

Gender Differences of Latvian Males and Females at the Stage of Adulthood

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ABSTRACT

Objective – In this research, gender differences of Latvian males and females in the stage of adulthood are determined and distinguished on the grounds of a theoretical analysis of socio-psychological, scientific and methodological literature and legislative documents as well as empirical findings.

Methodology/Technique – A survey by Bem (1974) has been adapted in this study for measuring how an adult individual sees him-/herself from the gender perspective. This was done with an aim of determining the place of gender in the cultural context rather than in the personality of a separate individual. 109 women and men from different regions of Latvia aged 20 to 64 took part in the study. The data were processed with the 23.0 version of SPSS, the data processing program.

Findings – The obtained results indicate that the gender patterns on male and female behavior are similar. No differences in male or female behaviour were established. The behavioral peculiarities of male and female gender are determined not by age, but by sex. It can also be concluded that research of Latvian male and female gender behavior led to Bem's androgyny theory, which argues for the ability of men and women to execute both – male and female behavioral patterns in ontogenesis.

Novelty – The understanding of gender as a discursive construction caused a confusion between these notions. This study contributes in literature of gender psychology with its original data.

Type of Paper: Empirical

Keywords: Identity; Gender; Stage of Adulthood; Gender Differences, Latvian Males, Latvian Females.

JEL Classification: J16, J21.

1. Introduction

The authors reflect on the notion of gender in psychological theory from a developmental perspective. First, we need to address the historical development of gender as: (1) development of philosophical ideas (from the ancient times to the end of the 19th century); (2) development of a subject of gender studies (end of the 19th century – beginning of the 21st century); (3) “Freudism” as related to psychoanalysis (from the beginning of the 20th century until 1930); (4) wide experimental research and development of first theories (1950-1980); (5) development of gender psychology from 1990 until present days.

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Plato introduced the notion “*androgenic*” by developing the notion of gender and adding the idea of equality and norms that exist among spouses. Still, his views display a controversial attitude towards women. During the Renaissance period, Thomas More wrote about the equality between men and women in different fields, about their leadership skills and relationships between genders. Rousseau analyzed the combination of gender equality and difference, the diverse behavioral norms among males and females and explored their relationships in marriage (Bem, 1974; Reņģe, 2012).

The second stage of science is marked by the development of social psychology or gender psychology that studies gender behavior as determined by the biological peculiarities of both sexes, social characteristics and their interrelatedness. Therefore, gender psychology studies, social norms of how a person, a group or the society reacts to gender differences. Several researchers (Walsh, 2001; Brokāne, 2007; Motschenbacher, 2012) indicate that gender psychology study the peculiarities of psyche as related to one's gender. The social psychology of gender focuses on six aspects: (1) comparative study of males and females, (2) female psychology, (3) male psychology, (4) gender socialization, (5) psychology of gender relations, (6) gender psychology of leadership. The objective pursued by this scientific discipline is related to the development of theories, concepts and methods and to implementation of the obtained results in practice.

The third stage is related to psychoanalysis. According to Freud, individuals have gender differences that are determined by the totality of male and female dispositions. Psychoanalytical theory refers to biological factors as determining factors in the process of socialization. Therefore, a harmonious personality development can only be achieved if it follows the traditional male and female behavioral patterns. Representatives of neo-freudism, such as Sullivan and Horney asserted that adhesion to such models does not guarantee psychological well-being of either males or females. Later, proponents of the social learning theory, such as Rotter and Bandura, argued that human behavior is determined by the stimuli from the external environment.

The main principle of learning the behavioral patterns characteristic to specific gender roles was their differentiation by observation, punishment and praise (Batlere, 2012).

The fourth stage – beginnings of broad experimental studies and the first theories. This period is marked by Bem's androgyny – gender concept and Chodorow's work on maternity, Eagly's theory of social roles, Gilligan's theory about the value of female value judgments as being different from male (Eagly, Karon & Makhijani, 1995). At the end of the 1960-s and the beginning of 1970-s, feminist studies formulated the idea about the interrelatedness of biological and cultural aspects of gender and came forth with the essence name for it: the natural was considered determinant and constant, independent of the socially cultural, while the socially cultural (gender) was postulated as dependent from the biological, as inconsistent and variable. The notion of gender at the onset of the second wave of feminism did not replace the notion of biological gender, but only supplemented it (Walsh, 2001).

Therefore, in the theory of gender psychology the main emphases were put on explaining the societal expectations of a gender role. Based on the new gender psychology theory, biological gender can only help to determine a person's potential behavior. According the new gender psychology of Maccoby, Jacklin and Bem, societal expectations that develop according to a certain socio-cultural matrix in the upbringing process of children may play the main role (Bem, 1998). The gender into which we are born can only help to determine person's potential behavior, but the main component is the social aspect of gender, acquired in the course of life and crucially impacted by the specific cultural gender variations and social expectations.

