

Conservatism and Social Inequality: Understanding Male Adolescents' Perspectives on Gender and Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between conservatism and social inequality, with particular focus on how male adolescents perceive and respond to issues of gender equality and social justice. Drawing on contemporary scholarship across psychology, sociology, and gender studies, this paper investigates the ideological foundations of inequality and how conservative attitudes shape adolescent male perspectives on gender roles, social hierarchies, and justice-oriented action. The study synthesizes emerging evidence on the origins and manifestations of conservative ideology during adolescence, explores mechanisms through which conservatism influences attitudes toward gender equality, and examines the implications for developing interventions that promote equitable perspectives among young males. Key findings indicate that political ideology significantly predicts attitudes toward social inequality, with conservative-oriented adolescent males more likely to perceive gender inequality as justifiable and less likely to support redistributive or justice-oriented policies. The paper concludes with recommendations for gender-transformative educational approaches, policy interventions, and future research directions designed to challenge inequality during formative developmental periods.

Keywords: *Conservatism, gender-transformative approaches, political ideology etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and Context

Social inequality represents one of the most persistent challenges facing contemporary societies. Whether manifested through gender disparities, economic stratification, or political power imbalances, inequality shapes life opportunities, health outcomes, and social participation across demographic groups. Yet despite growing awareness of inequality's harmful effects, attitudes

toward inequality remain deeply stratified along ideological lines. Particularly significant is the role of political conservatism—a set of ideological orientations emphasizing tradition, hierarchy, and skepticism toward egalitarian change—in legitimating and perpetuating various forms of social inequality. Understanding how these ideological patterns emerge and develop during adolescence is critical for designing interventions that promote more equitable societies.

1.2 Theoretical Significance

The intersection of political ideology and social inequality has emerged as an increasingly important focus within social psychology and political sociology [1]. Research demonstrates that people positioning toward the political right, characterized as political conservatism, are consistently associated with lower perception of social inequalities, greater justification of the unequal status quo, and refusal to take actions that redress inequality [1]. These patterns persist across different domains, including economic, political, and gender inequalities. Notably, adolescence represents a critical developmental period during which political attitudes and gender role beliefs begin to crystallize, with implications extending into adulthood [2].

Male adolescents warrant particular attention in this research domain for several reasons. First, masculinity itself is socially constructed and varies significantly across cultural contexts, yet hegemonic or culturally dominant masculinity often intersects with conservative ideology to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies [3]. Second, research indicates that male adolescents tend to endorse more traditional gender role attitudes than their female peers [3], yet comparatively less research has examined how conservatism shapes these gendered perspectives. Third, understanding male adolescent perspectives is critical for designing gender-transformative interventions, as male attitudes substantially influence relationship dynamics, support for gender equality policies, and participation in efforts toward social justice [4].

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

This research paper addresses the following central questions: How does political conservatism shape male adolescents' perspectives on gender equality and social justice? What are the ideological mechanisms through which conservative attitudes become associated with support for social inequality? What are the implications of these patterns for developing interventions to promote equitable perspectives during adolescence? Through systematic review of contemporary

research, this paper seeks to: (1) examine the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward social inequality across multiple domains, (2) investigate how conservatism specifically influences male adolescent perspectives on gender and justice, (3) identify developmental factors that shape ideological formation during adolescence, and (4) propose evidence-based approaches for promoting more equitable attitudes and behaviors among young males.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Political Ideology and Legitimization of Inequality

A substantial body of research has established that political ideology functions as a lens through which individuals interpret social reality and justify existing distributions of power and resources. In a comprehensive three-study examination conducted across Colombian samples, García-Sánchez and colleagues found consistent patterns: people positioning further to the right on the political spectrum—political conservatism—were consistently associated with lower perception of social inequalities, greater justification of the unequal status quo, and refusal to take actions that redress inequality [1]. These results held across three separate samples examining economic, gender, and political inequalities, suggesting that conservatism operates as a general ideological framework affecting attitudes toward multiple forms of inequality.

