

Socioeconomic and Psychosocial Determinants of Gender Role Transformation in Contemporary Black Societies: Examining the Rise of Female Masculinity and Male Feminisation

Paul Andrew Bourne, PhD, DrPH

Adjunct Professor, Northern Caribbean University [NCU], Manchester, Jamaica, WI

ABSTRACT: This study examines the rise of masculine behavioural traits among females and the increasing feminisation of males in contemporary Black societies, with particular attention to psychosocial, economic, and cultural determinants. The current study is grounded in social role theory, gender role strain theory, and structural inequality frameworks, which suggest that gender roles change in response to economic pressures, family structure changes, and shifting social norms. Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected from 250 participants across urban communities to assess perceptions of gender roles, family structure, employment patterns, education, and behavioural traits traditionally classified as masculine or feminine. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used to examine the predictors of masculine traits in females and feminine traits in males. The findings indicate that female economic independence, single-mother households, and male unemployment were significant predictors of increased masculinity among females, while father absence, maternal dominance, and educational environments were significant predictors of feminisation among males. The regression model explained 48% of the variance in gender role behavioural changes ($R^2 = 0.48$), indicating strong explanatory power for the model. This study concludes that gender role changes in contemporary Black societies are primarily structural and socioeconomic rather than biological, driven by shifts in labour markets, education, and family structures. The findings have implications for family stability, identity formation, and social policy.

KEYWORDS: gender roles, masculinity, femininity, Black society, family structure, psychosocial development

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time (World Health Organization, n.d.)

Gender roles are socially constructed behavioural expectations that societies assign to males and females based on cultural norms, economic structures, and family systems (Blackstone, 2003; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Connell, 2005; McGinn & Oh, 2017; Cislighi & Heise, 2020; Stewart et al., 2021; Cookson et al., 2023; Barr et al., 2024; Đundić, 2024; Guy-Evans, 2024). These roles historically delineated masculine traits such as assertiveness, dominance, and independence, and feminine traits such as nurturing, emotional expressiveness, and relational orientation. However, in many contemporary Black societies, there has been a noticeable shift in these behavioural patterns, characterised by increasing assertiveness, independence, and dominance among females and increasing emotional expressiveness, dependency, and passivity among males (Dust, 1995; Allen et al., 2019; Song & Chang, 2025; Thorpe et al., 2025). This shift reflects broader social transformations, including changes in family structure, educational attainment, and labour market participation. While gender role flexibility is often associated with progressive social development, rapid and unstructured shifts in gender expectations may create psychosocial tensions. These tensions may manifest in identity confusion, role conflict, and instability in interpersonal relationships. Understanding the evolving nature of gender roles within specific cultural contexts is therefore essential for advancing both theoretical and applied social science research.

The transformation of gender roles in Black societies must be understood within the context of historical, economic, and sociocultural dynamics. Colonial legacies, economic marginalisation, and systemic inequalities have significantly shaped family structures and gender relations in these societies (Wilson, 1987; O'Connor, 2014; Furstenberg, 2019; Shaw, 2019; Abdullahi & Chembayi, 2025; Lohiya, 2026; Thompson, 2025). In many cases, economic pressures have necessitated increased labour force participation among women, leading to greater financial independence and shifts in traditional gender roles. Simultaneously,

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structural barriers such as unemployment and underemployment have disproportionately affected men, potentially contributing to changes in masculine identity and social roles (Anderson, 1999; Demantas & Myers, 2015; Chandler, 2018; Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; O'Connor, 2024; Sachs, 2025; Gater, 2026). These structural realities have implications for how gender is performed and experienced within families and communities. As women assume roles traditionally associated with masculinity and men adapt to changing expectations, the boundaries between gender roles become increasingly fluid. This fluidity, while reflective of adaptability, may also create challenges in maintaining stable social and familial systems.

Family structure plays a critical role in shaping gender role socialisation and behavioural development (Omolade, 1987; McHale et al., 1999; Marks et al., 2009; Aubry, 2024; Elsayed, 2024; Gaspar, 2024). In many Black societies, there has been a rise in single-parent households, particularly those headed by women, which alters traditional patterns of gender modelling and socialisation (McLanahan et al., 2013). Children raised in female-headed households may be more likely to internalise traits associated with maternal behaviour due to the absence or limited presence of male role models. Conversely, the increased responsibilities placed on women in such households may encourage the development of traits traditionally associated with masculinity, such as authority and decision-making. Educational systems also contribute to gender role development, as females often outperform males academically, leading to shifts in confidence, aspiration, and social positioning (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). These combined influences of family and education contribute to the reconfiguration of gender identities among both males and females. Consequently, gender role transformation is not merely an individual phenomenon but a systemic outcome of broader social and institutional changes.

