Gender Difference in Perception of Masculine and Feminine Gender Roles among Primary Schools Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is statistically significant gender difference in perception of masculine and feminine gender roles. Data were collected from 156 randomly selected respondents from Burayu Primary and Lalisies Talent Schools Oromia regional state Ethiopia. The reliability and face validity questionnaire was checked via pilot test. The results revealed that a substantial sex difference in perception of gender roles. That means females are socialized to be more feminine than males are. However, both sexes did not differ significantly with respect to perception of masculine gender role. Implications of the results for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Burayu, Children, Gender role perception, Primary Schools

Introduction and Background

Regarding gender difference in perception of gender roles, many studies identified that masculinity traits are more of male's characteristics. For instance, Bakan,; Parsons & Bales, cited in Lippa (2005) noted that one set of personality traits- labeled as instrumental or agentic traits-is more associated with men, whereas another set- labeled as expressive or communal traits-is more associated with women. They discussed that Instrumental traits are goal-oriented and involves such traits like independence, assertiveness, dominance, and leadership ability. Expressive traits, on the other hand, are people-oriented, focused more on the private worlds of family and personal relationships involves traits such as warmth, sympathy, compassion, and sensitivity to others.

According to Stets and Burke (1988) males generally respond by defining themselves as masculine while females generally define themselves as feminine. Similarly, Rose and Montemayor (1994) found that boys had higher perceived social and athletic competency while girls had higher perceived romantic appeal. Moreover, study by Krampen, Effertz, Jostock and Muller (1990) reported that there were consistent gender difference in personality traits such as aggressiveness, anxiety and intelligence in which masculine traits male accounts for male score high in aggression while females are high in social anxiety. In terms of intelligence, male are greater than females in fluid intelligence which is about thinking and problem solving where as female score greater than males in crystallized intelligence which is about verbal fluency .

Several studies reported that there is sex difference in social behavior such as mate selection criteria, the roles held by men and women, for example, women into the homemaker role and men into the provider role (Eagly & Wood, 1999). The male gender role places on assertive and controlling qualities suggested that men would be especially more helpful than women when helping required as assertive intervention and also men are relatively task-oriented and women relatively concerned with interpersonal relations. That is, men apparently specialize in behavior directed to task completion and women in social activity (Eagly & Wood, 1988). Hence, the researchers intended to answer whether there is statistically significant gender difference in perception of masculine and feminine gender roles.

Methods and Materials

Study design

This study is correlational research as the relationship between different variables was examined.

Participants

The population of this study is all 7th and 8th grade students of Lalisies Talent School and Burayu Primary School. Stratified random sampling was used to draw the participants. Moreover, the researchers were formed strata on the basis of grades (7th and 8th), school and sex. Then via proportional allocation students were randomly obtained from each stratum. As a result, a total of 156 participants of which 86 female and 70 male were take part in this study. However, the data received from 24 participants were discarded from the final data analysis because they wrongly filled the items

Instrument of Data Collection

In this study demographic information in detail with gender role inventory was employed. Gender role is measured by the adopted instrument from Bem's sex role inventory. The BSRI consists of 60 personality characteristics on which respondents are asked to rate themselves on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never

or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). Bem's inventory consists of 20 items for masculine, 20 for feminine and the rest 20 items for androgyny. These items were also used by many researchers across culture and the reliability gets improved across time. Originally, Bem's (1974) reported test-retest reliability was .90 for masculinity and femininity and .93 for androgyny. For this study, only 40 items (20 for masculine and 20 for feminine) were used and those 20 items for androgyny were not included as the androgyny can be obtained from respondents score above the median in both feminine and masculine items. Those respondents' score below the median in both masculine and feminine items are considered as undifferentiated type. Again the reliability of the gender role inventory was checked by conducting pilot test and the reliability coefficient was Cronbach's Alpha 0.824. Then 36 items with greater inter item correlation were used for the final data collection and reliability coefficient was Cronbach's alpha 0.843.These instruments were developed in English language and then translated to Afan Oromo the mother tongue of the current research participants. The face validity as well as the language translation was made with the help of two language experts and the researcher. Hence, both forward and backward translations were also done.

