



IMPACT OF GENDER AND LOCALITY ON ANXIETY AND GENDER ROLE CONFLICT AMONG MIZO ADOLESCENTS.

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Abstract: *This study examined gender and locality differences on anxiety and gender role conflict with 600 Mizo adolescents aged between 15 to 18 years (300 males, 300 females and 300 urbans, 300 rural), from different districts of Mizoram. The participants were tested using Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale- 42 (DASS- 42) in classroom settings. The findings of the present study show significant independent effect of gender and locality on anxiety, in which female participants as compared to male participants scored higher on anxiety; and urban participants as compared to rural participants scored higher on anxiety. Also, rural participants scored higher than urban participants on restrictive emotionality and restrictive affectionate behavior between men/women subscales of GRCS, whereas, the urban participants scored higher than the rural participants on conflict between work and family relations subscale of GRCS.*

Index Terms: Anxiety, gender role conflict, success, power, and competition, restrictive emotionality, restrictive affectionate behavior between men/men, conflict between work and family relations.

Gender refers to the grouping of humans into two categories, female and male, which is based on biological differences, as well as the psychological, social, and socio-cultural features frequently associated with these categories (Riger, 2000). Gender refers to the differences between males and females that are a product of environment and are socially constructed. Gender roles are based on the assignment of duties according to theoretically different but complementary clusters of traits and interest patterns commonly labelled masculinity and femininity. The "masculine" cluster refers to several related traits and roles linked to what Bakan (1966) labelled "agency," i.e., an orientation toward oneself as an individual against the world, a concern with self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion, and what Parsons and Bales (1955) labelled instrumental competence. The essence of "femininity" has been described by Bakan as a "communal" orientation toward self, as being at one with the larger social organism, as an affective caring concern for others and for social relationships, and as an expressive sense of feeling and nurturance.

Difficulties arise when individuals grow up thinking that they cannot perform the other's tasks, or express both their instrumental and expressive abilities, but realize that they have both sets of abilities. The potential to change comes only when the person and the environment no longer match, reaching a state of gender role strain. This condition of "strain" or crisis is necessary in establishing the potential for growth, in the sense that all human development is a process of resolving such crises, or restoring synchrony between the biological, social, and psychological aspects of a whole individual (Riegel, 1975).

The term gender role strain or conflict refers to the socially constructed norms, cognitions and behaviors considered appropriate for men or women, and which are problematic. An important distinction between gender role strain or conflict and sex identity is that sex identity was believed to be biologically determined as well as adaptive for men and women and gender role strain or conflict is believed to be the result of societal influence as well as being problematic (Pleck, 1995). Gender role conflict is defined as a psychological state in which one's gender role results in negative consequences for oneself or others (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b). Gender role conflict occurs when the internalization of rigid, sexist, and restrictive cultural messages about what it means to be a man results in personal

restriction, devaluation, or violation of self and others (O'Neil, et al., 1995). Englar & Carlson (2006) asserted that men typically experience gender role conflict when they try to meet or fail to meet gender role norms of masculinity; violate or deviate from gender role norms; experience discrepancies between their real and ideal self-concepts, based on gender role stereotypes; personally restrict, devalue, or violate themselves or others because of gender role norms; and experience personal restrictions, devaluations, or violations from others.

Adolescents are concerned with shaping their rapidly developing identity into a socially acceptable role. On the socio-cultural level, then, gender role surfaces as a major determinant of acceptability during this period. For the adolescent, placing one's sense of a physical male or female body into what is perceived as a socially acceptable package is what developing gender role identity is all about (Matteson, D. R., 1975).

Repeated exposure to stressful situations may solidify a system of susceptibility and make an individual vulnerable to spontaneous attacks of anxiety (Kagan, 1989). Even stable, well-adjusted people may break down if forced to face extensive combat stress. But for some people, everyday problems can be disturbing, and as such anxiety may be experienced in such situations. Anxiety may be defined as a general feeling of apprehension about possible danger, (Carson, et al., 2003). Anxiety is experienced as an inner state in which an individual anticipates some dreadful thing happening that is not entirely predictable from his/her actual circumstances. Although anxiety is often adaptive in mild and moderate degrees, it is maladaptive when it becomes chronic and severe, as we generally see people diagnosed with anxiety disorders under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV) published in 1994 (Barlow, 1988). Many studies have investigated the link between gender roles and psychological well-being in the past twenty years (Marsh & Myers, 1986). The most consistently obtained finding has been that, among the populations studied, possession of masculine traits is correlated with lower levels of anxiety, less depressed mood (Antill & Cunningham, 1979).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In view of the foregoing theoretical considerations and empirical findings, the present study was designed to highlight the impact of gender and locality on anxiety and gender role conflict among Mizo adolescents. Thus, the main objective of the study was to illustrate the role of gender and locality in the relationship between anxiety and gender role conflict.

