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SEX ROLE ORIENTATION AND ITS RELATION TO AGE AMONG FEMALE ACADEMICS IN NIGERIA

MOWAIYE FAGBEMI .O.

Department of Arts and

Social Sciences Education,

Faculty of Education,

University of Ilorin,

Ilorin.

Abstract

Studies abound on gender, of which an aspect is sex role orientation of the many studies on sex role orientation in developed nations, most do not look into how sex role orientation is related to age among women in general. In Nigeria, a paucity of studies on sex role orientation and its relationship with age has been observed. This study was therefore an attempt at gap filling in this wise. The survey method was used in this study and the sample consisted of one hundred and sixteen randomly selected female University academics from southern and northern of Nigeria. One-Way Analysis of Variance and the Chi-square were used for analysis. The result revealed that sex role orientation was significantly related to age, and that androgynous subjects tend to be so, notwithstanding their age. It also seemed that as women grow older, they tend towards androgynous tendencies. On the need for gender behavioural flexibility especially in developing societies like Nigeria because of the advantages thereof; give an androgynous training to young females, and educate majority of the female populace because of their significant position as mothers and the influences they wield by that position.

Key Words: Sex role orientation, female academics, androgynous lecturers
Introduction

Human beings are labeled on two gender poles – masculine or feminine. Gender differentiation is much more than biological programming but also consist of ascribed actions and inactions. Gender is more encompassing in its ascriptions (Condry, 1984). Sex role orientation is an aspect of gender and is influenced by factors such as the environment, parental background, intelligence and schooling. It could influence and affect behavioural tendencies, wishes and dispositions.

Studies abound on sex role orientation in developed nations, especially as it relates to women, and how these relates to variables such as age, career orientation, and self esteem. However, there is still a paucity of studies on sex role orientation

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and how it relate to other variables like age among women especially in developing nations like Nigeria. This study is gap-filling therefore in this regard.

The relationship between sex role orientation and fear of success was studies by Horner (1968) who was one of the first researchers in the field of fear of success and sex role orientation. Rogers (1984), Skodas (1988), Wenger (1995) and Mowaiye Fagbemi (2001) also established a relationship between sex role orientation and fear of success. Studies on sex role orientation and achievement orientation and performance carried out by Kukla (1989) Shanahan & Welberg (1985) and Mowaiye (1989; 1994; 1995; 1997) established a relationship between the stated variables.

Researchers who have found a relationship between sex role orientation and self concept/self esteem include Merae and Costa (1982) Mussen (1984) and Alley (1982) Research reports indicate that a major characteristic of female academics is the tendency not to be home fixated (Rogers; 1984, Lenny; 1991) and with most of them coming from home backgrounds where importance is placed on achievement and career as well as the home. Mowaiye Fagbemi (2000) also reported that the women tended to be flexible as regards societal stereotypes.

Sex role orientation is an important aspect of an individual's psychological functioning. It is influenced by many factors like the environment, parental background, intelligence and schooling. It can also influence and affect behavioural tendencies, actions and dispositions.

Most studies on sex role orientation are on a bi-polar poles of masculine and feminine but some include a third polar of androgyny. Allen- Kee (1980) attempted to find out whether or not psychological androgyny, self-esteem and life satisfaction differed for career oriented and home oriented women, and whether or not androgyny was associated with age and parenthood. It was therefore, deemed necessary by Allen-Kee, (1980) to investigate the association between lack of sex typing (i.e. androgyny) or being gender behaviourally flexible and emotional healthy characteristics. Sex role orientation was measured by

- i. the Bem sex role inventory (BSRI)
- ii. self-esteem was determined by the Texas Social Behaviour Inventory.
- iii. life satisfaction was measured by Neugarten, Havighurst and Tobin Life Satisfaction Inventory, while
- iv. career and home orientation was determined by a researcher designed questionnaire.

The findings revealed the following:

1. A trend towards a significant level between sex role type and life choice with career women tending to be androgynous, and home oriented women tending to be feminine.
2. Androgynous women had a significantly higher self-esteem than feminine women, although career women had no higher self-esteem than home oriented women.
3. There was no relationship between level of life satisfaction, life choice or sex role type.
4. There was no significant difference in mean age between androgynous and feminine women.

