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Age as Predictor of Sex Role Identity

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Abstract. Sex role identity is an important aspect of an individual's orientation. Globally, traditional sex role identity is in a state of flux and more and more individuals are said to be embracing flexibility as regards sex roles. This being so, an overlooked area is the influence of age as regards this flexibility. Individuals change with more information, knowledge and experiences which come with age. The present study was therefore put in place to find out if age does have any relation to sex role identity and to find out if individuals grow to be more flexible as regards sex role orientation as they grow older .
Subjects were middle age women undergoing programs in selected Nigerian universities. The Sex Role Orientation Instrument (Mowaiye, 1997) was used to identify the subject's sex role identity while subjects were required to indicate their age on a bio – data form. The result was subjected to analysis using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and it indicated a significant difference for SRO and age for groups studied.

1. Introduction

Human beings are influenced by various genetic and environmental tendencies. An important aspect is socialization and its interactions with other variables such as age and cognitive manifestations.

In all societies, sex role identification predominates. In the 21st century, things are said to be changing, even in hither-to -societies regarded as traditional in sex role orientation. This change has led to many studies on gender behavioral flexibility, (Mowaiye Fagbemi (1997), Mowaiye Fagbemi (1999), Mowaiye Fagbemi 2000) and androgynous tendencies among individuals with ample evidence that sex roles are in a state of flux. This researcher wanted to find out if age does affect or influence an individual's sex role identity. This is in view of the fact that age is said to moderate behaviors and tendencies. The present study therefore sought to find out if age has any relation to one's sex role identity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender – Scheme Theory

Gender schema theory proposes that sex typing derives in large measure from gender schematic processing, from a generalized readiness on the part of the child to encode and to organize information - including information about self- according to the culture's definition of maleness and femaleness.

A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of association that organizes and guides an individual's perception. A schema functions as an anticipatory structure, a readiness to search for and to assimilate incoming information in schema relevant terms (Bem, 1981). Gender schema theory proposes that the phenomenon of sex typing derives from gender-based schematic processing, from a generalized readiness to process information and sort out attributes on the basis of the sex-linked associations that

constitute the gender schema. That is, not masculine and feminine categories, or "equivalent classes", regardless of the difference on a variety categories, or "equivalent classes", regardless of the difference on a variety of dimensions unrelated to gender. Thus, items like tender and nightingale are placed into a feminine category, and items like "assertive" and "eagle" into a masculine category.

As children learn the gender contents of the society, they learn which attributes are to be linked with their own sex and hence with themselves. Adults in a child's world are said to rarely notice or remark complimentarily on what is considered gender inappropriate e.g. on how strong a girl is or how nurturing a boy is.
Similarly, the child learns to evaluate his/her adequacy as a person in terms of the gender schema, to match his/her preferences, attributes, behaviors and personal attributes against the prototypes scored within it. The gender schema becomes a prescriptive standard or guide, and self-esteem becomes its hostage (Bem, 1981). Thus, the motivation to regulate behavior to conform to either femaleness or maleness, cultural myths then become self-fulfilling prophecies, and "thus do we arrive at the phenomenon known as sex – typing" (Bem, 1981).

Sex-typed individuals are seen to differ from other individuals not primarily in the degree of femininity or masculinity they possess but in the extent to which their self-concepts and behavior are organized on the basis of gender rather than some other dimension. Gender schematic; means a college student who might want to decide what new hobby to try will readily make the decision through the lens of gender and would therefore ask: What sex is the hobby? What sex am i? Do they match? If so, then the hobby will be considered further, if not, then it will be rejected without further consideration. Most people are said to be unaware that their perception are organized on the basis of gender.

Gender schema therefore, to Bem is a theory of process not content. Sex-typed individuals are seen as processing information in terms of and conforming to whatever definitions of masculinity and femininity the culture happens to provide. It is the process of partitioning the world into two equivalent classes on the basis of gender schema, not the content of the equivalent classes. It is believed by some however, that information in the gender schema consists of "fussy sets" organized around male and female prototypes (Cantor & Mitchel, 1979). What prompts so many individuals to organize information in general, and their self-concept in particular, in terms of gender? Why the prevalence of gender-based schematic processing? The answer, according to Bem (1981) is derived partly from the society's insistence on the functional importance of the gender dichotomy; from its insistence that sex makes a difference in virtually every domain of human experience.

In conclusion, from the perspective of gender schema theories, males and females behave differently simply because they have come to perceive, evaluate and relegate both their own behavior and the behavior of others in accordance with cultural definitions of gender appropriateness.

2.2 Socialization of Roles within the Home.

The home-play an important role in the socialization process of any child. What parents approve or don't approve of in any sex depends on the social and cultural milieu in which the family lives. Hoffman (1977) asserted that parents seemed to socialize their sons for the father's 'occupational role' and their daughters 'for the mother's role'

Low masculine and low socialized men and low feminine and low socialized women appear to have established their gender identity by emulating the parent of the opposite sex.