The fifth wave of development includes extensive experimental research, theoretical bases for the empirical facts, and cross-cultural research. This stage is marked by adaptation of methods related to the gender issue and the development of a new gender methodology. Today we can discuss the main theories and concepts in gender socialization: Psychoanalytical notions about gender identity and narcissism, Bem's gender theory, in the sphere of comparisons between males and females – the biological and socio-cultural approach, Chodorow's conception of maternity, and Gilligan's theory about the value approach to women. The branch of male psychology explores different hypotheses of masculinity: biological (hormonal theories related to

brainwork) and psychoanalytical concepts and Maccoby's (Maccoby, 1990) gender segregation and convergence theory about a specifically male subculture as different from the female one.

Leadership gender psychology is known of the existence of various theories and concepts: leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), Hays' status approach (Hays, 1996), and transformative leadership conception (Bass, 1985), Gutek's gender concept (Gutek, 2001), Bauman's leadership theory (Bauman, 2000), Linden and Mitchell's ingratiation concept (Liden & Mitchell, 1988), Lockheed and Hall status theory (Lockheed & Hall, 1976), and social role theory (Eagly et al., 1995)

Contemporary gender theory does not try to counter the biological, social and psychological differences that exist among males and females. According to this theory, the mere fact of difference is not as important as their socio-cultural valuation and interpretation, as well as the formation of a power system on the grounds of these differences. Gender approach, in its turn, is based on the idea that the main determinant is not biological or physical differences between genders, but the cultural and social meaning that the society attributes to these differences.

Therefore, the basis of gender research is not only the analysis of the status, role and other aspects of life of both genders, but also the analysis of domination that is prescribed to both genders through gender roles and relationships (European Union Publications Bureau, 2014; Problem questions in the Istanbul Convention, 2016). On the contrary, the understanding of gender as a cultural symbol springs from the idea that gender can be interpreted not merely socially, but also in a culturally symbolic way. Therefore, we can acknowledge that gender in social psychology is defined in the context of social diversity.

2. Methodology

Research was non-experimental and was carried out in a real life situation as a quantitative study. Empirical research uses an instrument for deepening the understanding of Latvian female and male gender peculiarities. The research makes use of Bem's (BSRI; Bem, 1974) questionnaire with the aim to explore the dynamics of gender-specific behavior of males and females from different regions of Latvia. Bem's androgyny concept describes the notion of gender in a more narrow and precise sense. Bem defines the gender concept as certain behavioral patterns of males and females. In terms of the androgynous conception or gender schema the author indicated that masculinity and femininity are not juxtaposed to each other; that a person may simultaneously possess both – male and female qualities. In addition, Bem argues that being androgenic is even desirable because it enables a person to internalize the best from both gender roles. The author further developed the idea of gender schematization as it permitted to even more categorically posit that masculinity and femininity are merely cultural schemas or lens constructions (Bem, 1976) that polarize gender, give it a certain direction. That is why in the current empirical research we focused on the dynamics of similarities and differences in gender behavior of males and females in a specific age group.

A questionnaire was designed in the form of a survey on the grounds of Bem's role questionnaire (Bem, 1974). The survey contained 60 statements. The methodology included the instructions, an answer form and recommendations for processing and interpretation of the obtained results. Each match counts for one point. Afterwards, the index of androgyny (masculinity and femininity) is calculated. The answers are suggested in the form of a Likert scale, which permits to pinpoint the respondent's opinion on a 5-point scale. The data were processed by the SPSS data processing program.

3. Results and Discussion

The authors used a written questionnaire. The research participants were males and females (N=109) from different regions of Latvia and represented an age group from 20 to 64: women – N=70 (64.2%); male – N=39 (35.8%). Mean age of survey participants: M=30.06; SD=10.814. The authors used non-probability sampling.

To begin with, indicators were measured on two scales: masculinity and femininity. Veracity and internal consistency of questionnaire questions were established with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Its values

ranged between 0.743 and 0.784, which denotes high consistency between questionnaire items: female scale $\lambda=0.743$, male scale $\lambda=0.784$. These ratios were then used to calculate the masculinity and femininity index (Figure 1).

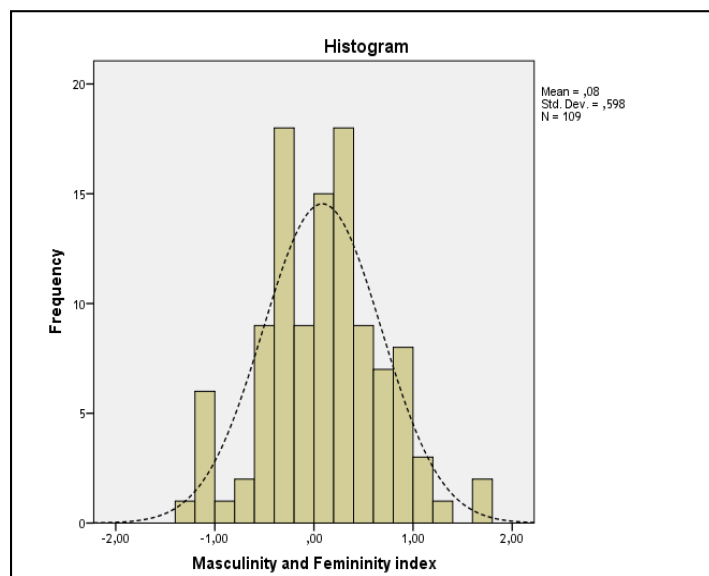


Figure 1. Masculinity and Femininity Index

The calculated masculinity and femininity indexes range between -2 to 2. Then the Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test was used to identify statistically significant deviations of the studied feature from normal distribution. Normal distribution was established (level of significance): $Z=0.751$, $p=0.625>0.05$.