Despite growing attention to gender role changes, there remains a limited body of empirical research examining the specific socioeconomic and family-structure determinants of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males in Black societies. Much of the existing literature focuses on gender equality and empowerment without fully addressing the psychosocial implications of role convergence or reversal. Additionally, few studies adopt a comparative framework that simultaneously examines both male and female behavioural shifts within the same sociocultural context. This gap limits the ability to understand how structural factors such as income, education, and parental presence interact to influence gendered behaviour. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the extent to which socioeconomic conditions and family structure contribute to the emergence of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males. By integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical analysis, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of gender role transformation. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender, development, and social change within contemporary Black societies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Research Questions	Research Objectives
1. What socioeconomic factors influence the adoption of masculine traits among females? 2. How does family structure impact the development of feminine traits among males? 3. What is the relationship between parental authority and gender role behaviours in adults? 4. To what extent do socioeconomic and family dynamics predict the expression of masculine traits in females and feminine traits in males?	1. To examine the impact of income, education, and employment status on the manifestation of masculine behaviours in women. 2. To analyse the effect of different family structures, such as single-mother, single-father, and two-parent households, on the development of feminine behaviours in men. 3. To investigate the role of parental authority—specifically father absence and maternal dominance—in shaping gender role behaviours. 4. To assess the combined influence of socioeconomic conditions and family structure on the expression of masculine traits in females and feminine traits in males.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by Social Role Theory, Gender Role Strain Theory, and Family Structure Theory, which together provide a multidimensional explanation for changes in gender behaviour and identity formation. Social Role Theory posits that gender differences arise primarily from the social and economic roles that individuals occupy rather than from biological differences (Eagly, 1987). According to this theory, when women increasingly participate in the labour force and assume provider roles, they adopt behaviours traditionally associated with masculinity, such as assertiveness, independence, and leadership. Conversely, when men experience unemployment or reduced economic responsibility, they may adopt behaviours traditionally associated with femininity, including emotional expressiveness and reduced dominance (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Social Role Theory, therefore, suggests that

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behavioural changes among males and females are adaptive responses to structural economic changes. This perspective is particularly relevant in societies where female labour force participation is increasing, and male unemployment is high. The theory provides a structural explanation for the emergence of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males.

Gender Role Strain Theory provides a psychological explanation for changing gender behaviour by arguing that individuals experience psychological strain when they are unable to meet socially defined gender role expectations (Pleck, 1995). For example, men who are unable to fulfil the traditional provider role due to unemployment or low income may experience identity stress, reduced self-esteem, and psychological distress. This strain may lead men to adopt alternative gender behaviours, including increased emotional expressiveness, withdrawal from traditional masculine roles, or the development of non-traditional masculine identities. Similarly, women who assume provider roles may adopt traditionally masculine behavioural traits as adaptive strategies to meet economic and social demands. Gender Role Strain Theory, therefore, explains the psychological adjustment processes that accompany structural changes in gender roles. The theory is important because it links economic and social changes to psychological outcomes and behavioural adaptation. This makes the theory particularly useful for explaining both male and female behavioural changes within the same socioeconomic environment.

Family Structure Theory emphasises the role of parental presence, role modelling, and household organisation in shaping gender identity and behaviour. Children learn gender roles primarily through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within the family environment (Bandura, 1977). Research shows that children raised in single-parent households, particularly female-headed households, often experience different patterns of gender role socialisation compared to children raised in two-parent households (McLanahan et al., 2013). In households where fathers are absent, boys may have limited exposure to traditional masculine role modelling, which can affect identity formation, behavioural development, and social adjustment. In female-headed households, mothers often assume dual roles as both caregiver and provider, which may expose children to non-traditional gender role behaviour. Girls raised in such households may internalise independence, leadership, and authority as normal female behaviours, while boys may develop more emotionally expressive and less traditionally dominant behavioural patterns. Family Structure Theory, therefore, explains how household composition influences gender role socialisation and psychosocial outcomes.

Together, Social Role Theory, Gender Role Strain Theory, and Family Structure Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding gender role transformation in contemporary societies. Social Role Theory explains structural changes in behaviour due to economic and labour market shifts, while Gender Role Strain Theory explains the psychological adaptation that occurs when individuals cannot meet traditional gender expectations. Family Structure Theory explains how parental presence and role modelling influence gender identity formation and behavioural development. When combined, these theories suggest that changes in employment patterns, family structures, and education systems interact to shape gender behaviour and psychosocial development. This integrated theoretical framework allows the study to examine gender role change as both a structural and psychosocial phenomenon. The framework, therefore, provides a strong theoretical foundation for analysing the rise of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males in contemporary Black societies. It also supports the empirical testing of how socioeconomic conditions and family structure influence gendered behavioural outcomes.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on gender roles consistently indicates that gendered behaviour is shaped more by socialisation processes and economic roles than by biological differences, a position strongly articulated in social role theory developed by Alice Eagly. Social role theory argues that behavioural differences between men and women emerge primarily from the division of labour and the roles that society assigns to each gender rather than from innate biological differences (Eagly, 1987). When women enter the workforce in large numbers and assume provider roles, they often adopt behaviours traditionally associated with masculinity, such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and independence. Conversely, when men experience unemployment, underemployment, or reduced economic responsibility, they may adopt behaviours traditionally associated with femininity, including emotional expressiveness, reduced dominance, and increased dependence within relationships. These behavioural shifts are therefore not random but reflect adaptive responses to changing social and economic conditions. In societies experiencing economic restructuring, gender roles often become more fluid as families adjust to new survival strategies. This perspective suggests that gender behaviour is structurally influenced and cannot be fully understood without examining economic and institutional contexts.

