



***Exploring Teachers' Stereotyped Gender Perceptions in the
Algerian Culture
The case of Ouargla Secondary School Teachers***

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Abstract:

This research investigates secondary school teachers' gender perceptions and attempts to uncover gender stereotypes. Adopting Grounded Theory methodology and using interviews, twenty-two secondary school Algerian teachers are questioned about their gender perceptions. The results show that gender is perceived as a set of societal norms and structures that determine how individuals are as women or men. The research highlighted two dichotomous gender stereotypes that oppose maths versus languages as fields of competence and outdoor versus indoor spaces as space divided on gender basis. It is significant to unveil gender stereotypes as it raises awareness about their existence and mainly about their altering effect on the attainment of gender equality in education that consists of a non equal binary division in society on gender basis.

Keywords: *education; fields of competence; gender equality; gender perceptions; gender stereotypes; space division.*

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I. Introduction:

Gender equality in education is among the most important goals that nations all over the world seek to reach. However, gender inequality prevails in educational institutions, (Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2009). Gender inequality in education represents gender disparities of all nature that exist among learners on a gender basis. These gender disparities include any aspect of learning and teaching that draws upon the creation and maintenance of a gender-based gap between learners. Among the factors contributing largely to gender inequality in education we can find gender stereotypes, (Alrabaa, 1985; Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2010); Evans, 2014; Ginevra and Nota, 2017; Song, 2017; Preece and Bllingham, 2020). Gender stereotypes can be observed in teachers' gender perceptions which in turn may affect and bias the learning environment. Matheis, Keller, Kronborg, Schmitt, Preckel (2020) declare that teachers' stereotyped gender perceptions structure and form learning. Therefore, the role of teachers' stereotyped gender perceptions is not an element to neglect if gender equality in education is targeted.

In Algeria, access to education is a right that children have. It is guaranteed by the Algerian constitution in articles 10, 11, 13, 14 and 53 in La Loi n°08-04 du 23 Janvier 2008. Education is a fundamental right, obligatory, and free for all children regardless of their gender which means that Algeria promotes gender equality in education. Gender equality in Education as stated in UNESCO's 2030 Framework for Action is related to the idea that quality education and the same lifelong learning opportunities are distributed equally regardless of gender. Since gender equality is related to equitable learning chances and choices for both girls and boys, it is important to think about the fields of competencies and how space is divided on a gender basis to verify how equitable they are.

So far, the Algerian educational system lacks concrete studies that investigate gender equality in education; therefore its attainment cannot be verified. The problem raised throughout this study is related to the stereotyping of secondary school teachers' perceptions which is of high importance regarding the role they have in attaining gender equality in education which is in return fundamental in the Algerian educational system. It addresses three questions that are: how Algerian secondary school teachers perceive gender, what fields of competence secondary school teachers associate with gender, and how secondary school teachers divide space on a gender basis. The objective of this research is to provide insights into secondary school teachers' gender stereotypes in terms of the fields of competence and space division.

1. Gender Stereotypes :

It is common in the literature that gender stereotypes are complex prejudicial socially shared set of beliefs about personal characteristics and behavioural expectations on a gender basis, (Kollmayer, Schober, Spiel, 2016). Myers (2008) allocates their complexity to the fact that they tend to become generalised and simplified that individuals apply them unconsciously. The report published by PISA (2015), related to gender equality in education concerns 57 countries all over the world among which we can find Algeria, aims at testing the science literacy and proficiency of 15 years old children. The results decrypts that girls are better than boys in reading and boys are more competent than girls in doing mathematics. Such differences in performance and competence can be explained if we consider the work of Meece, Glienke, and Burg(2006) who discussed the impact of gender perceptions in mapping/executing achievement motivation. They find that gender alters learners' competencies as they are exposed to different learning in terms of motivation, fields of competencies, and professional career orientations. Therefore, statistical differences in competence/performance between girls and boys can only

serve as indicators but not infer the superiority/inferiority of girls/boys in any domain since it is conditioned by the learning environment that is gender biased.

