenglass has explained that these roles reflect attitudes and characteristics associated with men and women (2001) by connecting them with a kind of psychological perspective. When these roles are processed within society, the traditional view of society is that women are more capable of

nurturing and caring than men, so women should take care of the residents in the home rather than work outside the home (Blackstone,2003). Accordingly, when this fact is considered in the role of teacher in the Sri Lankan context, it appears to be a suitable profession for women, as they have to work for only six hours by facilitating women to balance their gender roles as mothers, housewives, wives, daughters, and many more. Therefore, in the Sri Lankan social context, it appears that the term teacher has been stereotyped to some extent towards women. Amy further states that society's view of the man is that he is the head of all household affairs, the one who strengthens the household economy, and who handles important decisions in the household (2003). Therefore, society does not expect a man to stay at home full-time and do household chores in such a space. Accordingly, a man has a background where he can devote more time away from home for his professional development, which is very ideal for a large-scale tuition master. Cecilia and Shelly argue in their work that such hegemonic beliefs shape job structures (2004), influencing gendered patterns in large-scale tutoring contexts.

2. Identify the constructed concept through the gender division of labor towards the teacher's role

Sylvia Welby, a sociologist in the field of gender politics, explains how the sexes are more divided in ways that reflect and reinforce existing power relations, and in contrast, the sociologist Magret Mead argues that this is not a universal phenomenon, but a phenomenon that is unique to each culture. In the Sri Lankan context, the teacher’s role has become feminized, and it has been stereotyped that the teaching profession is more suitable for women than men. According to the 2017 census report,73% of female teachers are found within the school system. (Wedikandage,2024). So, within the Sri Lankan context, the teaching profession has been feminized. Globally, Beneria points out that 80% of domestic labor is done by women and that under the patriarchal division of labor, the male side takes the main advantage (1979). From that point of view, it can be thought that the role of the teacher in Sri Lanka has been feminized since she has more time to manage her work at home more easily. But when we consider this in the field of large-scale tutoring classes, the role of the teacher is to devote unlimited time and effort to professional development. Therefore, men get more opportunities as they are not traditionally allocated to engage in household responsibilities that women do.

3. The Sri Lankan tuition sector and the role of the teacher



Tuition in Sri Lanka is a growing phenomenon. Advancement in the field of tuition is due to the need of the student community to prepare for the competitive national-level examinations (Pallegedara, 2011). According to Asanka Pallegedara, three forms of tuition art can be seen in Sri Lanka, and among them, the third form of "whole class" can be seen in the field of large-scale tuition. In such large-scale classes, more than 50 students are studying, and the maximum number of students studying here can exceed 2000. Therefore, to maintain such a class, the teacher must be very popular, thereby increasing student attraction (2011). Because of these criteria, the large-scale tuition teacher must be a person with a strong personality and good endurance to stay in this field. Based on the traditional gender roles and stereotypes, men have the most suitable personality traits and freedom to be more popular within the field.

This literature inquiry examines the limited professional participation of women in large-scale tuition classes, emphasizing the impact of gender roles in education. While previous research has identified gender imbalances in public school teaching roles, there is a notable lack of studies focused on the private sector, particularly in large-scale tutoring. This study aims to analyze the reasons behind the limited participation of women in this professional domain and to identify the factors that contribute to this disparity.

Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-method approach, with data gathered via a semi-structured questionnaire administered to fifty large-scale tuition instructors in the Chilaw municipal council region of the Puttalam district, Northwestern province. The data has been analyzed using Microsoft Excel and thematic analysis.

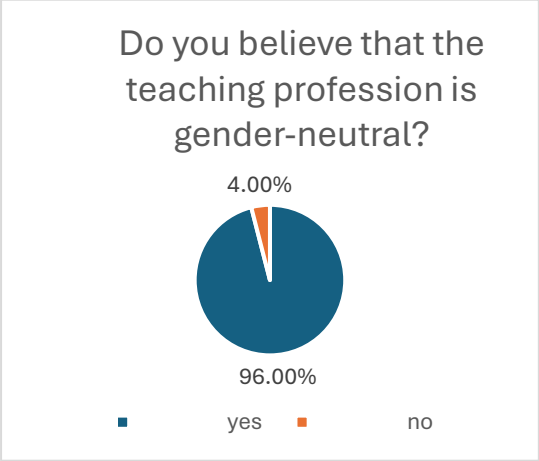
Data Analysis

3.1. Demographic information of the selected sample

The recording of gender, which is a basic-level demographic factor that is primarily considered in directing the questionnaire, is not just demographic information in this research. Through this, a clear idea can be understood as to whether the gender division of labor, which was a research question that was the basis for continuing the research, still exists in society. Only 40% of female teachers are included in the sample of 50 tuition teachers who conduct tutoring classes on a large scale in the Chilaw area. As revealed in Wedikandage's (2024) research, the teacher's role in Sri Lanka is a professionally feminized profession, but the graph above shows that there is some imbalance in linking it to the teacher's role in the field of large-scale tuition classes.

