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Unveiling the Silent Struggle: Men Facing Societal Pressure in India

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Abstract

This article examines the significant societal pressure on men, often overshadowed by discussions on women's gender norms. It explores how traditional masculinity standards impact men's behaviours, affecting their mental health, emotions, career choices, and relationships. Additionally, it addresses how societal pressure intersects with factors like race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, presenting unique challenges for different groups of men. By analysing research and case studies, it highlights the pervasive influence of these pressures and advocates for challenging and redefining gender norms to create a more inclusive and supportive society for men to express themselves authentically.

Keywords: Patriarchal society, peer pressure, masculinity

Introduction

In India, men face significant pressure within the framework of our patriarchal society, where their role holds privilege in the gendered power dynamics. This pressure begins early in life, as boys are expected to eventually become primary breadwinners, providing financial support for their families. This expectation is ingrained from childhood, evident in practices such as sending sons to private schools while daughters attend municipal schools or handle household chores. Even as adults, men are expected to financially support their elderly parents and ensure their children receive a quality education, often resorting to private institutions due to governmental limitations. Despite wives contributing to household income, men are still expected to earn more to uphold societal perceptions of their capability. This pressure to excel and provide stems from the overarching societal message that success is imperative in a densely populated country with scarce resources. The drive for upward mobility is strongly linked to this narrative, fuelled by aspirations for economic growth and a desire to surpass previous generations' achievements. Many individuals strive to ascend the social ladder, seeking economic prosperity and a secure future. (Erik, 2018) ^[2]

Peer pressure influences individuals to conform to societal norms, affecting behaviours, values, and actions. While commonly observed in areas like music preferences, it extends to broader aspects like religion and politics. Women often face pressure to meet ideal standards of motherhood and physical appearance, while societal expectations regarding masculinity, family roles, and career success burden men. Research indicates men experience pressure to conform to societal norms of toughness and physical appearance, leading

to stress and strained relationships. Common pressures on men include conforming to stereotypes, excelling as fathers and providers, achieving career success, and maintaining physical attractiveness, resulting in heightened stress levels. Efforts to meet societal ideals promote traits like muscularity and risk-taking behaviour, exacerbating stress. (Bhattacharyya, 2020) ^[1]

Aims and Objectives

- Unlike women, men also face a societal pressure.
- Traditional gender roles and expectations placed on men.
- The expectations placed on men in terms of career success, financial stability, and provider roles.

Reviews of Literature

"The Descent of Man" by Grayson Perry is a thought-provoking exploration of modern masculinity. Perry, an artist, and cultural commentator, delves into the complexities of what it means to be a man in today's world, examining issues such as power, privilege, and vulnerability. He critiques traditional notions of masculinity and argues for a more inclusive and emotionally intelligent model of manhood. Through personal anecdotes, cultural analysis, and insights from psychology and sociology, Perry offers a compelling critique of gender norms and encourages readers to rethink their assumptions about masculinity.

"Manhood in America: A Cultural History" by Michael S. Kimmel explores the concept of manhood throughout American history. Kimmel delves into the shifting ideals and expectations surrounding masculinity, examining how they have been influenced by factors such as religion, economics,

politics, and popular culture. He discusses how notions of manhood have evolved over time, from the rugged individualism of the frontier era to the corporate masculinity of the post-industrial age. Kimmel also analyses the impact of feminism and other social movements on the construction of masculinity, as well as the ways in which men have both perpetuated and resisted traditional gender roles. Overall, the book provides a comprehensive exploration of the complexities of manhood in American society.

"The Mask of Masculinity" by Lewis Howes delves into the societal pressures and expectations placed on men to conform to certain stereotypes of masculinity. Howes explores various masks that men wear, such as the stoic mask, the aggressive mask, and the joker mask, among others, and how these masks can hinder authentic connection and emotional well-being. He argues that by embracing vulnerability and authenticity, men can break free from these societal constraints, foster stronger relationships, and lead more fulfilling lives. Through personal anecdotes, research, and practical advice, Howes encourages readers to challenge traditional notions of masculinity and find greater fulfilment by embracing their true selves.

"Becoming Young Men in New India" by Shannon Philip delves into the experiences and challenges faced by young men in contemporary India as they navigate shifting social, cultural, and economic landscapes. Philip explores how notions of masculinity are evolving in the context of globalization, urbanization, and modernization. Through interviews and ethnographic research, the book examines how young Indian men negotiate traditional expectations of manhood with the pressures and opportunities of a rapidly changing society. It sheds light on issues such as education, employment, family dynamics, and gender roles, providing insights into the complex process of identity formation among Indian youth. Overall, "Becoming Young Men in New India" offers a nuanced understanding of masculinity and youth culture in a dynamic and diverse country.

