



Mental Health of Women: The Moderating of Self-efficacy

Krishna Veni¹ and Narendra kumar²

¹Department of Psychology, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

²Department of Psychology, Cuttack, Orissa.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 8 October 2014;

Received in revised form:

28 February 2015;

Accepted: 23 March 2015;

ABSTRACT

The participants of all the four groups were compared with respect to their mental health. The result indicated that androgynous women showed better mental health than that of sex-typed women. Women with high sense of efficacy showed better mental health and scored higher in almost all dimensions of mental health than less-efficacious women.

© 2015 Elixir All rights reserved.

Keywords

Androgynous,
Sex-typed,
Mental health,
Self-efficacy.

Introduction

In the field of psychology and society at large human quality with respect to gender role is conceptualized as bipolar ends of a single continuum i.e. either masculine or feminine. Instead of characterizing femininity and masculinity as bipolar, Bem (1974) argued that “ individuals might be "androgynous" that is, they might be both masculine and feminine, both assertive and yielding, both instrumental and expressive depending on the situational appropriateness.” According to her, androgynous individual does not rely on gender as cognitive organizing principle and his/her personality combines both masculine and feminine elements. Bem (1974) specifically argues that androgyny is a psychologically healthier and more human way of being than conforming to traditional gender roles.

The sense of efficacy also enriches mental health. It refers to the “can-do” cognition of an individual. It reflects the belief of being able to control challenging environmental demands by means of taking adaptive action. It pertains to optimistic self – belief to handle critical demands that tax individual’s resources. It can be regarded as a self-confident view of one’s capability to deal with certain life stressors as efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act (Bandura, 1992). If one feels confident enough to be able to control challenges or threats, then successful action is more likely.

A substantial number of studies evinced that androgynous individuals have greater behavioural flexibility and adaptability. They change their cognitions appropriate to the situation. Androgynous individuals demonstrate greater maturity in their moral judgement (Block, 1973), a higher level of self-esteem (Spence et al, 1975), a wider range of cross-sex behaviour (Bem & Lenney, 1976) and a variety of strategies for dealing with adverse situations. In the present study it is expected that androgynous women will demonstrate better mental health compared to sex-typed ones.

Method

In this investigation, a series of activities were carried out to test the effect of gender role orientation and sense of efficacy on mental health of employed women.

Measure of Androgyny

Sahoo Sex Role Inventory (SSRI) is used as a measure of androgyny. Although Bem Sex- Role Inventory (BSRI) has been extensively used in research and application, recent concern with cultural parameters and relevance has prompted some considerations. While many items may have their stereotypic nature across cultures, it is possible that some items may be indigenously masculine (or alternatively feminine). This possibility raises the requirement of developing and validating a sex- role inventory relevant in Indian socio-cultural context.

Measure of Mental Health

Sahoo (1990b) has developed a Health Behaviour Questionnaire (HBQ) that employs semantic differential technique to measure mental health. It comprises of fifteen criteria related to health. The criteria include sense of achievement, autonomy, competence, trust, control over the environment , feeling of happiness with family, good physical health, work satisfaction, values of spiritual quality, social support, freedom from depression, plenty of social contact, effective coping with stressful situations, integrated personality, and freedom from anxiety. Bipolar adjectives are presented to denote each of the fifteen criteria. Numerals from 1 to 7 between each set of descriptions are used. The individual is asked to think of her present life condition and evaluate it using each of the seven point by encircling a number for each set to depict her mental health.

While scoring, the direction of keying is considered. The closer an individual’s rating to desired criterion, the higher is the score. Score for each criterion and overall mental health scores are computed. Overall mental health score (total score) is computed by summing each criterion score of the individual.

Procedure

The study involved a 2 (androgynous versus sex-typed) x 2 (efficacious versus less efficacious) factorial design. 120 working women were given Sahoo sex role inventory, and they were categorized into androgynous and sex-typed sub groups on the basis of the median split of their scores on the measure of androgyny. Again both androgynous and sex-typed women

subgroups on the basis of the median split of their combined scores on generalized and domain-specific self-efficacy. However the participants of these four groups were compared with respect to their mental health.

Results

The summary of the analysis of variances of androgynous versus sex-typed and efficacious versus less efficacious employed women on different dimensions of mental health scores are presented in Table-1.

Table 1. Summary of the Analysis of Variance performed on Mental Health Dimensions of Participants

Mental Health Dimensions	Sources	df	F
Physical health	GRP	1	.33
	SE	1	33.04*
	GRP X SE	1	873.58*
	Error	116	
Freedom from anxiety	GRP	1	11.14*
	SE	1	75.63*
	GRP X SE	1	29.95*
	Error	116	
Person morale	GRP	1	2.04
	SE	1	.804
	GRP X SE	1	5.58*
	Error	116	
Social support	GRP	1	1.04
	SE	1	38.15*
	GRP X SE	1	35.23*
	Error	116	
Control	GRP	1	151.31*
	SE	1	8.55*
	GRP X SE	1	11.31*
	Error	116	
Feeling of happiness in family	GRP	1	5.40*
	SE	1	13.80*
	GRP X SE	1	124.71*
	Error	116	
Effective coping	GRP	1	192.55*
	SE	1	37.53*
	GRP X SE	1	18.86*
	Error	116	
Feeling of satisfaction in work	GRP	1	322.59*
	SE	1	86.44*
	GRP X SE	1	5.14*
	Error	116	
Social contact	GRP	1	322.55*
	SE	1	44.81*
	GRP X SE	1	50.79*
	Error	116	

*P < 0.01

Discussion

The present empirical investigation examines the impact of gender role perception and sense of efficacy on mental health of employed women. The above findings clearly showed that androgynous women possessed better mental health than that of sex-typed women. Efficacious women also showed better mental health compared to less-efficacious women.

The present study also reveals that efficacious women showed better mental health than did less-efficacious women in almost all mental health dimensions. Self-efficacy is basically an adaptive process. The adaptive process is reflected in a multitude of life functions such as health, interpersonal behaviour, motivational behaviour and intellectual activities. Efficacy beliefs contribute importantly to the level and quality of human functioning. A substantial amount of studies evinced that low sense of self-efficacy is related with depression, anxiety and helplessness. A strong sense of personal efficacy is related to better health, higher achievement, control and more social integration. Sense of efficacy is a key variable for better physical and mental health.

References

- Bandura, A. (1992). Exercise of personal agency through self-efficacy mechanism. In R.Schwarzer (Ed.), *Self-efficacy : Thought control of action* (pp.3-38).Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Bem, S.L.(1974). The measurement of of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 31,634-643.
- Bem, S.L; & Lenney, E. (1976). Sex typical and avoidance of cross-sex behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33, 48-54.
- Heilburn, A.B. (1968). Sex-role instrumental expressive behaviour and psychology in females. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 41, 1106-1108.
- Hinrichsen, J.J; Follansbee, D.J; & Ganellen, R. (1981). Sex-roles related differences in self concept and mental health. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 45, 554-599.
- Schwarzer, R.(Ed.) (1981). *Measurement of Perceived self-efficacy*. Berlin: Free University.
- Spence, J.T; Helmreich, R.V, Stappe, J. (1975). Ratings of self and peers on sex-role attributes and their relation to self-esteem and conception of masculinity and femininity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 29-39.