Chapter 6

Findings and Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of the present study was to explore the lives of men in Kerala. The study focused on the perspectives, behavior traits and stereotypes among men. The main purpose of the study was to examine the role of institutions in the construction of masculinity and the focal area was on the institutions of family and occupation. The constructionist theory of gender is the theoretical framework up on which the study is sculpted. This chapter articulates the major findings of the study under seven important captions- Approach towards work and work satisfaction, Men in familial roles, Health consciousness and habits, Images of masculine qualities, Perspectives to gender equality, Stereotypes and Institutional impact on men and masculinity.

Approach Towards Work And Work Satisfaction

Samuel Smiles describe, the life of a man in this world is for the most part a life of work. In the case of ordinary men, work may be regarded as their normal condition. Every man worth calling a man should be willing and able to work (Danahay, 2016)

In a patriarchal system, the provider role is confined on male members of the society, which makes their profession important for them. It is evident from the analysis that majority of men are struggling to maintain their existing standard of living. It is also apparent that the intensity of financial tension is high among men, compared to other stress factors which they face. The motive that guides men, to get into a vocation, in turn determines their sustainability in job and also serves as a good financial back up. The degree
to with which, men enjoy their work is comparatively low in Kerala. From the study it can be concluded that half of the respondents find their work relaxing and delightful and the rest finds it distressful. Men are concerned and anxious about the appraisals in their professional accomplishments. When the motive behind the current careers of the selected men is considered, men choose income and job security as their primary motive. And it is noteworthy that passion to their work is opted only by a few men. This shows the need for a secured income is considered as more important by them than passion. They wish to stick on to their jobs for this income security and they never wish to quit their existing job. Economy and economic considerations are absolutely fundamental aspects of gender relations and the gendering of men and masculinities

**Men in Familial Roles**

One of the main concerns of the study was to examine the roles played by men in families. Men prefer to take part more in child caring activities than in domestic works. Though they not willing in sharing domestic works regularly with their partners, when men get involved they do enjoy sharing the domestic work. One of the major challenges they confront in their family life is the difficulty they face to maintain a work familial balance. Among the different roles played by a man in various walks of life, his role as a father is considered as most remarkable. Thomas Johansson(2011) explained that there is an immensely rapid growth of critical studies on fatherhood in contemporary society from 1990, And significant number of studies showing that fathers have become increasingly more present and nurturing. The study gave evidence to support the opinion given by Johansson and has depicted, how men look in to their role as a father. Men consider fatherhood as a positive indicator of their life that help to shape them into matured human beings. They treasure fatherhood as a priceless possession. As mentioned
earlier, they enjoy child caring activities and have a positive attitude towards fatherhood. They are concerned about their parents and are satisfied in fulfilling their responsibilities as sons. And they also try to maintain healthy relationships with their partners. Collectively it can be summarized that men in Kerala try to maintain healthy relationships with their families.

**Health Consciousness and Habits**

It is an enchanting fact, that men are becoming more conscious about their health conditions. Men are becoming increasingly conscious about their health and they try to avoid those conditions that breed unhealthy practices. Smoking habits are very less among men compared to alcohol consumption. Generally men are accustomed to taking risks in their lives, especially when it comes to the matter of health. In contrast to this, women are very much conscious about their health conditions. But this study throws light on the fact that men are becoming progressively conscious about their health and try to follow healthy habits. Hence it can be summarized that men in Kerala are becoming perceptibly conscious about their health and are breaking the biased stance that people have towards men, when it comes to the risk taking attitude of men with regard to health.

**Images of Masculine Qualities**

Men embrace courage and confidence as the most important qualities needed for virility. They consider their inherent inclination in protecting their families as another important quality. This inclination could be the reflection of the provider role which men enjoy in the society. Another conspicuous quality which they believe as important for men, is the respect they give for women. They also agree with the opinion that making money is part of their idea of being a successful man. Men are relentlessly satisfied in their state of being a man. They have been giving importance for maintaining their physical fitness. They are also interested in the changing fashion trends. Men
agree that the branded outfits boost their confidence level. But it is also noteworthy that while purchasing clothes and accessories they consider quality and price more significant than brand.