2. Gender Equality in Education in Algeria:

The study conducted by Yassine (2016) investigated women's perceptions of what symbolic violence is at university show that the participants not only are aware that they are victims of this violence but also that they are capable enough to speak out about their malaise. In addition, Ziad and Ouahmiche (2019) analysed gender and how it is portrayed in two Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks and found those gender disparities exist even if they are subtle. The results show that men are subtly more visible, active and privileged than women. Next to this, they raised attention towards teachers' perceptions about gender equality that seems to disinterest them as they consider it as secondary to other issues. The results obtained by Abdelhay and Benhaddouche (2015) when they analysed gender representations in Algerian middle school EFL textbooks go hand in hand with the results of Ziad and Ouahmich (2019). They detect subtle gender bias in the representation of women and men in middle school textbooks when they dressed the picture of the occupational dimension of women that tend to be inferior, less diversified and required good looking physical appearance than the ones of men. The studies introduced above tackle the issue of gender equality in education from different perspectives but they can meet to corroborate the existence of gender inequality in education.

II. Methods and Materials:

1. Methodology:

This research adopts the Grounded Theory (GT) methodology that Cresswell (2012) defines as: "*a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic*" (p, 423). This study analyses Algerian secondary school teachers' gender perceptions which are purely qualitative and attempts to scrutinise gender stereotypes within their gender perceptions. Adopting the GT methodology goes hand in hand with the qualitative nature of the topic addressed in this research which is gender stereotypes. In this research, not only the theory developed is grounded, but also the whole methodology adopted from the participants to instruments, including the procedures as Morse (2009) declares "*Grounded theory is a way of thinking about data - processes of conceptualisation - of theorising from data*" (p, 18). To reach the objectives of the study, GT would better capture the core inter-connexions between the declarations of the participants and gender stereotypes.

2. Sample :

The sample of this study consists of 22 female and male secondary school teachers teaching different subjects in the locality of Ouargla. The subjects they teach are: Arabic, English, French, History and Geography, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Islamic Education, Physiques, and Sports. Ouargla is an area wherein different Algerian cultures co-exist; it is situated in the south of Algeria. The secondary school teaching staff is not different from this multicultural context as they come from different Algerian regions. The participants were selected theoretically and the size of the sample is determined by theoretical saturation as the sample was extended until no new data was gathered as stated by (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis, 2019).

3. Research Tools :

Interviews of about 10 minutes are conducted with the participants. The choice of

interviews is meant to gather in-depth data related to gender perceptions as Brenner (2006) states, interviews allow “*understand informants on their terms and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes*” (p, 357). The participants were interviewed in the sense that they were invited to share about three main axes that are as follows: how they perceived gender, perceived fields of competencies, and how they divided space on gender basis.

4. Constructivist Grounded Theory:

To construct the theory, Constructivist GT was chosen regarding the advantages it offered. Charmaz and Belgrave (2018) explain: “*Researchers give data form through definition and categorisation. What we treat as the content of data is shaped by the form with which we view them*” (p, 7). That is, the data gathered is analysed on the basis that interplaying dynamics exist within the data and with the researcher that was scrutinised back forward to reflect upon them and make explicit participants' meaning. The theory was constructed by the categories that were constructed from the data. The categories determined to consist of secondary school teachers' stereotyped gender perceptions that were based upon their saturation. Unless the category remains to reappear without change, it remained under continuous evaluation.

III. Results and discussion:

1. Gender perceptions :

Participants perceived gender under three levels: the first level deals with the individual as gender is perceived to be a psychological concept. The second level is related to societal norms and standards that make of gender what it is in society. The third level is related to the interactions of individuals and how they construct gender within and throughout their interactions.

First, gender is perceived by participants to be an important concept when they recognised its existence in individual's mind as crucial and deterministic of who she/he is. Girls are born to become women and boys are born to become men. Moreover, gender is perceived as exclusive and binary as women and men are perceived to be different from each other. Biological attributes shape what they integrate and learn to become either women or men. They perceived differences between women and men in terms of women versus men: the way of thinking, attitudes, and personality traits. The binary perceived gender was also exclusive since what they attributed to women was different from what they attributed to men.

Second, participants emphasised the deterministic role of society in shaping gender. Individuals are perceived to acquire gender through social experiences and following social norms and standards. They asserted that individuals' experiences are meant to learn to correspond to societal gender norms and standards. Gender norms and standards are perceived to be socially bound and grounded as they heavily depend upon societies' fundamentals. What our participants perceived to be their society's fundamentals were: religion that is Islam, Algerian culture, traditions, and moral values.