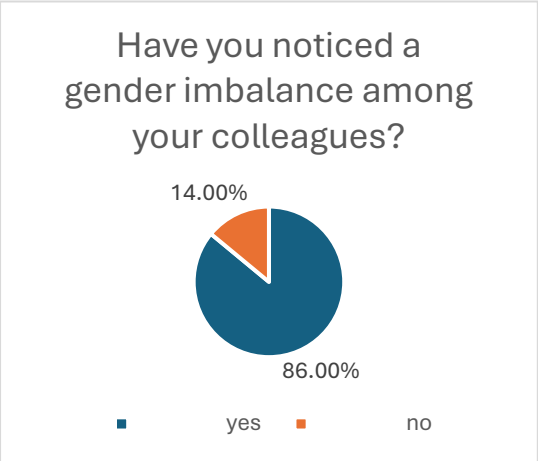
3.1.1 Graph: Gender of the selected sample

3.2. Existence of the historical gender division of labor concept



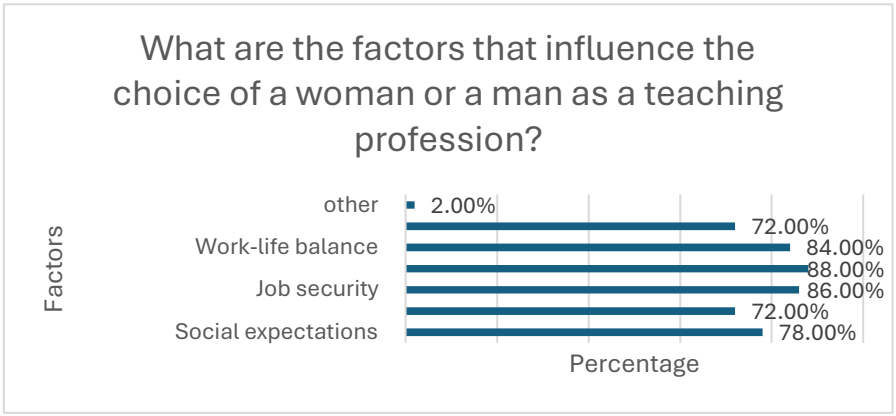
3.2.1 Graph: Do you believe that the teaching profession is gender-neutral?

In the Sri Lankan social context, the teaching profession is known as a feminized profession (Wedikandage, 2024). In such a background, it is a matter of happiness to be inspired to think that the teaching profession is not influenced by gender stereotypes. Only a very small minority of 4% adhere to the same hypothetical opinion, but the majority 96% interpret the teaching profession as being a woman or a man does not have any effect on engaging in that profession. Accordingly, it appears that the historical gender division of the labor system has been challenged.



3.2.2 Graph: Have you noticed a gender imbalance among your colleagues?

Despite this, it is evident from the majority of responses that a certain gender imbalance can be seen in the role of professional teachers in the field of large-scale support classes. Reasons for this will be developed in the future of this study, and on the surface, it appears that women who account for 80% of domestic labor globally (Benaria, 1979) direct their labor and time to a business field, such as large-scale support classes that must be maintained with great effort, which will be a burden for them to balance household work and their profession. Therefore, although a large percentage of 73% of female teachers can be seen in schools (Wedikandage, 2024), it appears that there is some imbalance in their engagement in the field of large-scale tuition.



3.2.4 Graph: Factors that led to the formation of social norms regarding the teaching profession as a more appropriate profession for a woman