Hypothesis:

- (1) It was expected that male participants as compared to female participants would show greater scores on success, power and competition; whereas, female participants were expected to show greater scores on restrictive emotionality.
- (2) It was expected that female participants would show greater scores on anxiety as compared to male participants.
- (3) It was expected that urban participants as compared to rural participants would show greater scores on anxiety
- (4) It was expected that rural participants as compared to urban participants would show greater scores on restrictive emotionality, while the urban participants were expected to show greater scores on success, power and competition, and conflict between work and family relations.

METHODS

The present study employed a sample of 600 Mizo adolescents aged 15 to 18 years (300 males, 300 females and 300 urban, 300 rural) randomly selected from the different districts of Mizoram in order to compare the males and females as well as the rural and urban population, using the Gender Role Conflict Scale and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale- 42. Thus, the study incorporated the psychological measures of Gender-Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995), and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

Table-1: Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, of the scales/sub-scales of the behavioral measures for the overall sample (N=600).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
			SE = .100	SE = .199
DASS-A	24.49	9.73	-.120	-.332
GRCS-SPC	51.76	10.04	-.065	.135
GRCS-RE	39.20	7.94	.070	.121
GRCS-RABM	30.26	7.19	.075	-.260
GRCS-CBW	18.54	5.70	.116	.009

DASS-A=Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-Anxiety; GRCS-SPC= Gender Role Conflict Scale- Success, Power and Competition; GRCS-RE=Gender Role Conflict Scale-Restrictive Emotionality; GRCS-RABM=Gender Role Conflict Scale-Restrictive Affectionate Behaviour between Men/women; GRCS-CBW= Gender Role Conflict Scale- Conflict between Work and Family Relations.

RESULTS:

In the present study, 300 male and 300 female adolescents aged between 15 to 18 years from rural and urban areas of Mizoram served as participants. Table- 1 highlights the mean, SD, skewness, and kurtosis of the subscales of DASS-A (Anxiety); GRCS-SPC, GRCS-RE, GRCS-RABM and GRCS-CBW.

	Male (n=300)	Female (n=300)	Urban (n=300)	Rural (n=300)
DASS-A	23.08	25.90	25.54	23.54
GRCS-SPC	51.83	51.68	52.01	51.51
GRCS-RE	38.78	39.62	37.66	40.74
GRCS-RABM	30.48	30.03	29.51	31.00
GRCS-CBW	18.66	18.42	19.22	17.87

Table -2 reveals that the rural participants show higher mean scores (M= 40.74) than urban participants (M= 37.66) on GCRS-RE, and also on GCRS-RABM the rural participants have higher mean scores (M= 31.00) than the urban participants (M= 29.51), whereas, the urban participants show higher mean scores (M=19.22) than rural participants (M= 17.87) on GCRS-CBW. Moreover, significant gender differences were obtained on DASS-Anxiety scale, in which $t(593.33) = -3.59, p < .01$, indicating that females score (M=25.90) higher on anxiety than males (M=23.08) as indicated by Table- 2.

	Equal Variances Assumed/Not Assumed	Levene's test		T-test			Test for equality of means	
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig	Mean Diff	SE Mean Diff
DASS-A	Assumed	.45	.50	2.66	598	.00	2.10	.79
GRCS_SPC	Not Assumed	26.35	.00	.609	538.65	.54	.50	.82
GRCS-RE	Not Assumed	6.20	.01	-4.84	588.05	.00	-3.08	.64
GRCS-RABM	Not Assumed	10.21	.00	-2.54	583.03	.01	-1.48	.585
GRCS-CBW	Not Assumed	12.54	.00	2.92	573.94	.00	1.35	.46

Table- 3 highlights the independent effect of locality on the dependent measures in which the t-test scores on Anxiety shows significant higher scores by the 300 urban participants (M=25.54) as compared to the 300 rural participants (M=23.54), $t(598) = 2.66, p < .01$. Moreover, the t-test statistics of GCRS-RE, $t(588.05) = -4.84, p < .01$; GRCS-RABM, $t(583.03) = -2.54, p < .01$; GRCS-CBW, $t(573.94) = 2.92, p < .01$ indicate significant differences between urban and rural participants as highlighted in Table-3.