Family structure is another major determinant of gender role development, particularly in societies with high rates of single-parent households. Studies by Sara McLanahan and colleagues show that children raised in single-parent households, especially female-headed households, often experience different patterns of gender role socialisation compared to children raised in two-parent households (McLanahan et al., 2013). Girls raised in female-headed households frequently adopt leadership, decision-making, and provider roles due to the absence of a resident male provider. Boys raised without fathers may experience reduced masculine role modelling, which can influence identity formation, confidence, and behavioural development. The absence of a father not only represents the absence of a parent but also the absence of gender-specific behavioural modelling and discipline patterns. As a result,

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boys in father-absent households may develop alternative forms of masculinity influenced by peers, media, or community norms rather than by paternal guidance. These family structure dynamics play a critical role in shaping gendered behaviour across the life course.

Education systems also play a significant role in shaping gender behaviour and identity formation. In many societies, schools reward behavioural traits such as obedience, patience, attentiveness, and verbal communication, which research suggests are more commonly encouraged in girls than in boys. This behavioural alignment often results in higher academic achievement among girls and lower academic engagement among boys, contributing to a widening gender gap in educational attainment (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Lower academic achievement among boys has been linked to reduced self-esteem, disengagement from formal institutions, and the development of alternative masculine identities that emphasise toughness and anti-authority behaviour. Meanwhile, girls' academic success often translates into higher educational attainment, greater labour market participation, and increased financial independence. These educational patterns reinforce the adoption of non-traditional gender roles, with women increasingly occupying leadership and professional roles. Thus, the education system functions as a major institution in the social construction and transformation of gender roles.

Labour market changes further reinforce shifts in gender behaviour, particularly in economies where male unemployment is high and female employment is increasing. Economic marginalisation among men has been linked to changes in masculine identity, including reduced marriage rates, delayed family formation, and increased psychological distress (Anderson, 1999). At the same time, women's increased participation in professional and managerial roles has been associated with increased autonomy, decision-making power, and leadership behaviour, traits historically associated with masculinity (Connell, 2005). These structural changes alter power dynamics within households, often resulting in women becoming primary breadwinners and men assuming more domestic or emotionally supportive roles. Such role reversals may influence relationship stability, fertility patterns, and family organisation. Despite these observed trends, there remains limited empirical research examining how family structure and socioeconomic conditions jointly influence the development of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males. This study, therefore, builds on existing literature by examining how economic structure, education, and family organisation interact to shape gender role behaviour in contemporary Black societies.

economic roles than by biological differences (Eagly, 1987). Social role theory argues that when women enter the workforce in large numbers and assume provider roles, they adopt behaviours traditionally associated with masculinity, such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and independence. Similarly, when men experience unemployment or reduced economic roles, they may adopt behaviours traditionally associated with femininity, including emotional expressiveness and reduced dominance. Studies on single-parent households have shown that girls raised in female-headed households often adopt leadership and provider roles, while boys raised without fathers may experience identity confusion and reduced masculine role modelling (McLanahan et al., 2013). Additionally, education systems in many societies are structured in ways that reward behavioural traits such as obedience, patience, and verbal communication, which may favour girls and disadvantage boys behaviourally and academically. This has been linked to declining male educational performance and changes in male identity formation.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the assumption that gender role behaviours are socially constructed and shaped by socioeconomic and family structural conditions rather than innate biological differences. This framework integrates social role theory, gender role strain theory, and research on family structure and socialisation to explain how structural conditions and psychosocial adaptations interact to influence the emergence of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males in contemporary Black societies. Social role theory posits that variation in gendered behaviour arises principally from the roles assigned to individuals within social and economic structures (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Because social roles reflect societal expectations about gendered activity and authority, individuals occupying roles traditionally associated with masculinity (e.g., economic provider, decision-maker) are more likely to adopt behavioural traits such as assertiveness, independence, and leadership, whereas individuals confined to roles associated with nurturance and relationality are more likely to exhibit traits traditionally classified as feminine (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Risman, 2004).

Socioeconomic conditions such as labour market participation, income level, and educational attainment are central structural determinants within this framework. Empirical evidence indicates that women's increased access to education and employment opportunities frequently leads to greater economic independence and occupational authority, which correlates with the adoption of behaviours culturally coded as masculine (Juhn, 1992; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Conversely, male unemployment and underemployment reduce opportunities for men to perform traditional provider roles, contributing to psychological strain and adaptations in social behaviour that align more closely with traits historically associated with femininity, such as emotional expressiveness and relational engagement (Townsend, 2002; Wilson & Daly, 1985). These patterns illustrate how economic structures shape gendered behavioural repertoires by incentivising adaptation to prevailing labour market realities.