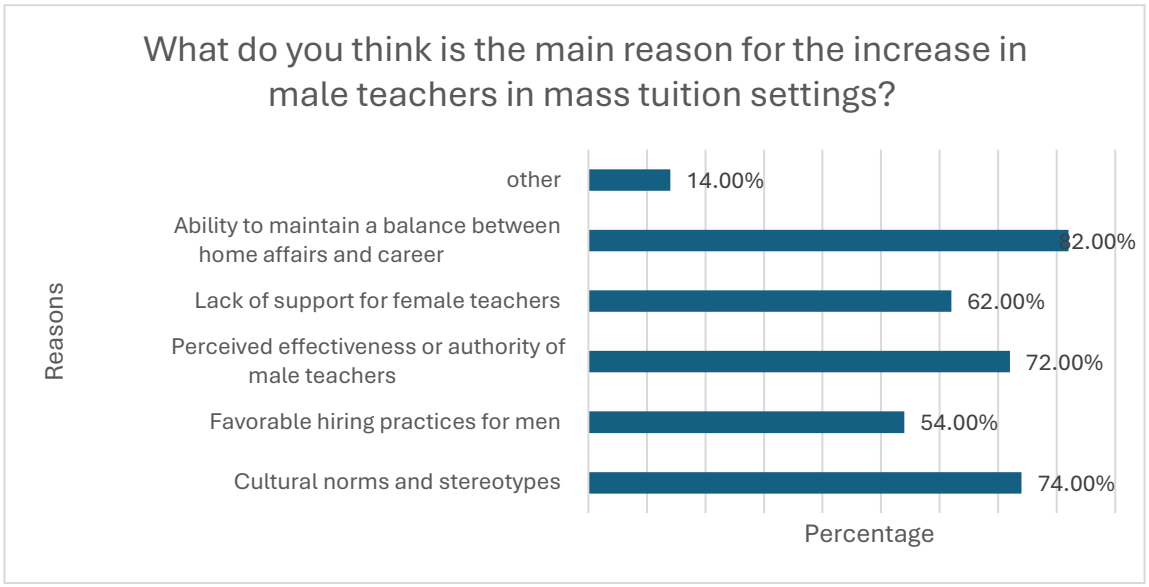
A list of possible reasons for choosing the teaching profession as a woman or a man was given in the questionnaire, and the research sample was allowed to choose all the reasons they wanted. Based on the reasons given there, it was further examined how the historical division of labor concept is further implemented in connection with the teacher's role in society. Accordingly, the factors chosen by a higher proportion of women are job security, work-life balance, and family influences. The percentage of female teachers selected is 38%, 40%, and 40%, respectively. Therefore, being a woman in the news can be thought of as a teacher's professional support for balancing and maintaining the set of responsibilities inherited.

Because of being a woman, she has delicate and motherly features.	22%
Able to maintain a balance between professional life and domestic responsibilities	38%
Women are not the main earners in a household	28%
Job security	12%

3.2.3 Graph: What are the factors that influence the choice of a woman or a man as a teaching profession?

The 50 responses received in response to the question included in the questionnaire, "Why has an idea been formed in society that teaching is a more suitable profession for a woman," are the responses received under the 04 main points mentioned in the table above. As Amy Blackstone points out in her research, nurturing women is rich in potential, such as caregiving (2003). So, the same motherly quality she shows in taking care of the residents is more important even in taking care of the children of the school. Amy further states that the man is the breadwinner of the family. In the family, the woman takes care of the residents and is responsible for household chores (2003). Therefore, it can be justified according to these ideas that it is very appropriate for a woman to work as a teacher in the Sri Lankan context.

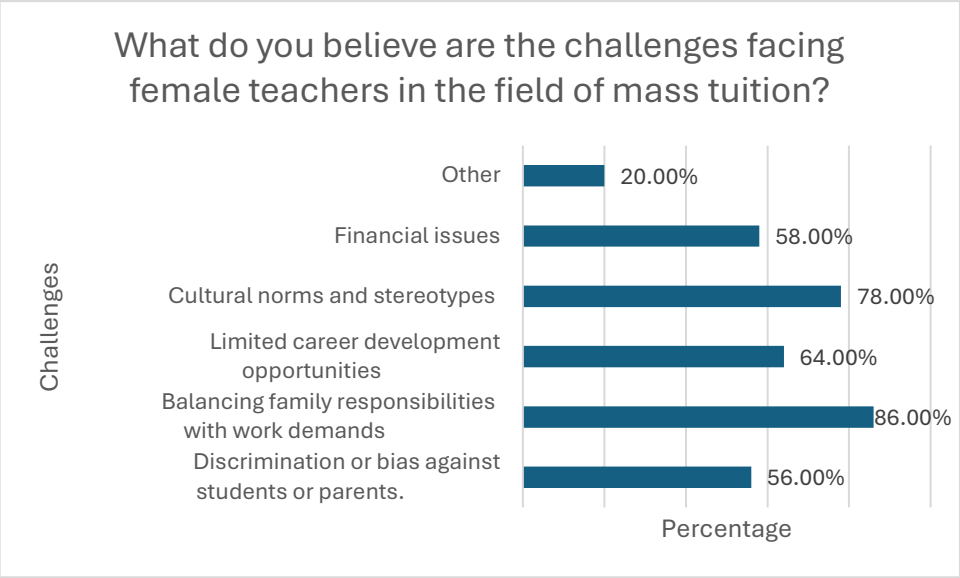
3.3. The effect of gender homogenous roles on a female teacher in entering the field of large-scale teaching classes