The legitimization of inequality through conservative ideology involves complex psychological mechanisms. System justification theory proposes that individuals are motivated to defend and justify existing social arrangements, particularly when they possess little individual power to change those arrangements [1]. Conservative ideology provides cognitive frameworks through which inequality can be perceived as natural, inevitable, or even beneficial. Research indicates that among highly educated individuals, economic conservatism is particularly predictive of views that support reduced redistribution and maintenance of economic hierarchies, driven partly by desires for social status and concerns about upward redistribution of wealth [5].

2.2 Gender Inequality and Conservative Ideology

Gender inequality represents one of the most comprehensively studied domains of inequality in relation to political ideology. The relationship between conservatism and gender attitudes emerges

clearly across diverse populations and contexts. In examining Korean society, researchers found that conservative ideology impacts gender attitudes more strongly among men than women, with younger citizens showing greater polarization compared to previous generations, suggesting that ideological influences on gender attitudes may be intensifying in contemporary contexts [6].

Significantly, research demonstrates that gender equality discourse has become weaponized within conservative anti-immigration agendas. Van Oost and colleagues found that individuals with right-wing political orientation and higher levels of system justification tend to associate women's rights with European values more than other participants, perceive Islam and Christianity as more different, and perceive Islam as incompatible with feminism [7]. They justify these views using gender equality arguments while simultaneously advancing exclusionary agendas, revealing how conservative ideology can instrumentalize gender equality as a tool against marginalized groups.

2.3 Adolescent Development of Gender Attitudes and Ideological Orientations

Adolescence represents a critical developmental window during which gender attitudes and political ideologies begin to crystallize. Understanding factors that shape gender attitudes during early adolescence is essential for identifying intervention points. A comprehensive mixed-methods systematic review of research examining gender attitude formation found that young adolescents in different cultural settings commonly endorse norms that perpetuate gender inequalities, and that parents and peers are especially central in shaping such attitudes [4]. Programs to promote equitable attitudes thus need to move beyond a focus on individuals to target their interpersonal relationships and wider social environments, starting early and being tailored to the unique needs of different populations.

In Bangladesh, research examining determinants of gender attitudes among adolescents aged 15-19 years found stark gender differences: girls were much more egalitarian in their views on gender roles regarding socioeconomic participation compared to boys (58% versus 19%) [2]. Importantly, the multivariate regression results showed that girls and boys who completed at least grade 10 were substantially more likely to have egalitarian views on gender roles. Participation in adolescent programs was associated with a 67 percentage-point increase in the likelihood of having egalitarian attitudes compared to those not exposed to such programs, indicating the potential for targeted interventions during this developmental period.

In India, longitudinal research tracking adolescents from ages 10-19 found that gender role attitudes became more egalitarian over time among boys and girls, except among the older cohort of boys [8]. Girls and young women held more egalitarian views than boys and young men, and this pattern persisted over time for both cohorts. Significantly, factors influencing gender role attitudes differed for younger and older adolescents, particularly among boys, suggesting that intervention timing and tailoring by developmental stage may be crucial.

2.4 Male Gender Socialization and Conservative Masculinity

Understanding male adolescent perspectives requires engagement with research on gender socialization and masculinity construction. Male adolescents are socialized into gender norms through multiple channels, including families, peer relationships, educational institutions, and media. Importantly, these socialization processes often transmit conservative gender role expectations emphasizing dominance, emotional restriction, and heteronormative sexuality [3].

In examining the association between gender role attitudes and school bullying among male adolescents in China, researchers found that male adolescents held significantly more traditional gender role attitudes than female peers (with t-test values of 30.78, $p < 0.001$), and reported higher prevalence of bullying behaviors (36.02% for boys versus 31.20% for girls) [3]. Crucially, boys' bullying behaviors were significantly predicted by gender role attitudes through perceived friend support, indicating that conservative gender attitudes become reinforced through peer relationships and can translate into harmful behaviors toward others.

Research on adolescent boys' aggressive responses to perceived threats to their gender typicality provides insight into the psychological mechanisms underlying conservative gender attitudes. Among boys in mid-to-late puberty, feedback that their score was atypical versus typical of their gender predicted aggressive reactions, particularly among boys whose motivation to be gender-typical was pressured rather than autonomous [9]. Parents with hegemonic beliefs about masculinity (i.e., that men should hold power over women) resided in more conservative areas, had less formal education, and had lower incomes, suggesting that conservative gender ideologies cluster with specific demographic characteristics and geographic contexts.