Third, individuals' interactions are perceived to be gender-based. Gender is perceived as important when individuals interact and exchange in society because they mark and others recognise it. Individuals are perceived to acquire gender according to their society's norms and standards through experiences as they interact with others and do gender. Hence, individuals are perceived to learn to become women and men as defined by their society and they experience their femininity and masculinity as they are expected to do.

2. Doing Gender in Secondary Schools:

Participants' declarations emphasised the role of schools in learners' gender construction. Next to family, schools are perceived to reinforce learners' gender acquisition as they experience gender and its corresponding norms and standards. Secondary schools are being

perceived to be the last step marking learners' shift from the acquisition of gender to the doing of gender when being, thinking, and behaving like women or men. Out of 22 participants, 16 declared that learners were taught teachers' gender norms and standards regardless of learners' gender perceptions diversity. The other 4 participants highlighted the idea that what is taught in the classroom is regulated by officials. The rest of the participants (2) perceived diversity in gender perceptions in classrooms as not being an issue as the classroom is a gender-free learning environment.

3. Boys Are Good at Mathematics versus Girls Are Good at Languages:

Participants' answers raised the gender stereotype related to fields of competencies distinguishing mathematics and languages. The majority of them, 18 out of 22, perceived boys to be competent in doing mathematics because they are boys. Out of the 18 participants, 15 attributed this to human beings' brain composition, structure, and functioning. Based upon observations in classrooms, they declared that it was difficult not to agree that boys are good at maths since mathematics classes and technical mathematic classes are full of boys.

All of the participants perceived languages to be rather a feminine area. The claims of 12 participants are oriented towards the association of the subject of languages with girls and women in general by referring to what they called the talkative nature of women that was perceived as innate and biological. Participants identified what they perceived as being the length of women's discourses as an indicator of an innate biological predisposition to languages. 10 participants explained the phenomenon by referring to the idea that girls speak before boys and their language is clearer than the one of the same age boy's language. Saying that girls are born to speak more than boys excludes all the other developmental stages, socialisation exposures and experiences.

More importantly, 13 of the participants explained how crucial is the learning of languages is for girls regarding their mental inferiority. 8 of them had gone on to declare that girls are mentally inferior to boys in many aspects; therefore, to compensate for this; they developed this competence for languages. They highlighted the position of languages as being among the subjects that needed less mental faculties than other challenging subjects. This idea deepens the stereotype as it brings it to more important implications related to the superiority and inferiority of individuals' competencies on a gender basis.

The social dimension was introduced by 15 participants in terms of appropriateness and correspondence. Since women could not do all the jobs that men could, it is important for girls to invest in appropriate domains to answer the requests of society. They explained referring to jobs appropriate for women: teacher, hairdresser, and kindergarten educator because they needed less effort than other domains regarding the other responsibilities that women have to assume first before thinking about a job. Languages are perceived to be more of everyday life requirements than academic careers. When teachers have a pre-established idea about learner's gender predisposition for a given field of competence may affect their classroom practices and alter the gender-free learning environment.

4. Outdoor Boy's Space and Indoor girl's Space:

Another stereotype arose in the participants' declarations; it is related to the notion of space division that was distributed on a gender basis. All the participants associated spaces with gender as they identified the outdoor space as being mainly masculine and the indoor space as being mainly feminine. 15 of the participants elaborated on this idea by legitimating it as men needed to be outside the house regarding the responsibilities they have to assume and they referred to gaining money and having a job. The other participants justified men's place referring to the fact that men can be outside the house at any time which is not the case for

women. They brought the appropriateness dimension to space division and allocated the outside to men. They stated that men are socially meant to be outside the house as they traced back this space distribution to their traditions.

Relating space division to the classroom, participants declared that it was mainly done subtly and could take different forms. Among the examples that were used, we can find: encouraging boys to get involved in activities outside the house (10 participants), emphasise the role that men are supposed to have and their appropriate places (22 participants), and teaching them the importance of being responsible to become responsible of the family (18 participants). The perceived place attributed to men did not seem to remain at the level of teachers' perception as they attempt to transmit it to their learners. Stereotyped space division can lead to dangerous consequences as boys can take it for granted that the outdoor space is theirs and may develop reticence towards sharing it with girls. Also, boys may believe that it is illegitimate to want to be inside the house as they were raised to think the opposite.