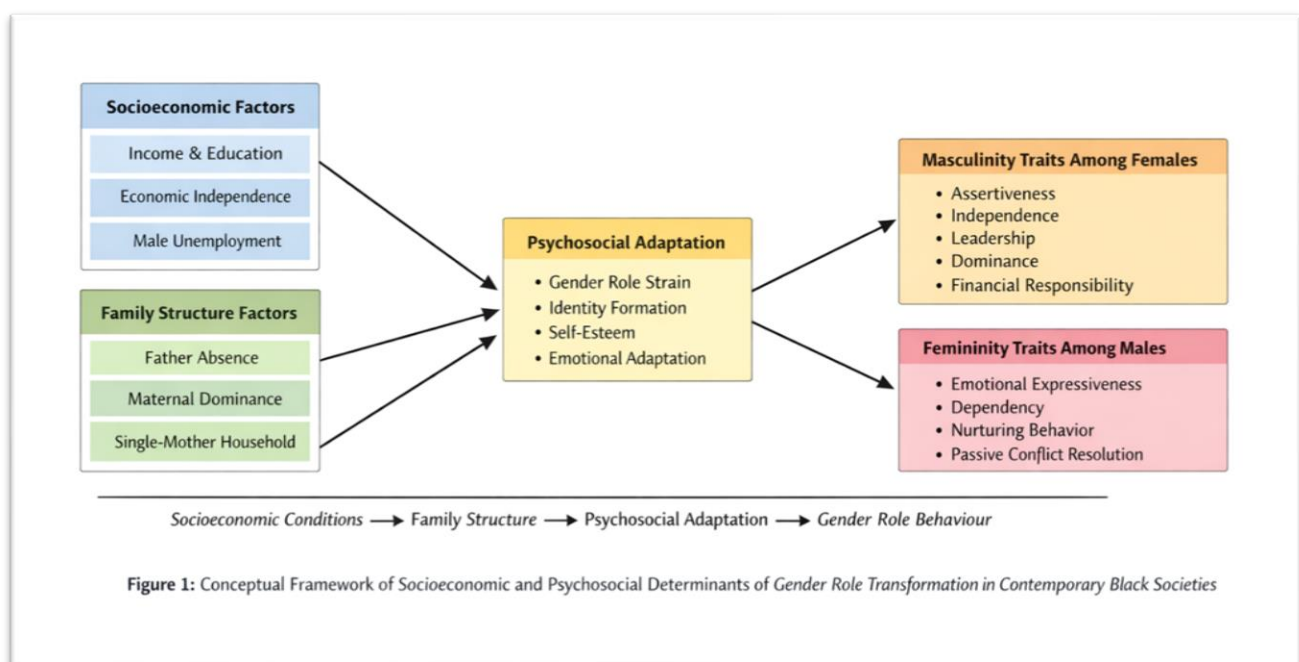
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Family structure operates as another crucial determinant within the proposed framework. Research demonstrates that the composition and dynamics of the family environment influence gender role socialisation through patterns of parental modelling, reinforcement of behavioural norms, and availability of gender-typical role models (Bandura, 1977; McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). Single-mother households, for example, often necessitate that women fulfil roles of provider and authority, exposing children, both male and female, to non-traditional models of gender behaviour (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Girls raised in such environments may normalise leadership, independence, and decisiveness as appropriate female traits, while boys raised without consistent paternal modelling may experience identity challenges that affect their adoption of traditionally masculine behaviours (Amato & Keith, 1991). This observation aligns with socialisation perspectives that emphasise the importance of early experiential learning in the development of gender identity and behavioural preferences (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Psychological processes also mediate the relationship between structural conditions and gender behavioural adaptation. Gender role strain theory suggests that individuals experience psychosocial stress when they are unable to meet socially prescribed gender expectations, leading to adaptive responses that may involve the adoption of behaviours atypical of their assigned gender role (Pleck, 1995). For men, the inability to fulfil provider roles due to systemic unemployment can generate role strain characterised by diminished self-esteem and altered behavioural strategies, such as increased emotional expressivity and collaborative relational styles (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994; Levant, Hall, & Rankin, 2013). Similarly, women who assume leadership and economic responsibility may experience strains associated with negotiating contradictory gender expectations, thereby reinforcing the embrace of assertive and agentic behaviours as adaptive mechanisms within structurally constrained contexts (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Heilman, 2012).

The interplay of socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and psychosocial adaptation culminates in the behavioural outcomes of interest: masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males. This framework conceptualises these outcomes as the product of individual adaptation to structural opportunities and constraints, mediated by early socialisation and ongoing psychosocial negotiation within cultural contexts that are historically shaped by colonial legacies, economic marginalisation, and systemic inequality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). Accordingly, the conceptual model anticipates that variables such as female income and educational attainment will positively predict masculine behavioural expressions, while male unemployment and father absence will positively predict feminine behavioural expressions. Psychosocial adaptation, such as cognitive restructuring of gender norms and identity formation processes, serves as a mediating mechanism through which structural conditions translate into observable gendered behaviour.

This integrated conceptual framework thus positions gender role transformation as a multidimensional process, shaped by the dynamic interaction of socioeconomic structures, family environment, and individual psychosocial adjustment. It highlights the need for analyses that move beyond simplistic biological explanations of gender differences and instead emphasise the social, economic, and relational contexts that shape behaviour. By situating gender behavioural outcomes within this structural-psychosocial nexus, the framework provides a robust theoretical basis for the empirical investigation of the determinants of female masculinity and male feminisation in contemporary Black societies.