2.5 Intersectionality, Class, and Conservative Ideology

The relationship between conservatism, ideology, and social inequality cannot be understood without attending to intersections with other social locations, particularly socioeconomic class. Research on perceptions of economic inequality reveals that adolescents with low socioeconomic status are more concerned about social issues and therefore had higher expectations of sociopolitical participation than adolescents with high socioeconomic status, and these effects were similar for both boys and girls [10]. However, family material affluence had limited direct influence on expected sociopolitical participation, suggesting indirect pathways through social concern.

Examination of masculinity perceptions among adolescent boys from different socioeconomic backgrounds reveals pronounced differences in how class intersects with ideological orientation. Boys from the social periphery facing economic challenges often adhered to traditional masculinity perceptions that curtail STEM engagement, aligning with theories of hegemonic masculinity [11]. In contrast, boys from affluent backgrounds demonstrated fluid masculinity perceptions that may encourage participation in diverse fields. This divergence highlights how conservatism and adherence to traditional gender norms cluster with specific class positions and may serve defensive functions among economically disadvantaged populations.

2.6 Effectiveness of Gender-Transformative Interventions

While documenting the prevalence and correlates of conservative gender attitudes is important, research demonstrating intervention effectiveness provides evidence-based directions for change. The Healthy Relationships program evaluated with male adolescents in detention in Western Australia found that participation significantly reduced endorsement of attitudes supporting intimate partner violence and attitudes endorsing traditional gender roles and stereotypes for both the total sample and the First Nations youth sample [12]. This finding demonstrates that even among highly marginalized populations of adolescent males involved in the justice system, structured interventions can effectively challenge conservative attitudes.

In Northern Uganda, the Gender Roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT) intervention employing narrative-based, resource-light approaches designed to promote gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors showed statistically significant effects across multiple domains among

adolescents [13]. Among older adolescents and newly married adults, significant shifts occurred in inequitable gender beliefs, household roles, and reduced likelihood of perpetrating sexual assault or reacting violently toward partners. These findings suggest that culturally tailored, participatory approaches addressing conservative gender norms can produce meaningful change.

3. METHODOLOGY

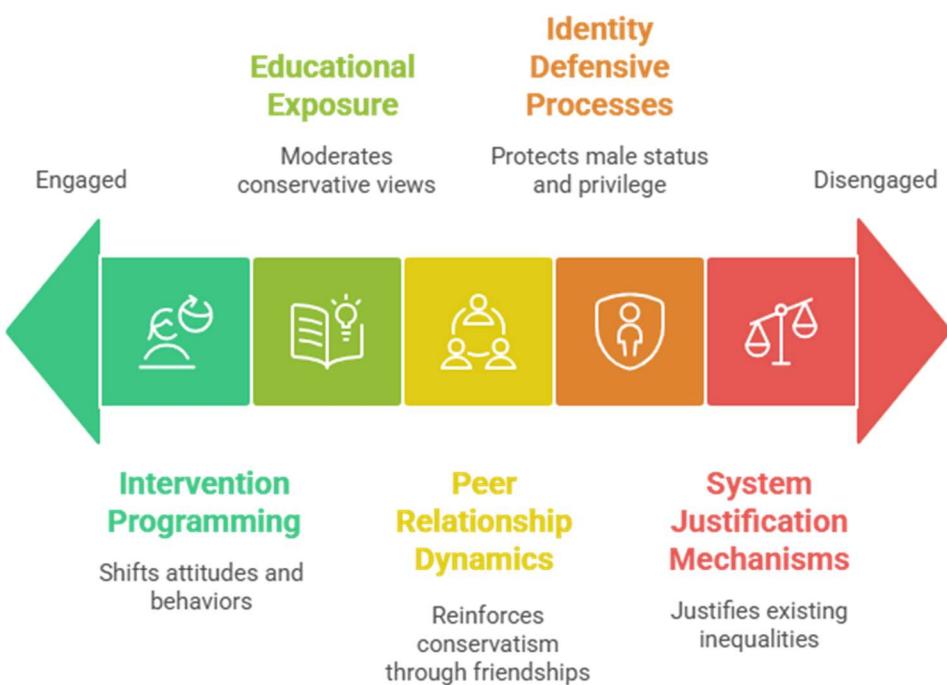


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework Linking Conservatism to Gender Attitudes and Social Justice Perspectives

