Gender on Self-Definitions in Work-Related and Relational Contexts: Are Women and Men Different or Similar?

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ABSTRACT

Beliefs and expectations about gender differences have been existed throughout the history. In these beliefs and expectations, the basic assumption was that "women and men are different". Studies in the literature showed that within-group differences are greater than between-group differences for gender-related issues [1]. However beliefs and expectations about gender differences still lead people to express gender schema-consistent manifestations. Therefore different gender related beliefs about self may lead different behavioral patterns in different contexts if these contexts are gender-schema related. In this study, our aim is to investigate whether self definitions change depending on context –either work related, relational or without context emphasize-. Thirty-two participants were interviewed and three questions asked, (1) How do you define yourself?, (2) How do you define yourself as a women/men in your romantic relationship?, and (3) How do you define yourself as a women/men in your work settings?. Frequencies of words used by both gender to define self in three conditions were analyzed to discover if women and men's definition of self change depending on contexts. These findings provide an understanding for the roles of gender-related issues.

Keywords: component; gender differences; gender similarities; work context; relational context; context differences

A. Sources of gender stereotypes

Gender differences are easily emphasized phenomena within the surrounding environment. For example; there are signs of gender differentiation within myths (Williams, 1987) and proverbs (Imamoğlu, 1995). These articles including analysis of myths and proverbs show that woman needs representations while man accepted as norms. It is demonstrated additionally that women have inconsistent representations such as mother-nature and seductress (Williams, 1987); or women as inferior and have to be protected by men and smarter than men (Imamoğlu, 1995).

Industries like media and toy production are other sources of the gender differentiation. Movies, advertisements, and toys emphasize how to be a woman (or girl) and man (or boy) (Crawford, 2012). For example; girls play with babies including a role-making as a mother; but boys play with toys including a role-taking as fighters. Toys, books, and cartoons represent women as fragile, vulnerable and needed to be protected while representing men as powerful and fearless. These instruments lead children to form preconsumptions about genders. Also, video-games which are easy to play for adolescents may represent women as sex-objects. It is found that people who played a video-game representing women as a sex-object rated violence against women as acceptable (Dill, Brown, & Collins, 2008). Lastly, screens and language used in the media are selective; if context is related with success, full face of a male figure

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appears (faceisim), but if it is female success, her whole body or different prefixes are needed to declare this success (Crawford, 2012).

Studies and later theories strived to find explanations for gender differences. Researchers looked for brain size, chromosomes, and hormones (for details, see: Crawford, 2012; and Helgeson, 2005). Helgeson (2005) stated that -these results showed little or no difference between women and men. Within gender difference is much more than between gender difference (Helgeson, 2005). Also Crawford (2012) mentioned that there are problems related with measurement and interpretation in gender studies. For example in some studies gender difference was found with small effect size which means that finding difference about the study topic is less in real world than finding similarities. Therefore, we have to be careful even while reading articles about gender differences. Depending on aforementioned information, we accept the gender difference as a societally shaped pseudo difference. It is not more than individual differences. Aim of differentiation may be decreasing uncertainties via making both gender more predictable, and/or by keeping advantaged position of patriarchy. However this differentiation (with either reason) has consequences on life of both women and men.

B. Consequences of gender stereotypes:

Some issues in consequences of gender differentiation are related with individuals' selves. These issues are mostly subcomponents of being gender schematic. Gender-schematic people were defined as evaluating others with gender-consistent associations while gender-aschematics as evaluating people with gender-free properties (Bem, 1981). It was also stated that "self-concept is assimilated in the schema" (Bem, 1981). Thus, it can be thought as strong identification with gender identity for one's own self and perception for others. Being gender-schematic leads people strive to fit roles described as feminine and masculine depending on their sexes. As long as self-related descriptions (called self-concepts) are parallel with these feminine and masculine roles; there is nothing to be problem. Because self-concept is also become reinforced. However if a gender-schematic person face with gender-aschematic tasks and lives difficulty because of his/her sex; we can talk about negative consequences of self-stereotyping explicitly. Studies about "gendering cognition" showed that girls display decrease in math performance when compared with boys if math ability was introduced as ability of boys although boys and girls are not different before this gender related ability emphasize (Crawford, 2012).