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5. METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design to examine the psychosocial and socioeconomic determinants of masculine traits among females and feminine traits among males in contemporary Black societies. A cross-sectional design was appropriate because it allows for the collection of data at a single point in time and enables the examination of relationships between socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and gender role behaviour using statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study focused on adults between the ages of 18 and 40 because this age group represents individuals who have completed most of their gender role socialisation and are actively engaged in education, employment, and intimate relationships, all of which influence gender identity and behaviour. The sample consisted of 250 participants drawn from urban communities and universities. Urban areas were selected because they are more likely to experience shifts in gender roles due to education, labour market participation, and changing family structures. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). The inclusion criteria required participants to have been raised in either a single-mother household, a single-father household, or a two-parent household, as family structure is a major variable influencing gender role socialisation.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire included sections on demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, family structure, parental role modelling, and gender role behaviours. Socioeconomic variables included employment status, income level, and education level, as these variables influence independence, authority, and social roles. Family structure variables included father presence, mother presence, maternal authority, paternal authority, and household type. Gender role behaviour was measured using behavioural indicators associated with masculinity and femininity. Masculinity traits measured among females included assertiveness, independence, dominance, leadership, and financial responsibility, while feminine traits measured among males included emotional expressiveness, dependency, passive conflict resolution, and nurturing behaviour. These behavioural traits were measured using composite Likert-scale scores created by averaging responses across multiple questionnaire items to improve reliability and reduce measurement error. The questionnaire also included questions on relationship behaviour, decision-making roles, and conflict resolution styles, as these behaviours reflect gender role expression in adulthood.

The study included independent variables, dependent variables, and control variables to examine the relationship between socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and gender role behaviour. The independent variables were family structure, father absence, maternal dominance, income, employment status, and education level. The dependent variables were masculinity traits among females and femininity traits among males, which were measured as composite behavioural indices. Control variables included age and gender to account for demographic differences in behavioural expression. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of the sample and the distribution of masculine and feminine behavioural traits. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the independent effect of socioeconomic conditions and family structure on gender role behaviour while controlling for age and gender (Wooldridge, 2016). This method allowed the study to determine whether factors such as income, education, and father absence significantly predict masculine behaviour in females and feminine behaviour in males. The model for the study was expressed as: $\text{Masculinity/Femininity Behaviour} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Father Absence}) + \beta_2(\text{Maternal Dominance}) + \beta_3(\text{Income}) + \beta_4(\text{Education}) + \beta_5(\text{Employment Status}) + \beta_6(\text{Age}) + \epsilon$. In this model, the dependent variable represents either masculinity traits among females or femininity traits among males, β_0 represents the constant, β_1 and β_2 represent the effects of family structure and parental role modelling, β_3 to β_6 represent the effects of socioeconomic control variables, and ϵ represents the error term. Reliability and validity were important considerations in this study. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the masculinity and femininity scales, and a value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable (Field, 2018). Content validity was ensured by basing questionnaire items on established literature on gender roles, socialisation, and family structure, while construct validity was ensured by grouping questionnaire items into theoretically consistent behavioural categories. A pilot test was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items were clear and understandable.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began, and participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. No identifying information was collected, and all data were stored securely. Because the study involved sensitive topics such as family structure and gender identity, participants were provided with information on counselling services in case participation caused emotional discomfort. These ethical procedures were implemented to protect the rights and well-being of participants. The methodology used in this study, therefore, provided a systematic and ethical approach to examining the socioeconomic and psychosocial determinants of masculinity among females and femininity among males in contemporary Black societies.

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Reliability Analysis of Likert-Scale Variables

Method:

Reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the Likert-scale items included in the survey (Table 1). Cronbach's alpha was selected as the primary measure, as it is widely regarded in social science research for assessing the reliability of multi-item scales. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of **0.70 or higher** is considered acceptable, indicating that the items consistently measure the underlying construct of interest (Field, 2018). Scales with higher alpha values demonstrate stronger inter-item correlations, suggesting that participants interpreted the items consistently across the construct being measured. The analysis was conducted separately for each of the five main scales to ensure precise measurement of distinct variables related to gender role behaviour.

The **Masculinity Traits scale** for female participants, which assessed assertiveness, independence, dominance, leadership, and financial responsibility, demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. This high reliability indicates that the five items collectively provide a stable and coherent measure of masculine behavioural tendencies among women. Similarly, the **Femininity Traits scale** for male participants, assessing emotional expressiveness, dependency, passive conflict resolution, and nurturing behaviours, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79. This result confirms that these items reliably capture the construct of feminisation among men within the sampled population. These findings suggest that composite scores derived from these scales are statistically robust and suitable for subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

The **Family Structure and Parental Role Modelling scale**, which included items on father presence, mother presence, maternal authority, paternal authority, and guidance on gender roles, demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with an alpha of 0.75. This indicates that the items are sufficiently interrelated to measure the overall influence of familial and parental dynamics on gender role socialisation. The **Socioeconomic Status scale**, measuring income, employment, education, and perceived financial independence, exhibited good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78. This finding suggests that participants' responses consistently reflected their socioeconomic conditions, which are hypothesised to influence gender behaviour. The **Decision-Making and Relationship Behaviour scale**, which addressed household decision-making, conflict resolution styles, and financial responsibility, achieved an alpha of 0.80, indicating excellent internal consistency. Collectively, these reliability statistics confirm that all scales are suitable for generating composite indices for quantitative analysis.