By identifying the outdoor space as one for men, participants also identified the indoor space as one for women. Not only they delimited and distributed spaces on a gender basis but also rationalised this distribution. 17 participants declared that the place of women is inside the house as has always been the case. They related traditional beliefs to space distribution by exemplifying using their own women figures including their mothers and grandmothers. What designated the place of women were traditions that were inherited from their elders. Transmission of traditions is not harmful in itself; yet, transmitting it without taking into account the surrounding factors can make it a prejudicial practice.

The second explanation shared by 19 participants is related to the roles that women are requested to have. They said that women have certain roles that they have to accomplish and these roles are done inside the house. They used the examples of raising children (15 participants), housekeeping (19 participants), and taking good care of the family (12 participants). Many participants insisted that this notion of women being inside the house is relative. That is, the main place of women was declared to be the house, yet they could also be outside the house. 14 participants conditioned the place of women outside the house on their tutor's opinion. There is a perceived necessity for a woman to ask for the permission of the man who is said to be responsible for her before occupying the outdoor space and he can be in favour or against the idea.

As far as their roles as teachers in transmitting this space distribution, all the participants said that there was no need to emphasise that in the classroom as girls will be confronted with it at a certain point in their lives. 14 of them declared that girls would become women and would give birth to children that they will have to raise and educate. This process of raising and educating is better done inside the house. The other 8 participants stated that girls are raised in a way that they always have a masculine tutorship figure in their lives. The role of this masculine tutor is to guide girls toward the appropriate choices. Therefore, they understand that the best choices are the ones agreed upon by the tutor.

Differences are apparent when it comes to teachers approaching space distribution in the classroom with girls and boys. Girls being perceived to be obedient made their education to become women easier than the one of boys to become men. Boys are perceived to show more rebellion than girls do. Therefore, we can say that not only the place distribution is stereotyped but also how it is transmitted to learners and the way they perceive their learners on a gender basis.

Furthermore, the necessity to delimitate space is perceived to be of high importance as it organised society. Perceiving gender stereotyped space distribution as an important societal organisational element implies the idea that the stereotype won't disappear soon. Since the participants perceived the stereotypes as positive as it organises society and prevents chaos, they won't abort it to avoid chaos. More importantly, if learners are not educated in the sense of critically approaching society as promoted in the Algerian educational system, they won't be able to discern gender inequalities and therefore fight and try to eradicate them.

5. Discussion:

What motivated this study is the idea that gender stereotypes are complex social constructions, unless deeply deconstructed; they are maintained and reinforced in educational settings. The literature shows that schools are powerful agents of socialisation wherein stereotyped gender perceptions exist and enlarge gender disparities. Because gender stereotypes are embedded in individuals' perceptions and therefore unconsciously prevailing; Awareness about their existence is the first step to recognise them and try understanding their mechanisms to eradicate them effectively in educational settings.

The participants of this study associated gender with girls/boys and women/men. By doing so, we can understand that there is no difference between gender and sex. The first being a social construct and the second being biological. Oakley(1972) made clear the distinctions that exist between gender and sex. Participants identified gender relating it to important social norms and structures that individuals internalise according to their gender. They perceived gender and sex as being equal when they formulated their gender perceptions in terms of societal norms and structures that individuals internalise in accordance to how they are born either as baby girls or baby boys. It is, therefore, the biology of individuals that decides which social norms and structures to follow to be women or men.

How secondary school teachers perceive gender is of high importance as it provides insights about how these teachers may affect their learners. In this study, secondary school teachers perceive gender as being a cultural dimension that individuals acquire. Its acquisition is believed to be in terms of societal norms and standards internalisation. The role of individuals is to internalize these norms and standards to think, behave, and be under society's expectations. Consequently, gender can be said to be a crucial identity-shaping parameter, arranges and patterns individuals' interactions, as well as a structure upon which power and resources are distributed, (Wharton, 2012).