3.1 Research Approach

This paper employs a comprehensive literature review methodology, systematically synthesizing contemporary research on conservatism, gender attitudes, and social inequality with specific attention to male adolescent perspectives. This approach was selected to (1) map the current state of scholarship on these interconnected topics, (2) identify key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, (3) synthesize evidence regarding relationships between ideology and attitudes toward inequality, and (4) identify gaps and generate recommendations for future research and intervention.

3.2 Literature Search and Selection Criteria

Literature was identified through systematic searches of multiple academic databases including PubMed, PsycINFO, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, using combinations of key terms including: "political ideology AND adolescents," "conservatism AND gender attitudes," "male adolescents AND gender equality," "social inequality AND political orientation," "gender role attitudes AND development," and "gender-transformative interventions AND adolescents." The search was deliberately broad to capture relevant research across sociology, psychology, public health, gender studies, and education disciplines.

Inclusion criteria specified: (1) peer-reviewed empirical research or systematic reviews published in the last 15 years (2010-2025), with inclusion of landmark studies predating this period when foundational to key concepts; (2) focus on adolescent populations or transition to adulthood; (3) examination of gender attitudes, political ideology, or social inequality; (4) diverse global contexts to ensure cross-cultural applicability; and (5) quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research. Exclusion criteria removed: single theoretical essays without empirical data, research focused exclusively on adult populations, and narrowly circumscribed studies lacking implications for understanding broader patterns.

3.3 Data Extraction and Analysis

For each identified study, information was extracted regarding: research design and sample characteristics, theoretical frameworks employed, key variables measured, primary findings related to ideology and gender/inequality attitudes, and implications for intervention. Data were organized into thematic categories including: (1) relationships between political ideology and inequality perception, (2) gender socialization processes during adolescence, (3) mechanisms linking conservatism to gender attitude formation, (4) intersections with class and geographic context, and (5) intervention effectiveness evidence. Thematic synthesis involved identifying convergent patterns across studies, noting areas of disagreement or contradiction, and highlighting emerging questions warranting further investigation.

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Conservatism Consistently Predicts Lower Perception of Inequality and Reduced Support for Remedial Action

Across multiple empirical contexts and populations, political conservatism emerges as a robust predictor of lower perception of social inequality and reduced willingness to take action addressing inequality. This pattern persists across economic, gender, and political domains [1]. Importantly, this relationship holds even when controlling for other variables frequently associated with conservative attitudes, suggesting that ideology itself operates as an independent influence on inequality perception rather than merely reflecting other characteristics.

4.2 Male Adolescents Demonstrate Significantly More Conservative Gender Role Attitudes Than Female Peers

Substantial gender differences emerge in adolescent gender role attitudes, with male adolescents consistently endorsing more traditional, conservative positions regarding gender roles compared to female adolescents [3]. In Bangladesh, only 19% of boys held egalitarian gender attitudes compared to 58% of girls [2]. These differences emerge early and persist through late adolescence, suggesting entrenchment of conservative gender perspectives during this period.

4.3 Peer Relationships and Friend Support Mediate Between Conservative Gender Attitudes and Behavioral Outcomes

The relationship between conservative gender attitudes and negative behavioral outcomes among male adolescents operates partly through peer relationship mechanisms. Male youth with conservative gender role attitudes report less perceived friend support, which in turn elevates their risk for behaviors including bullying perpetration [3]. This suggests that conservative gender attitudes may become socially reinforced through selective peer association and that intervention targeting peer relationships represents a potentially powerful leverage point.

4.4 Socioeconomic Context Shapes Expression and Meaning of Conservative Ideology

Research reveals that conservative gender attitudes and adherence to traditional masculinity do not operate identically across socioeconomic strata. Boys from economically disadvantaged backgrounds more frequently adhere to traditional masculinity perceptions, which may reflect

defensive ideological functions in contexts of material scarcity and limited opportunities [11]. In contrast, adolescent males from affluent backgrounds more frequently demonstrate fluid, flexible approaches to masculinity. These findings suggest that interventions must account for the material conditions within which ideology operates.