The above graph illustrates the main reasons why men tend to stay longer in the large-

3.3.1 Graph: What do you think is the main reason for the increase in male teachers in mass tuition settings?

scale tuition system. Based on the data, it also reveals how the role of a female teacher is challenged when entering this field, often being limited by gender roles. When considering the challenge of balancing household chores and career, as mentioned earlier in this study, it is noted that women perform 80% of domestic labor, with men primarily benefiting from this arrangement (Beneria, 1979). Consequently, men have minimal responsibilities for household chores, usually handling tasks related to managing the household economy and making key decisions (Amy, 2003). Society generally perceives that women face difficulties engaging in fields like large-scale tutoring, which traditionally emphasizes that women should prioritize domestic duties. Additionally, regarding social stereotypes, the widespread belief that men possess better decision-making, administrative, and business skills contributes to the dominance of males in tutoring classrooms. Various factors also contribute to the higher presence of male teachers in the large-scale tuition sector. However, one clear takeaway from these facts is that the teaching profession in schools has been connected to the perception that women's involvement in education has faced challenges in the large-scale tutoring field. Moreover, another stereotype about men is their supposed proficiency with technology, which has helped increase the number of male teachers in this area. This was also reflected in 14% of the responses to this question. Overall, the stereotype that women are less skilled with technology remains a significant obstacle for women seeking to establish their presence in this field.



3.4.1 Graph: What do you believe are the challenges facing female teachers in the field of mass tuition?

3.4. The effect of the family on establishing the existence of a female teacher in the field of mass tuition

The main thing that can be seen very clearly in the study of the challenges she faces as a woman in

establishing the existence of a female teacher in the field of large-scale tuition and the effect it has on her existence is that there is a great influence on a woman from within the family. As 86% responded, when a woman has to try to balance family responsibilities with the demands of work, it is difficult for a woman to devote her time and effort to her career in the field of large-scale tutoring classes, which is considered in the business category. Beneria has pointed out that the greatest advantage of the division of labor under patriarchy is achieved by the male side (1979). According to the school census reports, 73% of the school teaching community by 2017, the main reason for female teachers to be engaged in the profession is the social norm that she has enough time to fulfill her household responsibilities after six hours of service. Accordingly, since 80% of the domestic labor is done by women, it is clear that the family has built an effective wall that makes it difficult for a woman to be in a field like tuition where she needs to focus her full commitment.

Factors such as social stereotypes and norms, limited professional development opportunities, and financial problems created due to the same effect caused by the family seem to have deprived a female teacher of the opportunity to remain in the field of teaching. According to Pallegedara, popularity is a very strong factor in establishing the existence of a teacher in the field of tuition (2011). It is also stated in other sections of these responses that there is a possibility of verbal, mental, and physical effects in following the methods of achieving popularity, and it is because of being a woman seeking professional advancement in a patriarchal society. From that point of view, it is clear that the influence on a woman through the family and other problems arising from that influence, she is challenged in trying to maintain her professional stability in the field of large-scale tutoring.

Conclusion

This study investigates the gender imbalance in the teaching profession within large-scale tuition classes in the Chilaw Municipal Council area, based on responses from 50 teachers. Key findings suggest that historical gender-based divisions of labor continue to shape the teaching profession in Sri Lanka, where teaching is predominantly seen as a feminized profession. However, in the competitive tuition field, the role of tutor is often gendered as male. Cultural norms and family expectations of women's domestic roles further limit their participation in the commercial education sector, reinforcing their secondary status in a patriarchal society. The research contributes to the field by challenging long-standing societal ideologies and highlighting the impact of changing gender roles. It also provides valuable insight into gender

equality politics in Sri Lanka, an area with limited previous research. Despite several limitations, including language barriers in the questionnaire, limited time for data collection, and the scarcity of relevant literature, the study offers suggestions to address the gender imbalance. These include empowering women economically, socially, and psychologically, promoting gender-neutral education policies in schools, and curbing gender-based marginalization in the media. While implementing these changes may be challenging, these proposals provide a foundation for increasing female participation in large-scale tuition classes.

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