

Mental Health and Life Satisfaction amongst Adolescents in Context of Sex-role Orientation

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on 50 androgynous and 50 sex typed female adolescent respondents of Vapi, district Valsad, Gujrat to examine the effect of sex role orientation on mental health as well as life satisfaction of the respondents. It was hypothesized that the androgynous respondents would differ significantly from one another in terms of mental health and life satisfaction. For the purpose, Bem's Sex role Orientation Inventory, Kumar and Thakur's Mental Health Scale and Alam's & Srivastava's LS Scale were used to measure sex role orientation, mental health and life-satisfaction of respondents. Besides, a PDS was used to get other necessary information about the respondents. The data were obtained in accordance with their manuals and analysed using chi-square test. The result confirmed the hypotheses. It was concluded that androgyny is conducive to sound mental health and high life satisfaction. The female androgynous respondents excelled over their sex-typed female respondents in terms of both mental health and life satisfaction.

Introduction:

There are three major components in the present study which need elaboration the term mental health is one of them. Mental health is of great concern to psychologists. Many people, when they hear the mental health, think of mental illness, but mental health is far more than an absence of mental illness. In general, mental health refers to the ability to balance feelings, desires, ambitions and ideals in one's daily life. It means the ability to face and accept the realities of life.

Life satisfaction refers to a feeling of optimism in life. It is an attitudinal disposition that reflects satisfying present and prospects a happy and prosperous future with desired adequacy of resources and to achieve the goal of self-actualization.

Masculinity and femininity or one's gender identity (Spence, 1979) refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculatlive or

feminine given what it appears to be man or women in society. These two constructs are useually conceived as tow independent, orthogonal dimensions (Baucom, 1976; Bem, 1974). Masculinity in sex role theory characterise assertiveness, self-confidence, task-orientation etc whereas famininity charactrise increased culture socialization, interpersonal sensitivity, openness in the expression of emotion and high importance placed on relationships (Baucom, 1980, Bem, 1974) emphasized that androgyny refers to the possibilities that both masculine and faminine behaviours reside in varying degree in each individual, rather than so called faminine behaviours being assigned to women and masculine behaviours to men. Thus, the sex-role orientation involving both male and female altributes such that the person becomes highly flexible in adopting both instrumental and expressive functions, as per the situational demands, irrespective of one's sex, is

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known as 'Androgynous' orientation. Initially, Ben Conceptualised androgyny as balance of masculine and feminine traits, but later operationalized the concept as having high level of both masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1981). Undifferentiated person is one having low on both masculinity and femininity. Androgyny increases with a decrease in masculinity and femininity.

Researches revealed that good mental health of mothers is the basic urge of infant's mental health (Baucom et al., 1979, 1983). Several researchers argued that not only healthy males can assume feminine traits and healthy females can assume masculine traits but androgynous individuals are healthier than their sex-typed counterparts (Bem, 1974; Spence and Halmreic, 1978, 1979; Berzins, Welling and Welter, 1978). Androgynous and masculine females are mentally healthier than their feminine counterparts (Nevid et al., 2005; Lee., 2005, Debra et al., 1980; Gilbert et al., 1981). Masculinity rather than femininity or the combination of both is the pre-dominant correlate of mental health and adjustment (Alan et al., 1982; Burchardt, et al., 2004, Lefkowitz and Zeldow, 2006). Researchers revealed greater behavioural flexibility in androgynous individuals across various situations (Bem, 1975; Bem and Lenney, 1976) as well as their higher self-esteem (Lundy et al., 1987; Ginn 1975; Spence et al., 1975) and positive outcomes attributing behavioural value (Kelly and Worell, 1978; Taylor and Hall, 1982). Androgynous leadership style is most appropriate for organisational effectiveness and high performance (Judith, 1997, Korabik et al., 1990, Norlander, et al. 2000; Harington et al., 1981; Daewo Park, 1997., Guastell, 2002) reported that androgynous people are emotionally intelligent.

There is, however, a clear deficit of studies linking sex-role orientations with mental health and life satisfaction. Moreover, an androgynous person possessing traits of assertiveness, self-confidence, task-orientation, and the tendency not to express

tender feelings will lead a sound mental health and life satisfaction. Further, androgynous people are confident and will not feel shy in interacting with other people resulting into have sound health and higher degree of life satisfaction. So, an androgynous person would be found with sound mental health and high life satisfaction as compared to their sex-typed persons with mental health and life satisfaction. So, it seems that there is a link of sex-type orientation. In view of the above, the present comparative empirical study was undertaken.