4.5 Structured Interventions Can Effectively Challenge Conservative Gender Attitudes

Perhaps most encouragingly, evidence from intervention studies demonstrates that even male adolescents with strongly entrenched conservative attitudes and involvement with justice systems can shift toward more equitable perspectives through structured, culturally-tailored, gender-transformative programs [12]. Effects persist over time and extend to behavioral outcomes including reduced perpetration of violence and increased support for gender equality.

Table 1: Summary of Key Research Findings on Conservatism and Gender Attitudes

Study	Population	Key Finding	Implication
García-Sánchez et al. (2024)	Colombian adults across 3 studies	Conservatism consistently predicts lower perception of inequality & refusal of remedial action across economic, gender, political domains	Ideology operates as general framework affecting multiple inequality domains
Chen et al. (2022)	3,172 Chinese adolescents 12-20 years	Boys with conservative gender attitudes report less friend support, elevating bullying risk (OR=2.08)	Peer relationships mediate between attitudes & harmful behaviors
Streatfield et al. (2023)	7,800 Bangladeshi girls, 5,523 boys ages 15-19	Only 19% of boys vs 58% of girls hold egalitarian gender attitudes; program participation increases egalitarian views 67 percentage points	Substantial gender gaps; interventions can effectively shift attitudes

Patel et al. (2021)	4,428 boys, 7,607 girls India UDAYA study	Gender attitudes become more egalitarian over time except older boy cohort; factors influencing attitudes differ by age & gender	Age-specific intervention targeting needed; attitude shifts less likely in late adolescence
Stanaland et al. (2024)	207 US adolescent boys ages 10-14	Mid-to-late pubertal boys respond aggressively to gender-atypicality feedback when motivation pressured; hegemonic parental beliefs predict pressured motivation	Pubertal timing & parental ideology shape gender attitude rigidity
Duek et al. (2025)	Israeli adolescent boys from different SES	Periphery boys with economic challenges adhere to traditional masculinity; center boys show fluid masculinity	Class intersects with gender ideology; economic insecurity intensifies conservatism
Warner et al. (2024)	65 detained adolescent boys Australia	Program participation reduces endorsement of intimate partner violence attitudes & traditional gender roles for total & First Nations samples	Interventions effective even with high-risk populations; sustained effects
Dagadu et al. (2022)	Northern Uganda adolescents	GREAT intervention shows significant shifts in inequitable gender beliefs, household roles, violence perpetration	Culturally-tailored narrative approaches produce behavioral outcomes

5. MECHANISMS LINKING CONSERVATISM TO CONSERVATIVE GENDER ATTITUDES

Understanding how conservative political ideology shapes gender attitudes among male adolescents requires attention to psychological and social mechanisms through which ideology operates.

5.1 System Justification and Hierarchy Justification

Conservative ideology provides cognitive frameworks through which existing hierarchies—including gender hierarchies—become perceived as justified, natural, or even beneficial. System justification theory explains that individuals are motivated to defend existing social arrangements, and conservative ideology offers philosophical and rhetorical resources for this defense. For adolescent males, embracing conservative gender ideology may serve functions of psychological security and status maintenance within existing peer hierarchies.

5.2 Hegemonic Masculinity and Male Dominance Ideology

Conservative gender ideology becomes particularly entrenched during male adolescence through socialization into hegemonic masculinity—culturally dominant forms of masculine identity emphasizing dominance, emotional restriction, and heteronormative sexuality [9]. Parents and peers transmit messages equating masculinity with dominance over women and other men, particularly in contexts characterized by economic precarity or status anxiety. When adolescent males receive feedback that deviation from these gendered expectations triggers social disapproval or status loss, pressured (versus autonomous) motivation to conform to traditional masculinity strengthens, and this pressured conformity predicts heightened aggressive responses to perceived gender norm violations [9].

5.3 In-Group Preference and Defensive Positioning

Research examining reactionary collective action intentions reveals that high ethnic identification, social dominance orientation, and conservatism predict increases in reactionary intentions—movements' effectively increasing inequality by advancing rights of structurally advantaged groups [14]. For male adolescents, conservative gender ideology may function to defend perceived male privilege in contexts where gender equality initiatives are perceived as threatening male

status. This defensive positioning becomes particularly pronounced during periods of rapid social change or in contexts where gender equality gains are visible.