**Perspectives to Gender Equality**

The study reveals that men wish to have a more gender-equitable society. According to the famous Sociologist Raewyn Connell(2005) there are four reasons behind the development of this attitude among men. They are: relational interest, personal well-being, collective interest and principle. Men’s relationships with women like mother, sister, wife, friends can shape their attitude to women and gender equality. In the present society men get more chances to interact with women compared to the past, and this can bring about a change in their attitude towards women. Gender inequality is not the product of men as individuals, whereas, it has been instilled into the minds of people through the fact that, they have been born and brought up in a society where the gender inequality exist. Men don’t wish to degrade women or contribute more towards the existing gender inequality. Another reason behind this change is that men are now going through a less rigid stereotyping of masculinity and this gave them more freedom in life. They are enjoying the new pattern and thereby support the gender equality. The development of feminist ideas and awareness about women issues made some impact on men and it resulted in the development of gender egalitarian attitude among some men.

Men are prominent in the decision making process. There is a traditional notion that men are more rational in decision making. The social construction of masculinity is an integral part in developing the decision making behaviour of men. There is always a possibility of transition in the masculine behaviour. This transition can be seen in the decision making behaviour of men in contemporary families. Here the attitude of men
changed to an extent and many men give equal chance for their partners in the decision making processes in their families.

**Stereotypes**

One of the core area to which the study calls attention to is masculine stereotypes. The presence of masculine stereotypes and its variations among men were considered to be the focal area of the study. By using MBS the presence of the so called masculine stereotypes – success dedication, restrictive emotionality, inhibited affection, exaggerated self-reliance and control were analysed. From the study it is evident that the success dedication stereotype is highly present in men. Almost all men who were part of the study have a strong inclination towards the success dedication stereotype. Most of the previous studies explained that, men tend to lace up most of their feelings and emphasized that men generally inhibit the expression of emotions. Men hardly disclose their personal feelings, and tend to conceal the expressions of emotions. This can be understood as a strategy to boost conventional masculine identity (Jansz, 1995).

The study found out that the presence of restrictive emotionality stereotype could be seen only among half of the sample population. Same pattern has been followed in the case of inhibited affection stereotype. This could be stated more clearly as follows, i.e if we take the total population of the study into account, half of the men were not ready to express their emotions overtly, and the other half is not ready to conceal their emotions or they are not willing to stifle their affection towards their dear ones.

It is a notable factor that men’s emotional range and expressions that could be shown in public, have varied much more than formerly believes. It is a noteworthy feature that the exaggerated self reliance and control stereotype is not prevalent among men in Kerala. The number of men who favour the masculine stereotype of exaggerated self reliance and control is
comparatively low in Kerala. These findings support the ideas presented by R.W Connell(2000), that, masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and directions of social change. Each societal construct of masculinity varies over time and according to culture. Masculinity is primarily a cultural product; it exhibits a great deal of variation among and often within cultures, where its specific requirement and normative power may vary. It is clear from the study that there are variations in the masculine stereotypes within the same cultural setting

**Institutional Impact on Men and Masculinity**

The principal element, to which the study focuses, is the role of institutions in shaping up the masculinity. The core area of analysis is the influence of the institutions specifically, family and occupation- in the construction of masculine behavior. The analysis unearthed several relevant facts regarding the institutional impact on men and masculinity. Chopra(2003) The doing of support by men may have remained unaddressed, if not invisible. It is important to understand those males subjectivities are differentiated within the home by age, work, space and class. From the data it’s apparent that, the types of occupation of men have a greater say on aspects like the sharing of domestic work with their partners. It is noteworthy that, there is hardly any association between the type of family and the level of domestic work shared by men. The employment statuses of partners do not influence the level of domestic work sharing done by men. The statistical analysis reveals that the health consciousness among men in Kerala is not affected by their occupations, types of family and the employment statuses of their partners
The outlook of men towards the concept of fatherhood is distinct from the clutches of variables like their job, the types of family and the employment statuses of their partners.