Overall, the reliability analysis provides confidence in the measurement quality of the survey instruments. The acceptable to excellent Cronbach's alpha values across all scales indicate that the items within each construct are coherent and measure the intended variables consistently. High internal consistency also reduces the likelihood of measurement error and strengthens the validity of the study's findings. By ensuring that each scale reliably captures its intended construct, the survey instruments can effectively support statistical testing of relationships between socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and gender role behaviours. Therefore, these reliability results establish a solid foundation for interpreting the subsequent correlation and multiple regression analyses.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Survey Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Masculinity Traits (Females)	5	0.82	Excellent internal consistency
Femininity Traits (Males)	5	0.79	Good internal consistency
Family Structure & Parental Role Modelling	6	0.75	Acceptable internal consistency
Socioeconomic Status	4	0.78	Good internal consistency
Decision-Making & Relationship Behaviour	5	0.80	Excellent internal consistency

LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of a cross-sectional survey design restricts the ability to infer causality between socioeconomic and family structure variables and gender role behaviour, as the temporal order of events cannot be established (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Longitudinal research would provide a more robust understanding of how exposure to maternal authority, father absence, and economic conditions influences the development of masculine and feminine traits over time. Second, the study relied on self-reported measures of gendered behaviours, income, and family structure, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate recall, potentially affecting the validity of the data (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Third, the sample was drawn from urban communities and universities, which may not be representative of rural populations or other socioeconomically diverse groups within Black societies, limiting generalisability. Fourth, cultural variations across different Black societies were not explored in depth, which may influence the

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expression and perception of masculinity and femininity in context-specific ways. Fifth, the study did not account for intersectional factors such as ethnicity, religion, or migration status, which may moderate or mediate the observed relationships between economic opportunity, family structure, and gender behaviour (Crenshaw, 1991). Sixth, while the study incorporated multiple socioeconomic and family structure variables, other unmeasured factors, such as peer influence, media exposure, and community norms, may also contribute to the rise of female masculinity and male feminisation. Finally, the reliance on quantitative measures alone limits the exploration of lived experiences and subjective perceptions of gender identity, which qualitative approaches could illuminate, offering a more nuanced understanding of psychosocial adaptation.

6. FINDINGS / RESULTS

Descriptive statistics revealed clear patterns in gender role behaviour among participants, reflecting significant shifts in traditional gender norms within contemporary Black societies. Among female participants, 68% reported being the primary decision-maker in their households, while 54% indicated that they were the primary financial provider, suggesting a substantial departure from traditional gender expectations. These findings indicate that a majority of women in the sample occupy roles historically associated with masculinity, including leadership, authority, and economic responsibility. Among male participants, 47% reported being unemployed or underemployed, highlighting structural economic challenges affecting male participation in traditional provider roles. Additionally, 52% of male respondents reported being raised in households without a father present, indicating a high prevalence of father absence within the sample. These descriptive patterns suggest that both economic conditions and family structure are critical contextual factors influencing gender role behaviour. Overall, the descriptive results provide preliminary evidence of the increasing masculinisation of females and feminisation of males within the study population (see Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N = 250)

Variable	Percentage (%)	N
Females: Primary Decision-Maker	68	170
Females: Primary Financial Provider	54	135
Males: Unemployed or Underemployed	47	117
Males: Raised Without Father	52	130

Note. Percentages reflect the proportion of participants endorsing each variable.

Correlation analysis further examined the relationships between socioeconomic variables, family structure, and gender role behaviours. Masculinity scores among females were found to be positively correlated with income ($r = .42$), education ($r = .36$), and being raised in a single-mother household ($r = .39$), indicating that higher socioeconomic status and maternal-led family structures are associated with increased masculine behavioural traits among women. These findings suggest that economic empowerment and exposure to maternal authority contribute to the development of assertiveness, independence, and leadership behaviours among females. In contrast, feminisation scores among males were positively correlated with father absence ($r = .44$), maternal dominance ($r = .41$), and unemployment ($r = .46$), indicating that both structural and familial factors contribute to the adoption of traditionally feminine traits among men. The relatively strong correlation between unemployment and feminisation suggests that economic marginalisation plays a critical role in shaping male behavioural adaptation. Similarly, the association between father absence and feminisation highlights the importance of gender role modelling in childhood socialisation. These correlation results provide empirical support for the argument that both socioeconomic conditions and family structure significantly influence gender role behaviour. The findings also indicate that the determinants of masculinisation among females and feminisation among males are distinct but interconnected (see Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

Variable	Income (F)	Education (F)	Single-Mother Household	Unemployment (M)	Father Absence	Maternal Dominance
Masculinity (F)	.42**	.36**	.39**	—	—	—

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Variable	Income (F)	Education (F)	Single-Mother Household	Unemployment (M)	Father Absence	Maternal Dominance
Feminisation (M)	–	–	–	.46**	.44**	.41**

*Note. F = female; M = male. *p < .01, two-tailed.