Procedure of data collection

At first, the researchers visited both schools to get permission and cooperation. Then, the directors cooperated with the researchers in arranging the free class time on which sample of students from each class comes together in separate place to fill the data. More importantly, before letting the participants to fill the questionnaires, an agreements made between the researchers and participants about what can and cannot be done with information collected over a course of a research. Accordingly, the researchers went to the class rooms where students sit and distributed the questionnaires. It took respondents about one- half hour to complete the data at each school.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was coded, entered, cleaned and analyzed using SPSS computer software package version 21. Furthermore, the researchers computed descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to summarize the findings. On the other hand, from inferential statistics; independent sample t-test was used to compare gender difference in perception of gender role. Finally, a p-value of less than 0.05 was set to declare the significance of variables

Results

Sex Difference in Masculine and Feminine Gender Role

In order to detect whether there is sex difference in perceived feminine and masculine gender role between male and female independent sample t-test was computed and the result is as follows;

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Male and Female in Gender Role

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Masculine	Male	70	68.4429	11.32477	1.35357
	Female	86	64.6279	15.82630	1.70659
Feminine	Male	70	53.0000	14.65349	1.75143
	Female	86	65.0814	11.80849	1.27334

Table 1 shows that male respondents mean score in masculine gender role is m=68.443 with standard deviation, SD=11.32 where as female respondents mean score in masculine gender role is m=64.627 with standard deviation, SD=15.82. Regarding feminine gender role, male score mean, m=53.00 with standard deviation SD=14.65 while female score, m=65.08 with standard deviation of SD=11.80.

Table 2: Gender difference in perception of masculine and feminine gender roles

Masculine	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Std. Error Difference
M	1.694	154	.092	2.25201
F	1.751	151.650	.082	2.17821
Feminine	-5.703	154	.000	2.11837
F	-5.579	131.416	.000	2.16539

**p<.05

Table 2 reveals that there is statistically significant mean difference between male and female in feminine gender role, t=5.703, Df $_{154}$, P<0.05. This means that female are socialized to be more feminine than men do. However, there is no statistically significant difference in perception of masculine gender role between male and females.

Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

Discussion

This study found that there is statistically significant sex difference in perception of gender role. This means that females are socialized to be more feminine than males are. However, no statistically significant difference was found in perception of masculine gender role between male and females. The findings of this study go in line with other study to some extent. For instance, Rose and Montemayor (1994) found that boys had higher perceived social and athletic competency while girls had higher perceived romantic appeal. Hence, girls are identified with feminine gender role more than boys do. This implies that feminine characteristics such as social anxiety or shyness and affection are predominantly scored high by female respondents and masculine characteristics such as being competent, self-reliant, and independent shared almost equally by both male and female. Females share both feminine and masculine characteristics almost equally while boys are only inclined toward masculine gender role.

Apart from the findings of this study, Krampen, Effertz, Jostock and Muller (1990) reported that there were consistent gender difference in personality traits such as aggressiveness, anxiety and intelligence in which masculine traits male accounts for male score high in aggression while females are high in social anxiety. There may be several reasons that increase females' tendency to share masculine gender role. For example education, media, parental behavior, promotion of the right of equality between women and men by government and other bodies might contribute a lot to develop the feeling of competency, dominancy, independency and aggression in females as big as in males.

Conclusions

The finding suggested that there was sex difference in perception of gender role in that females are characterized by the tendency to be high in feminine gender role. Contrary to this, masculinity gender role is almost equally perceived to be the characteristics of both males and females.

Implications

It is important to pinpoint the relationship between gender role perception and social adjustment among adolescents to identify the impact of traditional gender role perception in day to day life. A researchers interested in this area need to include the impact of religion and rural urban difference on gender role perception.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of interest

Authors should declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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