Allen-Kee (1980) therefore concluded that androgyny is associated with higher esteem and therefore recommended that clinicians should encourage it, and that families and schools should be encouraged to foster androgyny in children and that cross-sex behaviours should not be ridiculed. Allen-Kee's research did not reveal a significant mean age difference between women who were sex typed in orientation and those who were not. Hers was one of the few gender researches to look into the relationship between age and sex role orientation.

As noted earlier, though research works abound in other countries in the area of androgyny and femininity, most research works tend to overlook how these are related to age. In Nigeria, many research works shy away from studies on androgyny not to talk of its relation to age as espoused by Mowaiye Fagbemi (2000). The present study is meant to be gap filling.

Studies on sex role orientation include research carried out by Reinhardt (1984), who examined:

- i. Differences in sex role identity for women in traditional versus non-traditional career females.
- ii. Whether self esteem differed for women with similar sex role identity but dissimilar careers.
- iii. And whether self esteem could be predicted from sex role identity and sex role behaviour.

The sample consisted of 306 women, half of whom were in traditional careers and the other half in non-traditional careers. Subjects completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the Acceptance of Self and Others scale by Berger and Reinhardt (1984) and a Sex Role Behaviour Questionnaire developed by the researchers. Findings of the research were that:-

- i. Non-traditional career females scored higher on the Bem Masculine Scale than did the traditional career females.
- ii. Traditional career women who participated in few traditional female activities and male activities had the highest level of self-esteem.

iii. Non-traditional career women who engage highly in traditional female activities and traditional male activities had lower level of self-esteem than other subjects.

iv. Women in traditional career had lower level of self-esteem, while those in non-traditional careers had higher self-esteem.

Using a Person Attributes Questionnaire, Spence, Helmreich and Stupp (1974) revealed in their study that the mean self-esteem scores were highest for men and women who scored high on what could be regarded as androgynous scale.

Bem and Lenney (1976) who were one of the early researchers in this area in their own research, found androgynous individuals to be high in self-esteem and not to show evidence of behaviour inhibition, while those who are undifferentiated have low self-esteem and suffer from some behavioural inhibitions. While androgynous individuals endorse both masculine feminine traits as self-descriptive, undifferentiated individuals do not endorse either masculine or feminine traits as particularly self-descriptive.

Another observation made on women and their self-esteem is that women tend to primarily rely on social relationships as source of determining their self worth, while men may depend on accomplishments (Carlson, 1991)

A summary of reports on psychological androgyny could be given as follows:

i. A high level of sex typing, it is believed, may limit behavioural flexibility.

ii. Further, high femininity has been associated with high anxiety and poor adjustment.

iii. Mental health indices also tend to show early and consistent relationship with only masculinity and no relationship with femininity (Taylor and Hall, 1982).

iv. Age is related to sex role orientation
In a related study, Mowaiye (1999) found androgynous individuals to be more science inclined than those in the humanities and that such individuals were more often than not trained during their adolescence period not to be sex typed and that gave the subjects the freedom not to be intimidated to go to a 'supposed' male inclined fields in the sciences. (Mowaiye 1997, Mowaiye 2001)

However, an area of paucity in studies, is the relationship between androgynous tendencies and age among individuals, of which the present study was meant to be gap-filling. Thus, the sex role orientation of subjects and its relationship with age is the present focus of study.

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the sex role orientation of female lecturers in the different age groups under study

2. There is no significant influence age on sex role orientation of female lecturers in Nigeria universities

Methodology

In this survey, women academics teaching in Nigerian Universities were randomly selected from states in northern and southern Nigeria. They responded to a sex role orientation instrument (Mowaiye-Fagbemi, 1999) which was used to identify their sex role orientation as either feminine or androgynous while a questionnaire was used to find out the respondents' ages to determine whether any relationship exist between age and their sex role orientation.

The population consisted of female academics in Nigerian Universities. A major characteristic of the subjects under study is their level of education, the minimum being a masters degree and their exposure to international conferences and discourse which it was assumed would have expanded their world-view.

The random and purposive sampling technique were used to select the final sample from the population. Five Universities were randomly selected from the Northern part of the country, ten from the southern part while the Universities of Abuja (being the nations capital) and Ilorin (central location between the south and north) were purposively selected. In all, seventeen Universities participated in the study. Analysis of variance and chi-square analysis were used to test two hypotheses generated in the study.