	Equal Variances Assumed/Not Assumed	Levene's test		T-test			Test for equality of means	
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig	Mean Diff	SE Mean Diff
DASS-A	Not Assumed	5.64	.018	-3.59	593.33	.00	-2.82	.79
GRCS-SPC	Assumed	2.19	.14	.19	598	.85	.15	.82
GRCS-RE	Assumed	.87	.35	-1.30	598	.19	-.82	.65
GRCS-RABM	Assumed	.70	.40	.77	598	.44	.46	.58
GRCS-CBW	Assumed	.196	.66	.52	598	.60	.24	.47

Table- 4 reveals the independent effect of gender on the dependent measures. The t-test scores on GRCS scale shows that there are no significant differences between the scores of males and females on all the different sub-scales of the behavioural measures.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The major interest of this study was to investigate the impact of gender and locality on anxiety and gender role conflict from the sub-scales of GRCS and DASS- IV among Mizo adolescents aged between 15 to 18 years. A total of 600 adolescents (300 males and 300 females) willingly and enthusiastically participated in the study. The participants were randomly selected from the different districts of Mizoram, namely: Aizawl district (urban), Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Champhai, and Kolasib districts (rural) in order to evaluate and compare the rural and urban population as well. The analysis plan of the study firstly employed descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, and

kurtosis). The study also employed T-test for the independent effects of locality and gender on the behavioural measures.

Impact of 'gender'

As hypothesized, the female participants as compared to the male participants showed significantly higher mean scores on anxiety. However, no significant relationship was found on gender with success, power and competition, and restrictive emotionality (subscales of GRCS) in the present study. There seem to be emerging gender differences in anxiety. This finding is consistent with previous results (Pigott, 1999; Gater, et al., 1998; Mackinaw-Koons & Vasey, 2000). Research on anxiety is one of the most active areas in psychology, and it has been the focus of considerable study especially in the last two decades (Abdel-Khalek & et al., 2004). They are more prevalent among women than among men, and they affect children as well as adults (Jacklin, C. N., 1989). Female preponderance of anxiety has been a consistent finding whether in children and adolescents. Psychological differences also might help explain these gender gaps. Social factors like gender roles are also likely to play a role.

'Impact of locality'

The findings of the present study reveal that the urban participants as compared to the rural participants showed higher scores on anxiety as hypothesized. This finding is consistent with previous findings (Harpham, T., 1994; Chu, A. et al., 2004; Sundquist, K. et al., 2004). In underdeveloped and developing countries, urbanization is more recent and has been rapidly experienced in a short time (Ludermir, A.B. & Harpham, T., 1998). Because of rapid urbanization, in short period, urban population has increased violently. This situation leads to negative impacts on social, economic, and psychological characteristics including anxiety and depression of people and groups living in cities. It can be said that social, economic, and political factors are key variables for the relationship between urbanization process and mental health (Harpham, T., 1994).

As hypothesized, the results of the present study also reveal that the rural participants as compared to the urban participants show higher mean scores on restrictive emotionality subscale of GCRS. This indicates that the rural participants as compared to the urban participants have greater conflict in handling their emotions restrictively. There is limited research on the relationship of locality with gender role conflict. It is possible that among adolescents of the rural areas as compared to those of the urban areas, the nature of their relationships may relate greater to their intentions and emotionality, which in turn may lead to vulnerability to greater problems in restricting their emotions. Denial, suppression and control of emotions are regarded as key features involving the tendency of accepting what happens without complaining or showing emotions (Wester, S, et al., 2002). This is particularly prevalent in rural communities where self-sufficiency and the ability to deal with hardship are highly valued (Wagstaff, G. F. & Rowledge, A. M., 1995). Social isolation as a result of distance is an important factor in the mental health and well-being of rural people, that may inhibit their psychological and psychosocial functions, thus, may be susceptible to more identity and role conflicts (Jennifer, D., et al., 2010).

As hypothesized, the present findings also reveal that the urban participants as compared to the rural participants show higher mean scores on conflict between work and family relations subscale of GCRS. The demands of one role make performance of the other role more difficult (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Job burnout, job tension, role conflict, role ambiguity, intention-to-leave an organization, and search-for-another-job greatly have impact on work and family relations among the sub-urban (Netemeyer, et al., 1996). Stressors associated with work role are more likely to increase feelings of work conflict. Likewise, stressors associated with family role are more likely to impact feelings of family conflict which are more common among the urban dwellers (Mesmer-Magnus, J. R. & Viswesvaran, C, 2005). The effect of conflict on urbanization is an important question to study, especially in developing countries where conflict is more prevalent. In fact, urbanization often causes competition for resources between urban and rural areas, and such competition can result in conflicts between the two systems (Yua, A. T. W., et al., 2014).

On the basis of the present findings, it may be concluded that females tend to be more susceptible to anxiety as compared to males, and that urbanization often causes psychological problems including anxiety and conflicts. Thus, urban adolescents have greater conflict tendencies in terms of competition and within the realms of work and family relations, whereas, the rural adolescents have greater conflict tendencies in terms of restricting their emotions. The overall conclusion is that there is a substantial amount of association between anxiety and gender and the association is stronger for females than it is for males. Moreover, there also is association between gender role conflict and locality. It is advised that future research continue to investigate these as multidimensional constructs.

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