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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SEX ROLE ORIENTATION INSTRUMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Much research on sex role orientation has been carried out in the developed nations of the world. This has generated varied instruments to measure sex role orientation, taking into cognisance, a given society's culture, mores and values on sex roles. However, in Nigeria, research works on sex roles, especially, an acceptable instrument to measure sex role orientation in Nigeria is yet to be developed. The present instrument was designed to be gap filling in this area.

Introduction

In every society, different roles are assigned to males and females. And different characteristics is found to be acceptable on the male-female polar. At recent times, there has been the argument that the traditional perception of maleness and femaleness is in a state of flux. Thus, there has been varied attention on measuring this, especially in the developed nations of the world. Even in developing nations of the world, this has become a major focus of research. However, in Nigeria, much still needs to be done in this area.

The Concept of Gender Behavioural Flexibility

The first Masculinity and Femininity test was that of Terman and Miles, (1936, cited in Lenny, 1991). Prior to the early 1970s, test on sex roles were built upon the assumption that masculinity and femininity were polar opposites, having a necessarily inverse relationship within the individual (Lenny, 1991, O'Lenny 1977). There were however questions as to the efficacy of such assumptions.

The first person to put forward an alternative conceptualization was Sandra Bem. She brought forward

the concept of an androgynous individual as she called it: an individual who does not rely on gender as a cognitive organizing principle and whose personality therefore combines both masculine and feminine elements; a sort of blended personality (Bem.1984).

The term "androgyny" is said to have been coined from the Greek words 'andro' meaning male and 'gyne' meaning female. Bem started her research on androgyny in 1971, and therefore came the development of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem 1972, 1974). In 1973; Jeanne Block published an insightful article on androgyny in the American Psychology based on her research (Block, 1973).

In the same year, Constantinople (1973) presented a comprehensive critique of masculinity – femininity constructs and its tests. It was concluded that the existing tests on M-F were inadequate for various reasons.

First, Constantinople (1973) revealed that there was enough evidence for separate M-F dimensions to warrant questioning the bipolarity assumption and secondly, M-F, it was believed, seemed multi-dimensional rather than unidimensional. Since then, sex role inventories purporting to measure psychological androgyny have been developed. Examples abound:-

- i. Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) developed by Sandra Ben in 1972, 1974.
- ii. The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) by Spence, Hermreich and Stapp (1974,1975)
- iii. The Personality Research Form ANDRO scales, often referred to as PRF Andro, by Bernins, Welling and Watter (1978).
- iv. The Adjective Check List (ACL) M and F scales by Heilbrum
- v. The M and F scales developed by Baucom (1976 cited in Lenny, 1991) and

vi. The Sex Role Behaviour Scale (RBS) by Orolofsky (1977)

The idea of "a blended personality" became widely accepted and within a period of eight years of its conceptualisation, over 100 studies had been carried out in it in various fields of Psychology (Bem, 1984).

Studies of Androgyny became widespread however from 1982. Lenny (1991) reviewed citations appearing in Psychological Abstracts (USA) and sex roles studies and studies on the concept, has been impressive. Within a period of about six years, 1981 – 1986, there were 760 citations as compared to what was before this period (62 citations between 1927 – 1960, 215 between 1961 to 1972, and 447 between 1972-1980).

The three fold typology of sex role identity; Masculinity, Femininity and the Androgynous individual was later challenged by Spence et al (1974). They proposed a fourth typology of which Sandra Bem acknowledged. The fourth being the "undifferentiated" Spence and her colleagues defined as Androgynous, people who score high masculine and high feminine, while those who endorse neither masculine nor feminine traits as self descriptive were regarded as "undifferentiated". The undifferentiated typology is however not a popular dimension.

Androgyny theorists have always based their different definitions on societal sex role expectations that specify how men and women ought to act in specific societies and situations in Nigeria, the concept of psychological androgyny is one that is yet to be highly researched into.

Many have however criticised the term "androgyny" or androgynous. This could be because of the distorted perception of its understanding. Many believe it sounds "hermaphroditic". Many have therefore sought other terms that would be more acceptable to a wider group of people.