Research Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the sex role orientation of the Lecturers in the different age groups under study

The one way analysis variance (ANOVA) was used for data analysis to test the null hypothesis stated above.

Results

TABLE 1: ANOVA summary of sex role orientation and age among University female lecturers in Nigeria.

Source	df	SS	MS	F-value	P
SR	1	2357.20	2357.20	144.48	0.0001
Age	6	4314.47	708.41	4.25	0.0006
SRO & Age	6	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.0000
Error	104	17668.39	165.125		
Total	115	42084.00			

Alpha 0.05

As observed from Table 1, there is a significant effect of participants' age on their Sex Role Orientation (SRO) (F: 5, 104, 4.25 $P < 0.0006$). To locate where the significant difference lied, the Duncan Multiple Range Test was used. The summary of results for this is on Table 2.

TABLE 2: Duncan multiple range test for SRO and age-groups among subjects under study.

SRO	AGE	N	X	MSE	DF	CRITICAL RANGE
A	25-40	35	102			
A	41-55	34	99.54	163.59	104	4.64
F	25-40	36	72.31			
F	41-55	11	73.31			

Table 2 shows no significant age-linked difference in the means scores of those within same sex orientation group, i.e. A or F (Androgynous or Feminine). However, the mean SRO scores of the androgynous group among the respondents (female lecturers) was slightly higher in the younger age range 25-40, and became slightly, (though not significantly) lower in the higher age range 41-50. Another statistical method not as robust as ANOVA was decided by the researcher for use, to see if at any point, a relationship can still be further maintained. This was why the chi-square analysis was used.

H0₁: There is no significant influence of age on sex role orientation of lecturers in Nigeria universities.

The age distribution of androgynous and feminine orientated lecturers presented on Table 3 were analysed with the chi-square to test this hypothesis.

Table 3
Age distribution of Androgynous (A) and Feminine (F) Oriented Lecturers.

SRO	Age Range			Total
	25 - 40	41 - 55		
A	35	34		69
F	36	11		47
Total	71	45		116

The Chi-square test applied to the frequency distribution in Table 3 revealed significant χ^2 value of 7.81 which is greater than the table value of 3.8 for 1 df, at alpha 0.05. This means that there is a significant difference between the frequency distribution by age of female lecturers in the androgynous group and the age distribution pattern of those in the feminine group. While the feminine group tend to be predominantly in the younger age range 21-40, with fewer in the older age range 41-50. It is observed that the androgynous group had roughly equal numbers in the younger and older age ranges. Overall, it is revealing that more of the women were androgynous and that less of the women between ages 41 - 55 were feminine which can be taken to mean that as women grow older, they tend to grow androgynous.

Discussion

Studies on sex role orientation and its relations to variable such as career choice and self-esteem abound, especially in developed nations, however, one variable that is not well researched into is its relations to age, especially in Nigeria. The present study was gap-filling and revealed:-

A significant relationship between sex role orientation (SRO) and age. Most of the women in the study were androgynous. This findings is not surprising considering that the world -view of the subjects under study would have been impacted by exposure to global influences. Most of the androgynous subjects were between the ages of 25-40. Using the chi-square analysis, a significant difference was found between the frequency distribution by age of subjects in the androgynous group and those in the feminine group. Feminine women were younger in the age range of 21-40, with fewer in the range of 41-50. Age seemed to be related to an individual's sex role orientation. It seemed that as women grow older, they tend towards androgynous behaviours.

Conclusion and Recommendation

For there to be a flux in sex role typing, there must be a concerted effort to encourage androgynous behaviours which has been found to have many advantages over sex-typing, especially for developing nations like Nigeria so as to be able to maximize the potentials of all its citizenry, either male or female.

Finally report findings support the view that age is usually related to one's sex role tendencies. It can therefore, be inferred that older women because they tend to grow androgynous, can also be expected to function better and have a greater level of mental health. If this is so, then it is necessary to encourage gender behavioural flexibility among women because of the advantages accruing therefrom and to encourage younger women to incorporate such psychological tendencies

into their self concept at an early age for greater maximal output from them, especially in stereotyped societies like Nigeria

There is the need to give enablement to gender behavioural flexibility especially in developing societies. Societies like Nigeria need to fund education and educate more of the female populace because of the influences they can exert on their children. Developing societies also need to give androgynous training to the young ones.

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