

Commentary

Androgyny Psychology and its Relationship with Self-Esteem

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Abstract

The most commonly used variable to measure mental health and well-being is self-esteem. Self-esteem is an individual's feeling of belief, respect and value of his or her own self. The present study addresses issues concerning the potential relationship between androgyny (subsuming both male and female traits) and self-esteem. The study aims to probe the influence of gender-role perception and gender on self-esteem of participants. A 2 (Androgyny and Sextype) \times 2 (Male and Female) research design has been employed in the study. Gender role perception and gender are the independent variables and self-esteem is taken as the dependent measure. Initially, 220 participants within the age range of 30-45 years from various areas of Bhubaneswar city in Odisha were randomly chosen for the study. They were administered the Sahoo Sex Role Inventory to determine the androgynous and sextyped orientations of the participants. Based upon their scores the participants were divided into 4 groups – Androgynous Female, Androgynous Male, Sex-Typed Female and Sex-typed Male. 20 participants with highest scores from each group were considered for further study, thus making the total sample size of 80 (40 Females and 40 Males). The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was then administered on these 80 participants. The interpretation of data revealed that the participants who were of androgynous gender role orientation had higher self-esteem than the sex-typed orientation participants, which is supported by the literature, a significant difference between males and females have been obtained. It has been inferred that the self-esteem of males is more than the females. Further, a significant interaction effect has been seen between gender role perception and gender.

Introduction

Adherence to feminine traits by the female gender had been culturally promoted and socially desired. A few studies, however, entertained the possibility that healthy men and women have some common attributes in their gender orientation. Androgyny and masculinity were found related to positive mental health.

In terms of gender sex refers to just those biological factors that distinguish males and females, and 'sex differences' are factors (biological, cultural, etc.) related to sex. It is important to emphasize that a sex difference is not necessarily biological, although it does rest on an assumed common understanding of a biological distinction between men and women.

The term 'androgyny' has its roots in classical mythology and literature.[2] 'Androgyny'

comes from the Greek word andros meaning 'man' and gyne meaning 'woman'. An androgynous person is, therefore, one who has both masculine and feminine characteristics. Androgyny refers to sex-role flexibility and adaptability. The major underlying assumption of this perspective of sex roles is that the individual may act in either a traditionally masculine or a traditionally feminine manner, depending on situation constraints and needs. Research indicates that the gender-role identity is a good predictor of psychological adjustment. Masculine and androgynous children and adults have a higher sense of self-esteem, whereas feminine individuals often think poorly of themselves.

Feminine women seem to have adjustment difficulties.[3] The Bem Sex Role Inventory was designed to facilitate empirical research on psychological androgyny. A sex-typed woman is one who is cooperative, dependent, and yielding, whereas a sex-typed man is one who acts as a leader and is aggressive and assertive. An androgynous person is characterized as having both high masculine and high feminine traits without employing a gender schema; circumstances dictate which trait – feminine or masculine – is exhibited by an androgynous person. Thus, she defined masculinity and femininity in terms of sex-linked social desirability. An individual can adhere strictly to one role (masculine or feminine), weakly to both roles (androgynous), or strongly to both (undifferentiated) or to neither (ambiguous). Although the definition of a particular role may be culturally dependent, we can presume that because gender roles are self-perpetuating through processes of socialization they are rarely subject to substantial change. In gender role theory, the feminine style of coping is to deal with the emotion associated with the stressor (emotion focused) whereas the masculine style is to deal directly with the stressor (problem focused). Feminine, emotion-focused coping is associated with higher levels of depression than masculine problem-focused coping. Compared with women who identify with more flexible gender roles, women who adopt traditional feminine gender roles appear to have lower self-esteem, find stressful events

more aversive than women who also show some masculine-type traits, are less capable of bouncing back from failure experiences, are more likely to believe that women are to be seen and not heard, and are more likely to conform to group pressure. Individuals with desirable assertive qualities, including both masculine and androgynous individuals, are proposed to experience higher levels of psychological well-being than do their feminine counterparts.

Materials and Methods

After due consent, each participant was subjected to psychosocial performance designed for this study (pretested and validated), personal attribute questionnaire (a 24-paired-item scale, each pair describing contradictory characteristics in which scoring brings out the masculinity and the femininity response of each individual), General health questionnaire 12 (GHQ, a self-administered standardized 12-item screening test sensitive for the presence of psychiatric disorders in individuals that is not designed to detect symptoms that occur with specific psychiatric diagnosis), Beck's depressive inventory (BDI, a self-administered standardized 21-item instrument to assess the presence and severity of depression with a reliability of 0.73–0.92 in nonpsychiatric samples), Beck's anxiety inventory (BAI, a self-administered standardized 21-item instrument to assess the presence and severity of anxiety), and Perceived stress scale (PSS, a most widely used 10-item psychological instrument to measure the degree to which situations in an individual's life are appraised as stressful, which measures the perceived stress over last 1-month duration). A cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the level of masculinity and femininity and its relationship with the perception of stress and various psychopathology including anxiety and depression.

Conclusion

Therefore, it has been inferred that males and females do not differ with regard to self-esteem. Further, no significant interaction effect has been seen between gender role perception and

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gender. IndexTerms androgyny, gender role perception, mental health, self-esteem, sex-type, well-being.

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