Impact of Society

In India, the weight of societal expectations rests heavily on men, emanating from various sources such as family, friends, and internalized ideals. These expectations dictate rigid norms of masculinity, prescribing behaviours and attitudes that can be confining and burdensome for men to navigate. From a tender age, boys are socialized into the constructs of manhood, observing, and emulating the role models present in their lives—fathers, uncles, and other male figures. However, the image of masculinity they internalize often revolves around notions of toughness, strength, and emotional stoicism. Boys learn to suppress their feelings and vulnerabilities, believing that exhibiting traits of sensitivity or emotional expression is a sign of weakness rather than authenticity.

As they mature into adulthood, men encounter escalating pressures to conform to societal expectations. The mandate to secure a stable job, achieve financial success, and shoulder familial responsibilities weighs heavily on their shoulders. Yet, the reality is that not every man can effortlessly fulfil these benchmarks, leading to feelings of inadequacy and failure. The narrative of male success becomes entwined with notions of control and self-reliance, discouraging men from seeking assistance or openly discussing their struggles. Consequently, many men find themselves grappling with internalized pressures and external expectations, grappling silently with the weight of societal demands.

Despite burgeoning discourse surrounding gender equality and the need for more inclusive notions of masculinity, dismantling entrenched beliefs and stereotypes remains an uphill battle. Men continue to grapple with the legacy of traditional gender roles, feeling compelled to conform to outdated standards even as societal norms evolve. Breaking free from the shackles of rigid masculinity requires a concerted effort to challenge deeply ingrained beliefs and foster environments that prioritize authenticity and emotional well-being.

Indeed, the discourse surrounding masculinity is gradually shifting, acknowledging that men are multifaceted beings with emotions, vulnerabilities, and complexities beyond societal constructs. It is imperative for society to recognize that a man's worth is not solely determined by his professional success or financial prowess but extends to his emotional depth and capacity for vulnerability. By promoting empathy, understanding, and acceptance, we can create spaces where men feel empowered to embrace their true selves without fear of judgment or rejection.

Ultimately, supporting men in their journey towards authenticity and self-discovery is not just an act of compassion but a societal imperative. By challenging antiquated notions of masculinity and championing a culture of inclusivity and respect, we can help men navigate the pressures they face and foster healthier, more fulfilling lives. As we strive towards a more equitable society, let us remember that true masculinity lies not in conformity to rigid norms but in the courage to embrace one's authenticity and vulnerability. (MindShift.2018) ^[5]

Conclusion

In the issue of men facing societal pressure is multifaceted and deeply ingrained in cultural norms and expectations. Throughout this exploration, it has become evident that men face significant challenges in navigating the rigid gender roles imposed upon them. From a young age, boys are socialized to conform to ideals of masculinity that prioritize strength, independence, and dominance. The pressure to fulfil these expectations extends into various aspects of men's lives, including their familial roles, educational pursuits, and professional endeavours. In the family sphere, men are often expected to be the primary breadwinners and providers, placing immense pressure on their financial success and stability. Moreover, societal norms dictate that men must suppress emotions and vulnerability, leading to mental health struggles and emotional repression.

In the educational and professional realms, men face additional pressures to excel academically and professionally, often at the expense of their mental well-being. The competitive nature of these environments perpetuates a culture of toxic masculinity, where men feel compelled to prioritize success and achievement above all else.

However, amidst these challenges, there are signs of progress and hope. As awareness grows surrounding the detrimental effects of rigid gender norms, more men are questioning traditional notions of masculinity and advocating for change. Initiatives promoting gender equality and emotional expression are gaining traction, encouraging men to embrace their vulnerabilities and challenge societal expectations. Furthermore, the support of allies and the broader community is essential in alleviating the burden of societal pressure on men. By fostering environments that value authenticity, empathy, and inclusivity, we can create spaces where men

feel empowered to embrace their true selves without fear of judgment or ridicule.

In conclusion, addressing the issue of societal pressure on men requires a collective effort from individuals, communities, and institutions. By challenging outdated stereotypes and promoting a culture of acceptance and support, we can create a more equitable society where men are free to express themselves fully and live authentically. It is only through collective action and solidarity that we can dismantle the harmful effects of societal pressure and create a world where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive.

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