Table 2: Intervention Components Associated with Attitude Change

Component	Description	Evidence Base
Multi-level engagement	Programs targeting individual, family, peer, community simultaneously	Bangladesh: 67-point increase with comprehensive programming
Critical reflection on norms	Explicit examination of gender role origins, consequences, alternatives	GREAT intervention effectiveness
Skills building	Concrete practice in equitable communication, conflict resolution, relationship skills	Healthy Relationships program outcomes
Power analysis	Explicit discussion of gender inequality, power imbalances, structural drivers	Gender-transformative framework foundation
Community/religious leader involvement	Engaging influential cultural figures as allies rather than obstacles	Tanzania: religious leader engagement enhanced effectiveness
Early intervention timing	Targeting early-to-mid adolescence before attitudes fully crystallize	Data showing reduced shifts in late adolescence
Cultural tailoring	Adaptation to specific community context, values, communication styles	Effectiveness varies by cultural appropriateness
Peer-based learning	Leveraging adolescent peer relationships as change mechanisms	Friend support mediates effects on behavior

6. INTERSECTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Class Dimensions

The expression and meaning of conservative gender ideology varies substantially across socioeconomic contexts. Male adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds more frequently display traditional masculinity and conservative gender attitudes [11], potentially reflecting defensive ideological functions in contexts of material scarcity. Conversely, affluent adolescent males demonstrate greater flexibility in gender role expressions. This divergence suggests that interventions must consider how material conditions shape receptivity to and functions of conservative ideology.

6.2 Geographic and Cultural Contexts

Conservative gender attitudes vary across geographic and cultural contexts, with research from Bangladesh, India, China, and other diverse settings revealing culturally-specific expressions of gender role conservatism while identifying common mechanisms [2]. Community norms, institutional arrangements, and media representations all shape how male adolescents express and justify conservative perspectives. Gender-transformative interventions must therefore be culturally tailored rather than universally prescriptive.

6.3 Intersections with Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration

Although less extensively researched in adolescent populations, evidence suggests that conservative gender attitudes intersect with other identities including race and immigration status. In examining immigrant youth across five European countries, researchers found that despite adaptation to host country contexts, religion—particularly among Muslims—played a role in preservation of conservative attitudes [15]. These findings underscore the complexity of how multiple identity dimensions shape gender attitude formation.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION AND POLICY

7.1 Gender-Transformative Educational Approaches

Evidence from intervention research indicates that comprehensive, culturally-tailored gender-transformative educational programs can effectively shift male adolescent attitudes toward greater gender equality and reduce perpetration of gender-based violence [12]. Effective programs share several characteristics: (1) they engage male adolescents in critical reflection on gender norms and their consequences, (2) they explicitly address power imbalances embedded in traditional gender roles, (3) they build skills for equitable relationships, and (4) they connect gender equality to broader social justice frameworks addressing multiple forms of inequality.

7.2 Multi-Level Intervention Strategies

Given that factors influencing gender role attitudes operate at individual, family, peer, and community levels, effective intervention requires multi-level coordination. In Bangladesh, research indicated that participation in adolescent programs was associated with 67 percentage-point increases in egalitarian attitudes [2]. These programs operated through multiple mechanisms including direct education, peer support, family engagement, and community norm-setting. Policy frameworks should support coordinated implementation across these levels rather than isolated single-level interventions.

7.3 Early Intervention Timing

Evidence indicates that gender attitudes begin crystallizing during early-to-middle adolescence, suggesting that intervention timing during this period may produce greater impact than waiting until late adolescence. Moreover, longitudinal evidence shows that older cohorts of boys are less likely than younger cohorts to shift toward egalitarian attitudes over time [8], implying potential "windows of opportunity" for attitude change during middle adolescence.

7.4 Addressing Material Conditions and Economic Insecurity

Given evidence that economic precarity may intensify conservative gender ideologies as defensive mechanisms, comprehensive policy must address both ideological formation and material conditions. Adolescent males in economically disadvantaged contexts require both gender-transformative education and economic opportunity to reduce reliance on defensive ideologies.