It was stated that self-stereotyping is related with expectancies about stereotypes within relations (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006). Researchers showed that stereotypes held by close others has a mediation effect on relation between salient event and self-stereotyping (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006). This effect can be examined with parent-child relation (e.g., using gender related rewards by the parent) and romantic relations (e.g., motherhood and fatherhood roles). Therefore, self-schemas and close others' gender related expectations influence how we define ourselves.

Additionally, distant-others are influential in our daily life. In work area, as an example, we contact with people we had little information about them. But they are still influential. In work settings there may be two different segregation; horizontal and vertical (Crawford, 2012). In horizontal segregation, women and men accepted as workers for different jobs (women as secretary and men as engineers). In vertical segregation, women and men accepted as workers from two ends of the hierarchy. For example, in an article, it is stated that women are positioned only 4 % of the managerial position which indicates underrepresentation of women (Aycan, 2004). Additionally, gender has an impact on hiring, promotions and performance evaluations (Crawford, 2012).

Society as including distant-others brings gender related consequences too. In society, we perceive more people as distantly relational even without a real contact. In societal settings; sexism is important. Glick

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and Fiske (2001) defined sexism as two types; hostile and benevolent. In hostile sexism, inferiority of women and power of men are explicitly emphasized. In benevolent sexism, women and men accepted as having different but important positive values (as complementary sexes). Thus, benevolent sexism leads people to believe in justice although there still is sexism and differentiation of genders.

Moreover, precarious manhood and honor cultures create important consequences within society. In precarious manhood, manhood is defined as tenuous which can be lost if did not proofed; so man needs to protect and prove it in public area to be accepted as a man (Vandello, & Cohen, 2008; Vandello, & Bosson, 2013). Similarly in honor cultures, toughness, being powerful and having control over others are important for a man to prove his manhood (Vandello, & Cohen, 2008). In these honor cultures, duties for women are protecting purity (virginity), while duties for men are controlling and protecting women's purity (Sakallı-Uğurlu, & Akbaş, 2013). If women cannot fulfill her duties, violence from men is accepted as normal in honor cultures (Sakallı-Uğurlu, & Akbaş, 2013). Therefore; gender differentiations and perceived hard responsibilities may lead men to be a killer, while making women dead. This is the most important consequence of the gender differentiation.

C. The present study

In this study we aimed to conduct interview to discover basically two questions. First one was to explore effect of gender identity on self-concept, and second one was to find if there is a change when relational (or work) contexts and emphasize for gender identity were included. Previously in the literature, it was found that gender has an effect on domain specific self-esteem such as personal, social, and academic domains for adolescents in Pakistan while domains related with parents and self-esteem in general is not effected (Ahmad, Imran, Khanam, ,& Riaz, 2013). It is possible to expect that, if self-esteem for both women and men is affected from their gender, the underlying reason can be differentiation in ranking self-related aspects in different domains. On the other hand, as literature suggests, there may be similarities between women and men in different contexts. Therefore, this study was planned to discover which perspective is more valid about impact of gender on self-concept in different context.

Method

In order to investigate contextual effect of gender on self-concepts we conducted interviews. In these interviews, 8 questions were planned to be asked and 5 of them were demographic questions. In the other 3 questions, participants were asked to list words which best describes (a) themselves, (b) themselves as male/female in close relation, and (c) themselves as male/female worker respectively. Therefore, it will be possible to evaluate self-concept differences within non-schema, gender-schema-consistent, or gender-schema-inconsistent emphasized contexts.

Results

Thirty-two participants (12 men and 20 women) joined to the interview. Their age range was 24-39 (*M*= 30.7, *SD*= 4.36). All the participants were in a close relation (23 of them were married) and they were all workers and mostly graduated from a university (for the demographics, see table 1).

Table1. *Demographic information for the participants*

	Women	Men	Total
N	20	12	32
Age range	25-39	24-36	24-39
Education			
Colledge	1	1	2
Undergraduate	6	6	12
Graduate	13	5	18
Relationship status			
Married	15	8	23
In a relationship	5	4	9

Firstly; to investigate whether there is an effect of gender identity on self-concepts, participants answer to a question in which there was no emphasizing for gender. It was only asked to describe themselves with a few words. Answers were divided into 5 categories as relational, emotional, separation, success-oriented and other. These categories were chosen as representing women (first two categories), men (next too categories) depending on gender stereotypes and other properties used to describe self. In this question among male participants, 7 participants used relational words to describe themselves (e.g., social, attached to family); 2 of them used emotional words (e.g., emotional, and aggressive); 2 of them used words as separation words (e.g., free and adventurous); and 7 of them used success related words (e.g., industrious and hard-worker). Among females, 8 participants used relational words (e.g., concerned, caring, interested); 6 participants used emotional words (e.g., happy, emotional, and fragile); 3 participants used separation words (e.g., rebellious and stranger); and 10 participants used success-oriented words (For details, see table 2 and table 3).