If we relate the above two perceptions of gender as being biological and deterministic in identity, interactions and social norms, we can say that for the participants it is the biological attributes with which individuals are born that determine who they can be, what they can do, and how they can think either as women or men. Individuals become slaves of their biological non-chosen attributes and the social norms and structures that they have to correspond to. West and Zimmerman (1991) used the term '*doing gender*' to refer to how individuals make gender visible through their interactions that are gender shaped. The going of the gender of the participants is through interactions that women and men do as they exert their femininity and masculinity in a way that corresponds to social norms and standards.

Participants perceive individuals' roles as one of internalising social norms and standards to correspond to what is expected from them as women and men, and what is expected from them is biologically determined at their birth. These gender perceptions refer to what Wharton(2012) names as '*gender socialisation*' which is the process by which biological sex is

transformed to become women's and men's personality characteristics, language, and behaviour. That is, the gender perceptions of the participants entail that individuals become women and men through social experiences that start at their birth. The process of socialisation to internalise social norms and standards is rather linear and exclusive. It is linear as it starts with biological attributes of birth that are developed through socialisation to make of individuals women and men as a final step in the process. When individuals become women and men they do gender as they think, behave, and be what their society expects from them as women or men.

Schools are social institutions wherein learners learn, interact and exchange with others. By projecting the above gender perceptions to secondary schools, we reach the idea that learners are perceived as passive recipients that internalise social norms and standards to make of them women and men. Secondary schools are the last step before the entrance of learners into the adult sphere. It is the last step in their linear acquisition of gender norms and standards as they become women and men. In other words, they finish their process of gender socialisation and start doing gender as they are expected to do. The passive role of learners in the gender socialisation process can result in their internalisation of gender stereotypes as being part of social norms and standards. Halim and Ruble (2010) attract attention to the danger of gender stereotypes perpetuation by individuals during their gender socialisation process.

The idea that gender is a matter of societal norms and standards is interesting when thinking about the multicultural context of Ouargla. Many cultures and sub-cultures co-exist together as we can find the Arabo-Islamic culture and Berber culture, without forgetting the subcultures that branched from these two cultures and others resulting from their mixture. It is worth being mentioned that there is another cultural axe to add to the equation which is foreign cultures. These foreign cultures can be said to be occidental as they came with French colonialism and other occidental cultures that are accessible through media and the internet within the globalisation sphere.

Multi-cultural context can be observed in the Ouargli society as we find individuals from different Algerian cultures, and the influence of two foreign languages that are French and English taught in secondary school. These cultures can be divided into two axes that are traditional versus modern cultures. These two axes result in what Sadiqi(2008) names a cultural paradox between '*traditionality*' and '*modernity*' in Maghreb countries. Perceiving gender as being cultural implies that it is multicultural in Ouarglaas it is an Algerian Wilaya that is part of Maghreb. Multiculturality and paradoxes axes in society refer to gender paradoxical perceptions of individuals. Paradoxes are said to be a source of potential social conflicts that can be reflected in teachers' gender perceptions and their learners' gender perceptions. The conflicts that may result from paradoxical gender perceptions can be misleading and interfere negatively with learners' gender perceptions. Some participants declaredthat they noticed differences in learners' gender perceptions but choose to implement theirs. Besides being paradoxical, gender perceptions can paradoxically be stereotyped and doubly challenging their eradication.

The way our participants perceive gender is rather binary and exclusive. Gender is binary as we can distinguish two categories that are women and men. It is exclusive since what they perceive to be women cannot be men and what is perceived to be men cannot be women. This polar distribution of gender can be understood if we think about the process of gender socialisation that starts at birth as a baby girl or baby boy and continues through socialisation that is also binary as girls learn to be women and boys learn to be men through their internalisation of gender-specific social norms and standards. Certain societies can be characterised by their binary exclusive gender norms and structures that Bem (1993) refers to as

the notion of '*opposite sex*'. This idea of the opposite sex implies the mutual exclusion of norms and standards of what women and men can think, do, and be.