In this view, Mowaiye Fagbemi (1995) argued that the simple term of gender behavioural flexibility to refer to behavioural non-rigidity as regards gender roles in any given society and cultural milieu could be adopted. The present effort was modelled after Bem (1974).

Description of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)

To measure psychological androgyny, Bem (1974) constructed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). It is comprised of a masculinity scale, and a femininity scale, each of which contains 20 personality characteristics, selected on the basis of gender-typed social desirability. There are 20 other items regarded as "neutral filler". Subjects indicated the extent to which each of the 60 items characterises them on a 7 point scale, ranging from "almost never or never true of me" to "always or almost always true of me".

The BSRI is a self administered 60 item to item questionnaire scale which can be completed in about 15 minutes (Lenny, 1991). The respondents masculinity score is the average of his/her ratings on the 20 femininity items while his/her femininity score is the average of his/her ratings on the femininity items.

Bem intended the BSRI to contain positive traits widely believed to be part of the culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity. She therefore started by compiling a list of 200 personality characteristics that seemed positively valued and stereotypically masculine or feminine, and 200 other characteristics that seemed neither masculine nor feminine, of these later traits, half seemed negatively valued.

These 400 items were presented to two samples of Stanford University undergraduates (20 males and 20 females at one time and 30 males and 30 females at another time). In each sample, half of the subjects of each sex rated each trait in terms of its sex-typed social desirability for a man e.g. in American society, how

desirable is it for a man to be assertive? And the other half in terms of its desirability for a woman to be assertive. No subject rated any trait for both man and woman.

Traits that were judged in both samples as significantly more desirable for a man than for a woman, or for a woman than for a man, qualified for inclusion in the masculinity and femininity scales. Traits judged by both males and females in both of Bem's (1974) samples as no more desirable for one sex than for the other qualified for inclusion in the social desirability scale. Bem was later to condense the BSRI 60 items to a shorter format made up of 30 items.

Respondents are classified on the basis of their scores as gender-typed masculine-feminine or androgynous. To be classified as androgynous, an individual must endorse a balance of male/female characteristics for himself/herself. To be gender-typed, the individual has to agree to only those attributes that characterise one gender and reject those of the other gender.

To determine an individual's androgyny score, a t-ratio for matched groups is calculated for the difference between a person's endorsement of masculine- femininity personality characteristics. If the obtained t-valued is non-significant, the individual is classified as androgynous. A significant positive t-value indicates a feminine sex-typed score. But a negative t-value indicates a masculine sex typed score. In practice, however, different methods are often used. The most common being as follows:

- a. Androgyny is sometimes expressed as relatively high absolute M and F score.
- b. Androgyny expressed as relatively balanced M and F score or
- c. Androgyny as a combination of A and B above (Lenny, 1991).

To determine the instrument's reliability, Bem (1974) used the test retest method and found high reliability over a 4-week interval among 28 male and 28 female Stanford undergraduates for masculinity, femininity and androgyny.

The Development of a Sex Role Orientation in Nigeria

The most used sex role instrument in the world is the Bem Sex Role Instrument. In fact, it was used by Famojuro (1986), on a group of Nigerians abroad. However, it must be noted that Bem used a set of Americans to develop her instrument and she had at the back of her mind, American social and gender values in the development of the instrument. The present writer believed that there ought to be a sex role instrument to take into cognisance, the Nigerian setting and values. This led to the SROI development. The first step was the pilot study. Opinions were sampled as to the behavioural traits and characteristics that are perceived to be most desirable for males and females within the Nigerian society. Selected twenty (females and ten males) adults within Ilorin metropolis were interviewed. The individuals involved were mainly-civil servants and lecturers of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Based on these opinions and facts, which the review of pertinent literature had revealed, an eighty item questionnaire was constructed. This questionnaire was given to a group of randomly selected forty adults (undergraduate students – twenty males and twenty female) at the university of Ilorin. This was to further assess how desirable the generated items were to each sex within the Nigeria society.