Maccoby and Jacklin, (1974) are of the view that the acquisition of gender roles, would involve in most probability, some combination of all mechanisms; identification, modeling, reinforcement, and reciprocal-role learning, mediated by the child's level of cognitive development.

3. Methods of Study

The sex role identity instrument by Mowaiye Fagbemi (1999) was used to identify the subjects sex role identity while the subjects were required to give their age . Subjects were women who were middle age individuals working as civil servants, teachers and those in private business, and who were acknowledged to still not rest on their oars, but who believe they can and were taking steps to go higher on the social ladder by registering in various programs in Nigerian selected universities. Purposive random sampling was used to select the universities from the north and south of Nigeria. The subjects were also selected by random sampling from varied faculties.

The One Way Analysis of Variance, Duncan Multiple Range and Chi-Square Analysis were used for statistical tools.

4. Result

Research Question I: Is psychological androgyny associated with age?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the sex role orientation of females in the different age groups under study.

To test the hypothesis generated from the research question. The analysis of variance, ANOVA was used. The result is presented on Table 1. The subjects were grouped into four age groups (i.e. levels 20-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-50) The subjects age ranged from 20 – 50.

Table 1: Anova for sex role orientation (SR) and age among subjects

SOURCE	DF	SS	MS	F-VALUE	P □ F
SR	1	4362.4267	4362.42	137.52	0.0001
Age	5	3798.0915	759.6183	2.119	0.0386
SR & Age	5	0.0000	0.0000	0.00	1.0000
Error	215	68518.768	317.216522	-	-
Total	226	114192.810573	-	-	-

Alpha = 0.05

Table 1 revealed that for the subjects, the association between sex role orientation and age is significant- $F(5/215) = 2.19$, $P < 0.05$. The hypothesis is therefore rejected on the basis of the result. To reveal the area of difference, the Duncan Multiple Range test was used and the result is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: *Duncan multiple range test for SR and age-groups among subjects*

SR	AGE	N	X	MSE	DF	CRITICAL RANGE
A	20-30	21	94.5			
A	31-35	17	101	317.22	215	5.35
A	36-40	16	99.30			
A	41-50	5	107.25			
F	20-30	53	67.09			
F	31-35	58	66.35			
F	36-40	32	64.66			
F	41-50	25	65.70			

Note – A=- Androgynous
F = Feminine

From table 2, it can be observed that among the androgynous subjects, there is a significant difference between the mean SRO scores of those in the age bracket 20-30 (94.5) and. those in the higher age groups whose scores were greater (except for the age group 36-40 whose mean score of 99.3 only very narrowly misses being significantly greater). However, this significant difference between the scores of the different age levels did not occur for those in the feminine oriented group; although there is a noticeable gradual decrease with age in the mean SRO scores from the lowest age range i.e. 21-30 (67.09) to the highest age group i.e. 41-50 (65.70). The Chi-square test was applied to the frequencies obtained for the age levels in both the feminine and androgynous groups of-students. A non-significant Chi-square value

of 2.3 was obtained which is less than the table value of 7.8 for (3) df. This shows that the frequency distribution obtained for the different age levels among the androgynous students are not significantly different from those of the feminine oriented students. The frequency distribution is shown in table 3.

Table 3: *Chi-square analysis for age groups among subjects*

Age	Feminine	%	Androgynous	%
30 – 40	53	31.5	21	35.5
31 – 35	58	34.5	17	28.8
36 – 40	32	19.0	16	27.1
41 – 50	25	14.8	5	8.4
Total	168	100	59	100

X^2 value = 2.3

5. Discussion

The data analysis revealed a significant relationship between sex role orientation and age. A further analysis using the Duncan Multiple Range revealed a significant difference in the mean sex role orientation scores of those between the ages of 20 – 30. This significant difference was however not observed for the feminine groups.

The results indicate that the association between age and sex role identity was significant. Younger subjects between 20 – 30 years of age were found to be more androgynous than the others within the same sex role group and again, the difference was significantly so.

A significant revelation of the study was that quite a significant number of the subjects were feminine by sex role identity while an insignificant number were androgynous.

This study is the exact opposite of a related study by the researcher, Mowaiye Fagbemi (2000), where the researcher found majority of the subjects were androgynous with those in the age – groups of 40 and above were found to be more androgynous than others. One reason for the substantial difference in the results could be because of the nature of subjects used in that study (female executives for the previous).

It is imperative to seek for gender behavioral flexibility among people especially in developing nations like Nigeria ,where the rate of development in all facets of life is nothing to write home about . Gender flexibility would accelerate development.

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