Gender Stereotype

***Mains syllabus**: GS I- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India | Role of Women and Women's Organization | Population and Associated Issues*

Why in news?

A recent research study at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna revealed that gender stereotypes continue to exert a significant influence on the career decisions of women in higher education institutions in Bihar and Jharkhand.

What is gender stereotype?

- **Definition** - According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a gender stereotype is a ***generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics***, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men.
- It refers to the practice of *ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles* by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men.

Aspect	Stereotype	
	Boy	**Girl**
Early childhood	Play with Trucks	Play with dolls
Color Association	Pink	Black, blue, green
Familial role	Bread winner of the family	Doing household chores
Behaviour	Expected to act out	To be well behaved
Sports	Boys should engage	Girls may not do well
Dressing	Their own choice	Traditional and decent
Leadership	Natural leaders	Lack leadership qualities
Jobs	More dedicated and hard working	Less dedicated and less devoted to jobs
Education	Their own choice of any subjects	Not interested in STEM subjects
Choice of children	They may or may not consider for children	Women should have children soon after marriage
Economic independency	Men should have	Women cannot have as they will not respect their husband
Emotions	Men are emotionally strong	Women are emotionally weak

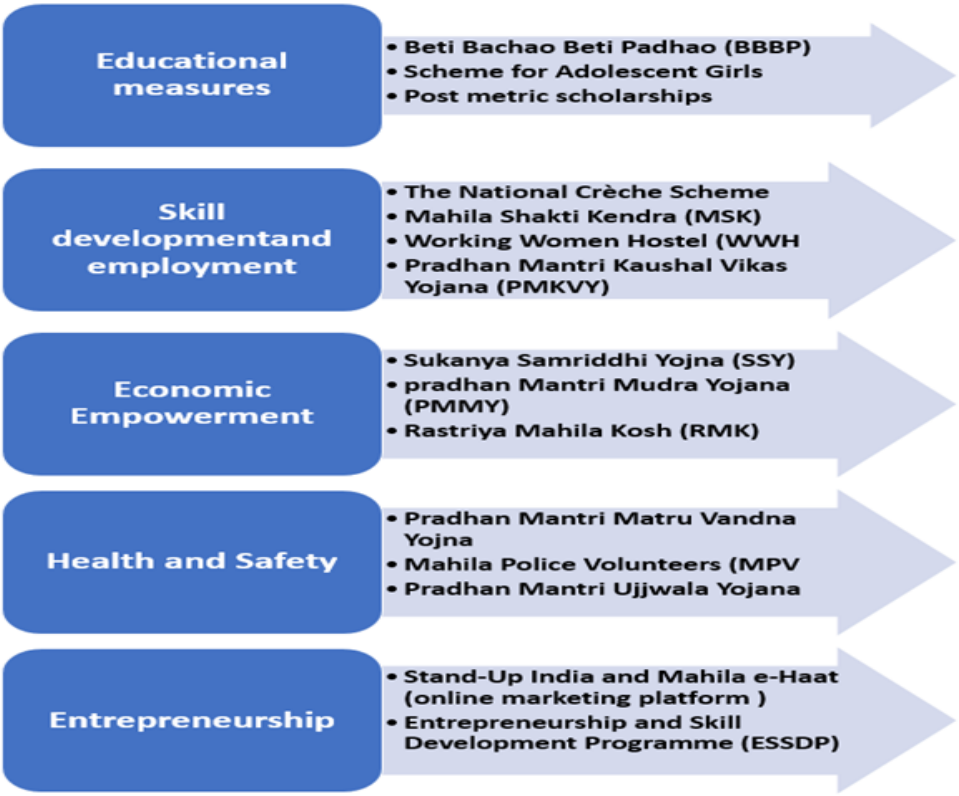
What are the Causes for gender stereotypes?

- **Family Structures -** The traditional family model, has contributed to gender role expectations.
  - **Men** - Considered as the leader of the family.
  - **Women** - Responsible for domestic chores and caregiving.
- **Fear of being judged** - People often adhere to gender norms out of fear of being judged, ostracized, or discriminated against.
- **Patriarchal mindset** - Patriarchal societies often *value masculine attributes over feminine ones*, imbibing the notion that topmost jobs are suitable only for men.
- **Societal customs** - Many societies have ingrained traditional norms that have historical roots and have been reinforced over time, making them difficult to challenge.
- **Cultural beliefs** - Many religious and cultural practices promote specific gender roles and expectations.
- **Economic factors -** If one gender is systematically disadvantaged in terms of education, employment opportunities, and income, it can reinforce stereotypes about their capabilities and roles.
- **Influence of media** - The media, including television, movies, and advertisements, often *portrays biased and skewed depictions of gender roles.*

What are the Issues of gender stereotyping?

- **Psychological Impact** – It negatively *impacts the mental health* of both men and women.
- This can manifest in the form of anxiety and depression, and at times can lead to such illnesses as anorexia and bulimia.
- **Limit's ability** – It is harmful when it limits women's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives.
- **Self-esteem issues** - It can also cause someone to question their self-worth, as being different from societal expectations can make individuals feel that they are not as capable as others.
- **Erosion of trust** – It often results in *trust deficit in the society* which is already dwindling.
- **Exclusion issues** - Stereotyping women has a serious consequence of *leaving behind of women* in many spheres like education, employment etc.

What are the steps taken by India?



- **Supreme Court handbook** - ***The Handbook on Gender Stereotypes*** is released by the Supreme Court of India.
- It is released with the intention of *assisting judges and legal practitioners* in recognizing, understanding, and combating gender stereotypes present in legal language and judgments.

Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes

Stereotype promoting language (INCORRECT)	Alternative language (PREFERRED)
Adulteress	Woman who has engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage
Affair	Relationship outside of marriage
Bastard	Non-marital child or, a child whose parents were not married
Biological sex / biological male / biological female	Sex assigned at birth
Born a girl / boy	Assigned female / male at birth
Career woman	Woman
Carnal intercourse	Sexual intercourse
Chaste woman	Woman
Child prostitute	Child who has been trafficked
Concubine / keep	Woman with whom a man has had romantic or sexual relations outside of marriage
Dutiful wife / Faithful wife / Good wife / Obedient wife	Wife
Easy virtue (e.g., a woman of easy virtue)	Woman
Effeminate (when used pejorative-ly)	Accurately describe the characteristic using a gender neutral term (e.g., confident or responsible)
Eve teasing	Street sexual harassment

What lies ahead?

- Breaking the stereotypes against women is important to promote inclusion and to build a more egalitarian society.

- Recognising and respecting the role and importance of women should be done in current fast-growing modern world.
- **References**

1. The Hindu| Thriving Stereotypes
2. OCHCR| Gender Stereotype