The questionnaire required the respondents to indicate how desirable each trait in the questionnaire was to the respondent(s) sex in the Nigeria society.

The questionnaire was on a seven point scale, extremely desirable (7), most desirable (6), desirable (5), not more desirable or undesirable to both males and females (4), undesirable (3), most undesirable (2) and extremely

undesirable. Items on the questionnaire were generated from literature review and interviews of adults in the society.

The questionnaire was scored, while the factor loading matrix was then applied on the responses to pull out the fifteen most weighted traits by the males and fifteen for the females to make up the thirty items on the sex role orientation instrument (SROI)

Reliability

Reliability can be perceived as the level of internal consistency of stability of a measuring instrument over a period of time, it is the extent of precision of measurement. Further, it is usually expressed as reliability coefficient which reflects the extent to which a test is free from error variance, the test retest method, was adopted for use for the present study. The time interval for the retest was five weeks.

For the (SROI), the reliability coefficient was obtained using the person product moment method of correlation which produced a coefficient of 0.89. This was significant at the 0.01 probability level. The investigator considered this to be high enough for use.

Validity

The construct validity is established when a psychological concept is teased out and the instrument measures this concept. The construct validity was established by varied procedures already explained.

The concurrent validity was determined by using a parallel instrument, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and using the pearson moment correlation, this was determined at 0.72. This was significant at the 0.05 probability level.

Thereafter, the instrument was further turned to Psychomeric experts who confirmed the face validity of the instrument.

Scoring Scheme of the Instruments

To classify the respondents into either feminine or androgynous group (on the basis of sex orientation) their self description on the thirty items of the SROI were scored and calculated. The scoring procedure adopted was to score responses to the items on five-point Likert-type scale of 1-5, i.e. from "highly untrue of me" to "highly true to me" as it is on the instrument. For the feminine orientation items, the same scoring procedure was adopted but in this instance, the scoring was reversed (i.e. 5-1) for similar responses. Thereafter, high total scores on the fifteen items would indicate androgyny while low total scores would indicate femininity. Fifteen items i.e. 3,4,7,10,11,13,15,17,22,24,25,27,28,29 and 30 on the SROI were treated as the feminine orientation items while the other fifteen items on the instrument were regarded as the androgynous orientation items. Thereafter, the total scores were calculated for each respondent. Those who had scores of 90 were regarded as "indeterminate" since the score represents an average of 3 (for undecided) on each of the thirty items. Those whose total scores fell below 90 were regarded as "feminine and those who had total scores 90 were regarded as "androgynous".

Conclusion

Much efforts had been exerted to put in place the present sex role orientation instrument. It is hoped that it will be gap filling on the dearth of instruments on sex role orientation in Nigeria. It will aid greatly researchers in the area of sex role orientation and it is hoped that future researchers will improve on the present one.

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APPENDIX 1

SEX ROLE ORIENTATION INSTRUMENT

Please kindly indicate how true, each item on this scale is true of you, most of the time.

Key:- 1. Highly untrue of me 2. Untrue of me 3. Can't decide 4. True of me. 5. Highly true

	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
1. Likes taking leadership roles						16. Blunt Speech					
2. Takes risks						17. Conventional in behaviour to feminine roles					
3. Feels insecure						18. Assertive					
4. Speaks coolly						19. Usually adaptive					
5. Has quick judgement						20. Logical in thinking and actions					
6. Strives for personal achievements						21. Courageous					
7. Gentle						22. Affectionate					
8. Forceful						23. Self dependent					
9. Competitive						24. Cheerful					
10. Submissive						25. Meek					
11. Gets bodily weak easily						26. Don't get easily discouraged					
12. Athletic						27. Very understanding					
13. Loves children						28. Dependent on others					
14. Dominant by nature						29. Takes care of the body in a feminine way					
15. Nurturant by nature						30. Tender by Nature					

The first edition of the Mowaiye Fagbemi Sex Role Orientation Instrument & publication is in African Journal of Information Technology, Vol 5, No 1 1999. This is the reviewed edition.