When considering participants' gender stereotypes we find the notion of exclusion is highly promoted. It is found in the established gender stereotype that states that boys are good at mathematics whereas girls are good at languages. There is a gender-based distribution of fields of competence that may have considerable consequences on learners. Participants' gender stereotypes being exclusive of the other gender category may lead them to not recognise, demotivate, and neglect developing competencies in the other gender. The work of Meece, Glienke, and Burg (2006) elaborated on the role of certain factors in the achievement of learners. Their results highlight the role of teachers' stereotyped perceptions and classroom context in learners' achievement, motivation, and orientations. Therefore, our participants' stereotyped gender perceptions about their learners' fields of competencies can alter learners' achievement as well as their future professional orientations as these latest depend heavily on their achievements.

In the same line of thought about the role of the learning environment, we can refer to the work of Scheder, Raufelder and Wulff(2015) as they discuss the interplay and effect that exist between gender and the learning environment. Their results show the correlation that exists between gender and the teacher-directed learning environment. That is, the more the teacher directed the classroom the more the gender factor appears to be important in the motivation of learners and their achievement. In our case, in addition to the existence of gender stereotypes in participants' perceptions, there is the passive role that learners are believed to have in their acquisition of gender norms and structures. If both ideas are combined, we can think about the biased learning environment resulting from teachers' stereotyped gender perceptions. This biased learning environment promotes stereotyped learners' choices and motivations that affect their learning achievement.

The second participant's gender stereotype is related to space division. They identified the indoor space as women's space versus the outdoor space as being male's space. They distinguished between two different spaces on gender basis as they allocated the space of the home to women and the outdoor space to men. This distribution tells a lot about the roles that women and men are to perform. The indoor space implies housekeeping, cooking, children rising and all that is said to be women's roles to be accomplished inside the house. The outdoor space is related to a professional careers and many others perceived to be men's roles. There is a clear cut between women's and men's spheres not only for space but also what is accompanied with. There is a need to consider the appropriateness dimension discussed by the participants as they associated space with what is convenient in society and what is not convenient as it is commonly found in many cases like in Nigeria. The PISA (2015) reports wherein the patriarchal society advantages boys' education over girls' education as boys are perceived to be the family root and skeleton, placing the quality of education that girls access as inferior to one of the boys.

By reporting this at the level of the classroom, participants stated that they transmitted what they believed is the legitimate place of men to their learners through different manners. Here again, we come back to the effect of the learning environment. Besides, their revelations about women's place are to add another dimension which is power. The traditional patriarchal power of women's tutors to decide about the place that a woman can occupy is prejudicial for girls as they don't learn to take decisions for themselves. Their choices are conditioned by their tutor's choice not because they are about to make the wrong choice but because they are girls or women; therefore, culturally inept to take decisions of this importance. This stereotype is doubly dangerous as it contributes to girls' self-perceptions of being inapt to take a decision and

to boys' perception of superiority over girls' choices.

In addition, girls are believed to be more obedient than boys. This gender stereotype is important in the classroom as it can bias the learning environment. The findings of Schweder, Raufelder, and Wulff(2015) corroborate the negative effect of the perceived non-obedience of boys on their motivation and achievement. That is, if boys are perceived to refuse to obey, teachers' may emphasise less on what can be important to learn as a discipline in the classroom. In the sense that, having in mind the idea that boys won't obey rules, teachers can abort insisting and therefore promoting boys' indiscipline in the classroom. The stereotype can also have the reverse effect as it can bias teachers' reactions towards girls' refusal to obey. Girls are seen as obedient, they are expected to obey; when they don't, it can be seen as an important transgression of norms and standards

What contributes to the generalisation of gender stereotypes is the possibility to perceive them in everyday life. That is, there are always possibilities to confirm certain stereotypes as they are omnipresent in all contexts. In this study, the results show that participants' stereotypes confirm the findings of PISA (2015) which statistically discussed the tendency for girls to be good in reading and boys to be good in mathematics. At first look, one cannot deny that if certain results keep reappearing in a different context, there should be a reason. The easiest first thought that we can derive is the potential natural predisposition of girls to learn languages and boys for mathematics. However, if we deepen our analysis we can think about the interplay that exists between different societal, individual, and interactional factors that maintain and reinforce these gender stereotypes.