Policies addressing economic inequality, educational access, and employment opportunity represent important complements to gender-focused interventions.

7.5 Community and Religious Leader Engagement

In many cultural contexts, community and religious leaders significantly influence adolescent attitude formation [13]. Gender-transformative intervention frameworks that engage such leaders—rather than treating them as obstacles—may access influential voices shaping young male perspectives. Evidence from Tanzania indicated that religious leaders' engagement in gender-equality promotion effectively challenged traditional norms while respecting cultural and spiritual frameworks [13].

8. LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH GAPS

8.1 Limited Longitudinal Research

While this paper draws on several longitudinal studies, most research examining relationships between political ideology and gender attitudes among adolescents remains cross-sectional. Longitudinal research with multiple measurement waves would better illuminate developmental trajectories and identify critical periods for intervention. Additionally, most longitudinal research focuses on relatively short time spans (2-3 years); longer-term follow-up examining persistence of attitudes into adulthood remains limited.

8.2 Geographic and Cultural Representation

Although this review included research from diverse global contexts, the literature remains dominated by research from North America, Europe, and select Asian countries. Substantial gaps exist regarding how conservatism and gender attitudes operate in African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Pacific contexts. Moreover, research differentiating between conservative ideologies operating through religious frameworks versus secular political conservatism remains limited.

8.3 Mechanisms and Processes

While empirical research documents relationships between conservatism and gender attitudes, explanatory mechanisms remain incompletely understood. Few studies employ experimental designs enabling causal inference or qualitative research illuminating lived experience of

adolescent males navigating ideological formation. More research examining how male adolescents themselves understand, experience, and justify conservative perspectives would enrich understanding.

8.4 Intersectional Analysis

Although growing, research examining intersections between gender ideology and other identities including class, race, sexuality, and disability remains limited among adolescent samples. This limits understanding of how conservative ideologies operate differently across populations and how interventions might be effectively tailored for diverse male adolescent subgroups.

8.5 Long-Term Intervention Outcomes

While intervention studies demonstrate short-term effectiveness in shifting attitudes, research examining whether attitude change translates to sustained behavioral change and long-term outcomes remains limited. Do adolescent males who shift toward more equitable gender attitudes maintain these perspectives into adulthood? Do attitude changes translate to reduced intimate partner violence perpetration, increased gender equality support in policy contexts, and more equitable relationship practices?

9. CONCLUSION

Political conservatism significantly shapes male adolescents' perspectives on gender equality and social justice, operating through ideological frameworks that legitimate existing hierarchies, psychological mechanisms including system justification and identity defense, and social processes including peer reinforcement and family transmission of values. Male adolescents consistently endorse more conservative gender role attitudes than female peers, and these attitudes intersect with socioeconomic position, geographic context, and cultural frameworks in complex ways.

Importantly, this research does not suggest that conservative ideology or conservative-oriented male adolescents represent inevitable obstacles to social progress. Rather, evidence from intervention research demonstrates that even male adolescents with strongly conservative perspectives can shift toward more equitable orientations when provided with structured,

culturally-tailored education addressing gender inequality and social justice. Such shifts become more likely when interventions operate across multiple levels—individual, family, peer, community—and when they connect gender equality to broader frameworks of social justice.

Moving forward, research, policy, and practice must: (1) recognize adolescence as a critical period for ideological formation with implications extending decades; (2) design gender-transformative educational interventions grounded in evidence of effectiveness; (3) attend carefully to intersections between gender ideology and other social dimensions including class, race, and sexuality; (4) engage community and religious leaders as allies in promoting gender equality rather than treating them as obstacles; (5) address material conditions and economic insecurity that may intensify conservative ideologies; and (6) conduct longitudinal research with extended follow-up examining persistence and behavioral implications of attitude change.

The stakes of this work are substantial. Male adolescents' perspectives on gender equality and social justice will shape their future relationships, their participation (or lack thereof) in efforts toward social equity, and their influence on younger generations' ideological development. By understanding how conservatism shapes these perspectives and by implementing evidence-based interventions during this formative period, societies can work toward reducing inequality and promoting social justice across generations.

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