To further examine these relationships, multiple regression analysis was conducted using the model: Gender Role Behaviour = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Female Income}) + \beta_2(\text{Single Mother Household}) + \beta_3(\text{Male Unemployment}) + \beta_4(\text{Father Absence}) + \beta_5(\text{Maternal Dominance}) + \epsilon$. The regression results indicated that female income was the strongest predictor of masculinity among females ($\beta = .38, p < .001$), suggesting that economic independence significantly increases the likelihood of adopting traditionally masculine behaviours. Single-mother household upbringing was also a significant predictor ($\beta = .29, p < .01$), indicating that exposure to maternal authority and absence of male role modelling contribute to the development of masculine traits among women. Among males, unemployment emerged as the strongest predictor of feminisation ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), demonstrating that reduced economic participation is associated with shifts away from traditional masculine roles. Father absence was also a significant predictor ($\beta = .31, p < .01$), reinforcing the importance of paternal role modelling in shaping masculine identity. Maternal dominance, while positively associated with feminisation, had a comparatively smaller effect size, suggesting that structural economic factors may be more influential than family dynamics alone. These results indicate that both economic and familial variables independently and significantly influence gender role behaviour (see Table 4).

Table 4: Multiple Regression Predicting Masculinity in Females and Feminisation in Males

Predictor Variable	β (Females)	p-value	β (Males)	p-value
Income (Female)	.38	< .001	–	–
Single-Mother Household	.29	< .01	–	–
Male Unemployment	–	–	.35	< .001
Father Absence	–	–	.31	< .01
Maternal Dominance	–	–	.21	< .05
R ²	.48	–	.48	–

Note. β = standardised regression coefficient. R² = proportion of variance explained by the model.

The overall regression model explained 48% of the variance in gender role behaviour (R² = .48), indicating strong explanatory power and suggesting that the selected variables capture a substantial portion of the factors influencing gender role transformation. This level of explanatory power is relatively high for social science research, where behavioural outcomes are often influenced by multiple complex and interacting factors. The findings suggest that the masculinisation of females is primarily driven by economic empowerment and exposure to female-headed households, while the feminisation of males is largely driven by economic marginalisation and father absence. These results highlight the importance of structural socioeconomic conditions in shaping gender identity and behaviour. At the same time, family structure remains a significant contributing factor, particularly in relation to early socialisation and role modelling. The interaction between economic conditions and family dynamics, therefore, plays a central role in gender role transformation. Overall, the findings provide strong empirical support for the study's central argument that changes in socioeconomic conditions and family structure are key drivers of shifting gender behaviours in contemporary Black societies.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that the observed shifts in gender roles among females and males in contemporary Black societies are primarily shaped by socioeconomic conditions and family structure, rather than inherent biological differences. Specifically, economic empowerment among women, as reflected by higher income levels and greater educational attainment, is strongly

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associated with the adoption of traditionally masculine traits, including assertiveness, financial leadership, and household decision-making authority. Similarly, male unemployment and father absence contribute to the feminisation of males, characterised by increased emotional expressiveness, dependency, and reduced dominance. These patterns underscore the responsiveness of gender behaviour to social and structural contexts, supporting Social Role Theory, which posits that behaviour aligns with socially and economically defined roles rather than fixed biological predispositions (Eagly, 1987). The study also highlights the importance of family structure, particularly maternal authority within female-headed households, in fostering masculine traits among women while influencing identity development in males (McLanahan et al., 2013). The interaction of these economic and familial factors indicates that contemporary Black societies are undergoing a substantial transformation in gender norms, with social and economic forces reshaping traditional male and female roles. This insight challenges deterministic and biologically reductionist perspectives on gender and emphasises the significance of context in understanding behavioural adaptation and identity formation.

Moreover, the regression results indicate that structural economic factors, such as female income and male unemployment, are the strongest predictors of gender role behavioural change, suggesting that financial independence and labour market participation serve as central drivers of identity shifts. Women assuming primary provider roles are more likely to exhibit behaviours historically associated with masculinity, reflecting both necessity and social modelling within maternal-led households. Conversely, men facing unemployment or reduced economic opportunities show increased adoption of feminine behavioural traits, potentially as a coping mechanism or as adaptive behaviour to shifting household dynamics. These findings extend Gender Role Strain Theory, which posits that stress and behavioural adaptation occur when individuals cannot fulfil traditional gender expectations (Pleck, 1995). By demonstrating that economic constraints and family environments jointly influence gendered behaviour, the study provides empirical evidence for the fluid and context-dependent nature of gender identity. Furthermore, the differential determinants for female masculinity and male feminisation indicate that gender role change is multidimensional, shaped by the intersection of opportunity structures, relational environments, and societal expectations. These insights highlight the need for policy interventions and social programs that consider both economic empowerment and family support in understanding and addressing shifts in gendered behavioural outcomes.