Objectives :

- (i) to compare androgynous and sex-typed female rural respondents in terms of their mental health.
- (ii) to make a comparison between androgynous and sex-typed female rural respondents in terms of their life satisfaction.

Hypotheses :

- (i) Androgynous and sex-typed female respondents will differ significantly from one another in terms of mental health.
- (ii) Androgynous and sex-typed female respondents will differ significantly in terms of their life satisfaction.

Method of Study :

Sample : The study was conducted on an incidental-cum-purposive sample of 100 female adolescent respondents belonging to +2 schools of Vapi, district Valsad, Gujrat, who were selected from among 250 respondents. They were equal in number (N = 50 each) in respect of androgynous as well as sex-typed traits. In other respect they were matched so far as practicable.

Research Tools :

1. A Personal Data Sheet was employed for collecting necessary information about the respondents.
2. Bem's Sex-role orientations Inventory : It comprises of 60 adjectives including

masculine, feminine and socially desirable but neutral traits, which are to be rated from 1 to 7 depending upon the extent to which it suits oneself. 1=almost never true', 2=rarely true, 3= seldom true, 4= half true half untrue, 5= often true, 6= mostly true, 7= almost always true. Thus, scores are obtained across three dimensions: Masculinity, Femininity and Androgyny. Using median-split method, individuals who are high on masculinity & low on femininity or vice-versa are termed as sex-typed. Those who are high on both masculinity & femininity are termed as Androgynous. Androgyny increase with a decrease in a difference between masculinity & femininity.

3. Mithila Mental Health Status Inventory (MMHSI) by Kumar & Thakur was

employed to measure the various dimensions of mental health of the respondents.

4. Life satisfaction Scale by Alam and Srivastava was used to measure the life satisfaction of the respondents.

Procedure

Bem's Sex-role Orientation Inventory along with PDS were employed on the respondents. The scoring was made as per the direction of the manual concerned. The subjects were grouped into androgynous and sex-typed groups as mention earlier. Then 160 respondents were subjected to Mental Health Status Inventory and Life Satisfaction Scale. The scoring was made according to its manual. The obtained data were analysed using chi-square test.

Results and Interpretations

Table - 1

Chi-square showing the association of sex-role orientation with mental health of the respondents.

Sex-role Orientation	N	Mental Health		c ²	df	P
		Sound	Poor			
Androgynous	50	73% (N = 37)	27% (N = 13)	33.96	1	<.01
Sex-typed	50	32% (N = 16)	68% (N = 34)			

It is obvious from the table that sex-role orientation has significant impact on mental health of the respondents. Respondents belonging to androgynous group excel over their counterparts belonging to sex-typed group of respondents in terms of mental health. (c² = 33.96; df = 1; P<.01). The finding might be interpreted in terms of better control over emotion on the part of the respondents belonging to androgynous group as compared to their counterpart respondents leading to sound mental health.

Table - 2

Chi-square showing the association of sex-role orientation with life satisfaction of the respondents.

Sex-role Orientation	N	Life Satisfaction		c ²	df	P
		High	Low			
Androgynous	50	71% (N = 36)	29% (N = 14)	29.17	1	<.01
Sex-typed	50	32% (N = 16)	68% (N = 34)			

It is clear from the result table that life satisfaction of respondents of androgynous male group of respondents is very high 71% (N = 36), whereas for their counterparts respondents of sex-typed group it is only 32% (N = 16). The chi-square is found significant (c² = 29.17; df=1; P<.01). Thus it is concluded that androgynous is conducive to high level of life satisfaction.

Discussion:

It is evident that sex typed students maintained larger personal space as compared to androgynous students. The androgynous student possess high self-concept, self-confidence and so they interact with others with least discomfort. Endowed with social self they do not feel shy, they are more participative and so they possess sound mental health. Contrary to it, students possessing sex-typed traits possess comparatively lower self-concept and self-confidence and are shy, lack confidence and are hesitating and thereby fail to be socially participative. The findings have got support from Lundy et al. (1987). Sex-typed students have an internalized sex role standard and are motivated to maintain consistency between their behavior and this standard. Thus, the masculine sex-typed students would inhibit behaviors that are stereo-typically feminine and vice-versa. It also claims that the assertiveness of a highly masculine student might have a self-defeating, abrasive quality, and the gentleness of a purely feminine student might have an element of intellectual passivity. Both the types of these students might show serious limitations in how they handle difficult and delicate personal and interpersonal situations.