In the same line of thought, Barthes (1973) explained how meaning-making is done socially throughout what he referred to as the normalisation process that starts with denotation, followed by connotation, and ends to become a myth. Gender stereotypes can be considered myths. Hawkes (1977) described Barthes's myth as a complex system of beliefs constructed in society but also maintained and reinforced through social practices that serve as rationales for its existence. The results showed that participants perceived gender as a set of social norms and standards that individuals perpetuate to correspond and be identified as women or men. While denotation corresponds to how gender is perceived at the surface level, connotation refers to how gender is perceived at a deep level. Gender stereotypes are prejudicial perceptions about individuals on a gender basis that can become myths and therefore be perpetuated and maintained. The danger does not only lay in perpetuation, but also in the rationalisation and continuous identification of these gender stereotypes as norms and standards. In that way, due to what Barthes (1973) calls the normalisation process, gender stereotypes may become social norms and standards.

Participants perceive gender as a set of societal norms and standards inherit from elders; within this packaged heritage of gender norms and standards, there are gender stereotypes transmitted from generation to generation. This idea arose when some participants highlighted the idea of tradition perpetuation and the necessity to preserve them. This comes to intersect the complex nature of gender stereotypes and their interconnectedness with other factors that make the mission of gender stereotype eradication even more difficult. The difficulty can reside in the choice to preserve traditions that may be gender stereotyped or opt for change that can be more equal.

The choice is not easy to make for individuals, but even more difficult for secondary school teachers as they are educators that perceive themselves as raising generations that

constitute the future of our nation. The choice of traditional preservation or modernity forwarding is not easy to take regarding the consequences it implies. The Algerian educational system is governed by regulations that are determined by the Ministry of Education. Hence, secondary school teachers cannot make this choice by themselves as they are not the ones supposed to as well as that they are not allocated this right since regulations are stated by the Ministry of Education, (education.gov.dz). The educational system in Algeria calls for gender equality as a fundamental element; hence there is an urgent need to think about a plan to investigate gender equality in education and determine the extent to which it is attained. After deepening investigations of gender equality in educational settings, teachers need to be trained to promote gender equality in the classroom despite their stereotyped gender perceptions.

Gender equality in education is an area of study that attracted the attention of scholars. The achievements realised in many areas of the world are mainly due to these findings that are refined with time, grounded to contexts, and dynamic in nature. It is important to say that the areas of the world where gender equality in education is more attained than other areas of the world did not come to these results easily and rapidly. However, a starting point is necessary to attain gender equality in education. It is worth being mentioned that no studies can be found in Algeria that tackle gender equality in education qualitatively. Besides some statistics, there are no available resources to address gender equality in education in Algeria. It is high time we thought about investigating this area regarding the tremendous impact it has.

Throughout this research, our objective is not to spotlight on particular participants or institutions. Rather, it is to shed light upon the existence of stereotypes in teachers' gender perceptions. There are not only the stereotypes determined here, but many other stereotypes could be found. The purpose is not to determine all teachers' gender stereotypes but to unveil some of them to consolidate the idea of their existence in an attempt to attract authorities' attention to this phenomenon. Gender stereotypes are not specific to the Algerian educational system; they existed and remain to exist across the world despite the huge efforts made to try to get rid of them. Their complex structures, their subtle manifestations, their mutations, and their dynamics make it that it is among the big humanistic challenges to attaining gender equality in education.

IV. Conclusion:

Secondary school teachers seem to perceive gender as a set of norms and standards that individuals acquire to think, behave, and be the expected women or men in their society. They highlighted the crucial role of society exposing the interplay between society and gender that places individuals as 'marionettes' that passively perform gender as they are dictated to. The issue of this gender perception is one of gender stereotypes maintenance, reinforcement, and normalisation. Secondary school teachers perceiving themselves as transmitters of social norms and standards are at the same time transmitters of gender stereotypes as these latest seem to exist in their perceptions.

Gender stereotypes are dangerous in educational settings as they alter the achievement of gender equality. The gender stereotypes unveiled in this research workplace men as dominating and holding valuable statuses in society as they are more competent than women in what society perceives as complex domains. As far as women are concerned, they are placed in an inferior position as they hold subordinate and more interpersonal competencies. Gender-based fields of competence and space division can alter sectors like economy and politics as their consequences can be observed in unequal job opportunities and career choices among females and males.

Further research is necessary to investigate the real impact of gender inequality in education in other domains to reinforce the willingness to eradicate gender inequality in education.

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