Table 2. *Frequencies of words used in each category among male participants.*

	Self-definition		Self-definition in relationship		Self-definition in work	
	Number of participants	Totally used words	Number of participants	Totally used words	Number of participants	Totally used words
Self- concept						
relational	7	15	12	36	5	9
emotional	2	3	1	1	0	0
separation	2	2	0	0	0	0
success-	7	9	1	1	7	14
oriented	10	21	8	11	7	10
other						

In the second question, gender was emphasized and self-definition in a romantic relationship was asked. 12 of male participants used relational words, 1 participant used emotional, and 1 participant used success oriented words. Also 15 female participants used relational words, 9 participants used emotional, 1 participant used separation, and 5 participants used success oriented words to define themselves.

In the last question, gender was emphasized but self-definition in work setting was asked. 5 participants used relational words, and 7 participants used success-oriented words among males. Additionally, 9 female participants used relational words, 2 participants used emotional, 1 participant used separational, and 17 participants used success-oriented words.

Table 3. *Frequencies of words used in each category among female participants.*

Self- concept	Self-definition		Self-definition in relationship		Self-definition in work	
	Number of participants	*Totally used words*	*Number of participants*	*Totally used words*	*Number of participants*	*Totally used words*
relational	8	15	15	35	9	13
emotional	6	9	9	11	2	2
separation	3	4	1	1	1	1
success-oriented	10	14	5	10	17	26
other	17	59	13	26	13	35

Discussion

These results show that (1) women used more words to describe themselves; (2) both female and male subjects used relational words to describe themselves in general and in a romantic relationship, and number of used words nearly equal among both women and men; (3) success-related words were also used by both gender highly; (4) least descriptive words were separation-related words for both women and men in general, in work setting and in a romantic relationship contexts; (5) lastly, as words in other category used for self-concepts are the highest when general definitions were asked in both number of participants and words; it is possible to suggest that people generally define themselves separated from gender related expectations as categorized in here when gender was not emphasized. These results also demonstrate that being relational and success-oriented are important for both women and men as they include these words in their self-concepts. Therefore, participants in this interview disprove suggestions of Cross and Madson (1997) who claimed that women needs to have a relational self-construal, and men needs to have a separated self-construal.

In this interview, participants (both male and female) described themselves as both relational and success oriented. These results fit with findings of Balanced Integration Differentiation (BID) model of Imamoğlu (2003). In this model, it is stated that optimal state for human beings (both women and men) is being in balanced between dimensions of differentiation and integration where integration stands for "need to be connected to others", and differentiation for "need for actualization for unique potential". Therefore it is possible to state that people (regardless of the gender) has relational and goal oriented aspects in their

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self-concepts. Additionally, this finding fits with the claim of Baumeister, and Sommer (1997). They stated that men need to be relational in work settings to be successful.

Conclusion

Gender differentiation rises from a lot of sources such as myths, proverbs, storied, media cartoons and video games. It is also visible in language usage. Although studies show little evidence for differences, people still think that women and men are from two different poles. There are important consequences for these believe. Firstly, people may be affected while evaluating themselves; they may show poor performances or motivation for the actions that they are able to do. Secondly, consequences can be seen in relational settings. Parent-child relation and wife-husband relation (as close-relations); and work settings and society (as distant-relations) reveal important consequences on optimal functioning.

The small-sampled interview showed that both female related (being relational) and male related (success oriented) words are chosen as a part of self-concept for both women and men. This finding can be an evidence for similarities between women and men, and importance of both relatedness and differentiation for optimal functioning as stated in BID model (Imamoğlu, 2003). Therefore, it is possible to suggest that (1) differences are needed to be accepted as individual differences rather than gender differences, and (2) attributed gender characteristics can be demonstrated as independent from genders.

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