Moreover, masculine students assume competence and 'hard' work by overemphasizing technical capability and individual achievement, while de-emphasizing other, equally important skills such as facilitating collective achievement, team building, or the ability to relate effectively to personal external affairs. They also believe that Androgyny softens their style of interacting and living. The situation is vice-versa for the feminine students. Most of them feel privileged in stepping out of a role to which they have become habituated, especially when they become aware of the need to be more collaborative, to be less competitive, and to seek greater openness instead of coolness. Resultantly, they maintained smaller personal space as compared to the androgynous students. On the other hand, androgynous students might deal with conflicting situations more successfully and effectively by virtue of being forceful and assertive

at one occasion and gentle & sensitive, at the other. In sex typed American business executives great reluctance to reveal their 'feeling of dependence' even to their wives, which was presumed by them to be their signs of weakness and that culture doesn't accept these things in men. Hence, the characteristic behavior of sex-typed individuals is reinforced in the fashion it is. It clearly indicates that students who eschew softer, relational skills, such as listening and inquiry in favor of more stereotypically masculine skills as persuasion and advocacy resorting to hyper-aggressive sales/management style are going to be fraught with problems leading to maintenance smaller personal space and personal effectiveness

Androgynous respondents are found to be optimally form of action falling into a state of 'anomy'. Orlofsky and Windle (1978) found that androgynous subjects possessed sound mental health and high life satisfaction along with greatest behavioral adaptability, performing well on both masculine and feminine tasks while un-differentiated subjects performed poorly on both tasks, but particularly so on sex-reversed tasks. Thus, behavioral flexibility was shown to derive from strong identifications with both masculine roles ie androgyny rather than from a simple lack of identification with either role. A similar position was advanced by Glazer and Dusek (1985) who specified that in the assessment of instrumental self-concept domains, masculine and androgynous persons will be advantaged, and in the assessment of expressive domains, feminine and androgynous persons will accrue maximum benefits. But, individuals who fail to hold neither domain of self-concept, will be the most disadvantaged. Also, androgynous subjects scored high in personal intergration than undifferentiated peers (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Fletcher & Kaeufer, 2003).

Philips & Ziller (1997) emphasized that person with more complex self-concepts involving both masculine & feminine behaviors attend to a broader range of stimuli, are more open to feedback from others, and are more responsive to a wide variety of other people, leading into

maintaining sound health and high life satisfaction. They have divergent thinking with the ability to understand that opposites can stand in a complementary fashion rather than contradictory relationship. Also, at supervisory leadership positions they are rated as better handlers of conflict situations than their masculine or feminine peers.

Similarly, androgynous students with a complex self-schema, consider a broader range of information about self and doing so creates a means by which the self-schema can be further elaborated or changed. They act as well as take one step back to gain perspective whether one has selected the most effective behavior to meet the objectives or not. Hence, such students are stable individuals with flexible cognitive structures. They not only disclose themselves to others but also welcome others feedback on their actions. In addition to it, they are sensitive to the outcome of their actions. Thus, along with strategy planning they are also better at listening and responding to the customer needs which improves professional skills & in turn self-efficacy. Shifren & Bauserman (1996) proposed that androgynous persons are psychologically advantaged when compared with sex-typed and undifferentiated individuals in terms of behavioral flexibility and psychological well-being. Androgynous strategies are active coping approaches that are related to greater feelings of satisfaction and wellbeing and to less psychological strain and distress. Thus, in dual expectation situations they lead to better psychological outcomes than instrumental or expressive strategies alone.

Conclusion:

On the basis of discussion based on studied conducted by various researches we arrive at a conclusion that sex-role orientation is highly significant predictor of both mental health and life satisfaction. Those, psychologically androgynous female adolescents who maintain sound mental health and high life satisfaction are more personally effective than sex-typed adolescents. They are better able to disclose themselves, more open to feedbacks and highly perceptive than other adolescents. Psychological androgyny predicts

personal effectiveness in terms of maintaining sound mental health and life satisfaction among female adolescents. Androgyny is more conducive to maintain sound mental health and to held high life satisfaction as compared to sex-typed trait amongst adolescents.

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