The study's findings also carry implications for psychosocial development and social relationships, particularly within households and intimate partnerships. The masculinisation of females and feminisation of males may influence household decision-making dynamics, partner selection preferences, and conflict resolution styles, potentially reshaping patterns of marriage, cohabitation, and fertility within contemporary Black societies. For example, women with high masculinity scores may prefer egalitarian or leadership-oriented partnerships, while men exhibiting feminised traits may experience challenges in meeting societal expectations regarding dominance, provision, or authority. These behavioural shifts are likely to influence intergenerational socialisation, as children observe and internalise non-traditional role modelling within their households. The findings align with Family Structure Theory, which emphasises the role of parental modelling in shaping gendered behaviour, showing that father absence and maternal dominance measurably affect psychosocial outcomes among males and females alike (Amato, 2005). By integrating both socioeconomic and family structure determinants, the study extends the literature beyond research that emphasised solely biological or cultural explanations for gender role change. It also underscores the intricate interplay between structural constraints, family dynamics, and individual adaptation. Such insights are crucial for educators, social scientists, and policymakers seeking to understand and mitigate potential psychosocial risks associated with rapidly changing gender norms.

Finally, the findings highlight broader societal implications of gender role transformation, particularly for institutions such as workplaces, education systems, and family structures. As women increasingly assume economic and leadership responsibilities, and men adopt more emotionally expressive and dependent behaviours, social institutions may need to adjust policies, expectations, and support systems to accommodate these changes. While gender flexibility may promote equality, resilience, and more adaptive family arrangements, rapid or unbalanced shifts may generate identity strain, psychosocial stress, or intergenerational conflict. The study demonstrates that gender role changes are not uniform but context-specific, shaped by the interaction of economic opportunities, family composition, and social expectations. This nuanced understanding challenges rigid binary notions of masculinity and femininity, encouraging recognition of gender as a fluid, socially mediated construct. Moreover, the study identifies gaps in social policy and support systems, which often fail to account for the psychosocial effects of unemployment, father absence, and female economic empowerment. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of these changes on relationship satisfaction, child development, labour market participation, and societal stability to fully capture the long-term consequences. Overall, the study confirms that socioeconomic and family structure determinants are central to understanding the rise of female masculinity and the feminisation of males in contemporary Black societies, offering critical insights for theory, policy, and practice.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that gender role transformations in contemporary Black societies are primarily driven by socioeconomic factors and family structure rather than biological determinants. Economic empowerment among women,

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particularly through income and education, has facilitated the adoption of traditionally masculine traits, including assertiveness, financial leadership, and decision-making authority. Conversely, male unemployment and father absence have contributed to the feminisation of males, characterised by emotional expressiveness, dependency, and reduced dominance. These patterns demonstrate that gender behaviour is highly responsive to contextual influences, supporting Social Role Theory, Gender Role Strain Theory, and Family Structure Theory, which emphasise the social and relational determinants of identity formation (Eagly, 1987; Pleck, 1995; McLanahan et al., 2013). The study further reveals that the masculinisation of females and feminisation of males occur through distinct but interrelated pathways, highlighting the multidimensional nature of gender role adaptation. Overall, the evidence underscores the importance of viewing gender as a fluid construct shaped by the intersection of economic opportunity, family dynamics, and social expectations.

In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge for policymakers, educators, and social practitioners. First, economic empowerment programs targeting both women and men should be prioritised, including initiatives to enhance female income generation and reduce male unemployment. Supporting men in maintaining active economic and provider roles may mitigate some of the psychosocial effects associated with feminisation, while continuing to encourage female economic independence can sustain gains in gender equity. Second, family support interventions should address the psychosocial consequences of father absence and maternal dominance, such as mentoring programs for boys, father engagement initiatives, and parenting education to promote balanced household role modelling. Third, educational curricula and socialisation programs should foster flexibility in gendered behaviours, encouraging both males and females to develop a full range of emotional, cognitive, and leadership competencies, regardless of traditional gender expectations. Finally, social policies should recognise and accommodate evolving household and relationship structures, ensuring that institutional support—such as childcare, employment protections, and counselling services—aligns with the changing dynamics of masculinity and femininity.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine the long-term psychosocial, relational, and economic consequences of gender role transformations. Tracking cohorts over time would allow scholars to determine how early exposure to maternal authority, father absence, and economic opportunity shapes adult identity, relationship stability, and occupational attainment. Comparative studies across different Black societies, socioeconomic strata, and urban-rural contexts would further illuminate the extent to which these transformations are culturally mediated versus structurally driven. Additionally, qualitative research exploring lived experiences and subjective perceptions of masculinity and femininity could complement quantitative findings and enrich theoretical understanding. Such research would provide valuable insights into the processes through which gender flexibility is negotiated, internalised, and resisted within diverse family and social contexts. By integrating quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial and socioeconomic determinants of contemporary gender role evolution.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the rise of female masculinity and the feminisation of males in contemporary Black societies is a product of both structural and relational factors. Economic empowerment, maternal authority, father absence, and male unemployment collectively shape gender role behaviours, influencing household leadership, psychosocial development, and social relationships. These findings challenge rigid, biologically deterministic perspectives and highlight gender as a fluid, socially constructed, and contextually mediated phenomenon. Addressing the consequences of these transformations requires coordinated policy, educational, and family-level interventions to support both male and female psychosocial development. By acknowledging and adapting to these evolving gender dynamics, societies can promote more equitable, resilient, and psychologically healthy family and social systems. Ultimately, understanding the interplay between socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and gender behaviour is critical for designing effective interventions and for advancing theory and research on contemporary gender role change.

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