In order to examine how age and gender affect the masculinity and femininity index, the linear regression method was used (Table 1).

Table 1. Dependent Variable: masculinity and femininity index (n=109)

Constant	B	SE	β	t	p
Age	- 0.004	0.005	- 0.070	- 0.825	0.411
Gender	0.600	0.106	0.483**	- 5.641	0.001

* - $p < 0.01$

** - $p < 0.05$

$R^2 = 0.234$

The regression model explains more than 23% of the total variable dispersion ($\Delta R^2 = 0.234$, $p < 0.01$) and has a Durbin-Watson coefficient of 2.058.

The results of the study suggest that the independent variable of age has no influence on the masculinity and femininity index unlike the independent variable of gender, which does affect the masculinity and femininity index ($\beta = 0.483$, $p = 0.001 < 0.01$) (Figure 2).

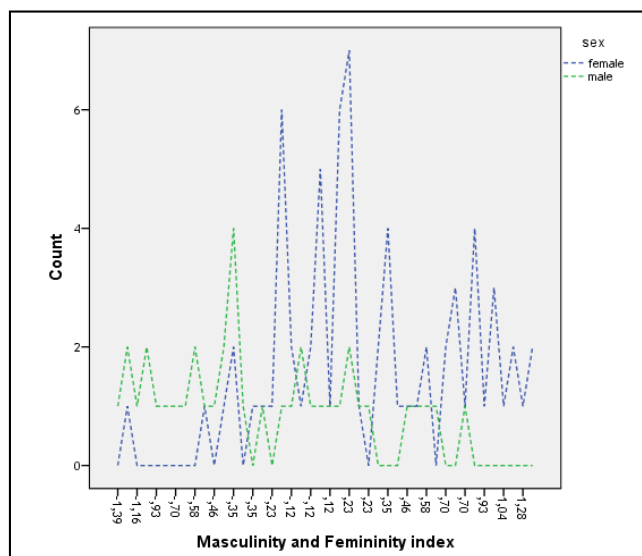


Figure 2. Effects of gender on the masculinity and femininity index

Since the findings suggest that gender affects the masculinity and femininity index, the groups of male and female participants were compared with the Student's t-distribution. The t-distribution of the index of femininity and masculinity according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion is normal: for the female sample $Z=0.891$, $p=0.405>0.05$; for the male sample $Z=0.474$, $p=0.978>0.05$.

For the female sample the mean indicator is $M=0.2699$, $SD=0.521$. For the male sample the mean indicator is $M=0.297$, $SD=0.538$. Research results have demonstrated that the femininity and masculinity index has statistically significant differences: $t=5.641$, $p<0.01$. Consequently, gender-specific behaviors of men and women are gender- rather than age-dependent. The study also suggests that androgynous behaviors were observed among the respondents, irrespective of their belonging to a certain gender, which proves that maturity is accompanied by adaptation to the changing conditions in life. This aspect deserves a more in-depth research in the future.

4. Conclusion

The study of gender psychological theories and concepts permits to conclude that the notion of gender and gender differentiation leads to a new theoretical level. Based on a new theory of gender psychology, inborn gender characteristics can help to determine person's potential behavior. The understanding of gender as a discursive construction caused a confusion between these notions.

Several studies indicate that psychology has no single understanding about gender. The notions "femininity" and "masculinity" carry different meanings. Scientists have no singular opinion about those notions. Therefore, we can conclude that the notion of gender denotes a formation and construction process of complex socio-cultural differences in what are socially considered male and female roles, behavior, mental and emotional characteristics, and the result of this process is the social construct of gender itself. Therefore, the essential elements in the theories contain an oppositional understanding of masculinity and femininity and subordination to the male origin.

The obtained results indicate that the gender patterns on male and female behavior are similar. No differences in male or female behavior were established. The behavioral peculiarities of male and female gender are determined not by age, but by sex. It can also be concluded that research of Latvian male and female gender behavior led to Bem's androgyny theory, which argues for the ability of men and women to execute both – male and female behavioral patterns in ontogenesis. In the studied age group, women and men both

display a rather high androgyny index. Out of 109 respondents (n=109; M=30.06, SD=10,814); only 6 of 39 men had a high indicator of masculinity, another 33 – androgynous; one woman displayed a high index of masculinity; 6 of 70 women were discovered to have high female behavioral characteristics, the remaining 63 were androgynous.

Thus, at the age of 20 to 64 years Latvian females and male gender behavior peculiarities can be defined as androgynous. Hence, in accordance with Bem's conception, the research results illustrate society's adaptability in the changing conditions of life.

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