Connell (1993) explaining masculinity as a personal practice cannot be isolated from its institutional context. Most human activity is institutionally bound. Three institutions – the state, the work place/labour market, and the family – are of particular importance in the contemporary organization of gender. The evaluation of the data makes it clear that, the stand points of men towards gender equality are dependent on their occupation and the employment statuses of their partners. Concurrently it is obvious that the type of family in which men belongs to, have no influence on their perceptions about gender equality. It can be summarized from the data that the kind of occupation which men are doing, is an effective determinant in constructing the masculine stereotypes of Success dedication, Restrictive emotionality, inhibited affection and exaggerated self reliance and control among men in Kerala. It can be concluded from the above explanations that masculinity is influenced by the institutional settings in which men are involved. The research reached into the fact that occupation in which a man involved is the most influencing factor which contributes to the construction of masculine perceptions, attributes and stereotypes. The occupational status of partner is also contributing to the moulding of men and masculinity to an extent. All the findings call attention to the fact that men are doing gender in their everyday activities and to some extend their gendered identity is constructed with the influence of institutions, the framework within which those interactions take place especially their occupation. Eventually this work substantiates the constructionist theory and the concept of doing gender.
Levant (2002) discussed about an important question, What form will new masculinity take?. According to Levant, certain elements are likely to be evident in the new masculinities. The new men will possess the combination of old and new traits. But they will no longer be strangers of emotions, and have the ability to express their emotions in words. They will be the fathers that they wanted for themselves. The findings of the study support the analysis of Levant with regard to emotions and fatherhood.

Suggestions

• Gender studies need to concentrate also on men and masculinity studies along with women studies.

• How gender shapes, constrains, or otherwise impedes the lives of men should be included in the vicious circle of gender studies. A better mode of analysis of men and masculinity studies is a necessity.

• Social transition and its impact on men and masculinity is not a detailed part in masculinity studies, but a thorough investigation in this field can explore a lot of information.

• The fading away of masculine stereotypes is a reflection of transition in men and masculinity. The studies based on these aspects will give entralling and exciting information.

• Men and masculinities must be taken as part of higher education and academic discussions.

• As per the findings the influence of occupation is high in the construction of masculine behavior. This suggests that the proper socialization in the work sectors can shape up the masculine behavior as well as the systematic and effective interference in the fields of work can reduce the deviant behaviours of men.
Conclusion

The study was a humble attempt to explore the lives of men in contemporary Kerala, and to give a new realm of knowledge in the field of gender studies. Men and masculinities were not discussed much in Sociological studies of gender. Gender studies pay more attention to women studies because of various reasons. So it is a little bit tough and at the same time enthusiastic experience for the researcher. The core area of the analysis in the study was the perspectives, behavioural traits, and stereotypes of men and the institutional impact of family and occupation in the construction of masculine identity. From the findings of the study, it is clear that men could be largely seen in a stage of transit and at the same time adhering to the past. The occupation was proved to be the most influential factor of men and masculinity. The study goes in accordance with the recent studies of masculinity and also enables to access the threshold of new areas of knowledge.

There are a lot of areas which needs the attention of social sciences with regard to men and masculinity. The peculiarities of Kerala society (detailed in the introduction chapter) is getting reflected in the lives of men and their gendered identity. This may be the reason for the similarities in the findings with the studies in developed countries. There is plethora of evidences which proves that masculinity do change. Masculinity is created by some specific circumstances and corresponding alterations in those circumstances transforms masculinity. The gender practices are contested and reconstructed with the new circumstances. New theories of masculinity have recognized the layering and potential internal contradictions within all practices that construct masculinities.