



Original Article

Correlates of student's gender role conflict: Can gender role conflict predict psychological well-being?

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Abstract

Introduction: In many studies, gender role conflict is considered as one of the correlates of psychological problems. The aim of this research was to study the relationship between gender role conflict and psychological well-being among students.

Materials and Methods: In this descriptive-correlational study, research subjects were 200 male students selected through multistage cluster sampling from Mohaghegh Ardabili University in 2014. O'Neil's Gender Role Conflict Scale (1986) and Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (2002) were used for data collection. The data were analyzed using multi-variant regression analysis.

Results: The results showed that the elements of success, power, and competition can predict the components of self-acceptance ($P<0.01$), autonomy, and mastery over the environment ($P<0.05$). Limited affectivity has a significant impact on Positive relations ($P<0.05$) and personal growth ($P<0.01$), and the conflicts between work and family relations has a significant effect on positive relations ($P<0.05$), environmental mastery ($P<0.01$), and Purpose in life ($P<0.01$). Moreover, 42% of the variance in psychological well-being among college students is explained with gender role conflict.

Conclusion: Based on these results, individuals with less gender role conflict have better psychological well-being.

Keywords: Conflict, Gender, Psychological, Students, Well-being

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Introduction

When people change to adolescent, they develop some special norms and values about their gender. This process, which is known as gender role socialization, is defined as a process in which children and adults acquire and internalize attitudes, values and behaviors related to womanhood and/or manhood (1). Efforts to follow social standards will often lead to some negative results and this have some physical and psychological consequences for men that may affect their other life dimensions such as family, work and intimate relations (2). This phenomenon which is called gender role conflict by O'Neil (1) is a psychological state in which gender roles have some negative consequences for the person himself or for others. Gender role conflict occurs when men fail to get along with gender role

norms or when they experience an inconsistency between their real and ideal selves on the basis of gender role norms or when gender based notions lead to some value limitations or loss (3-5).

O'Neil et al. (6) identify four elements for gender role conflict scale: success; power and competition (SPC), restricted emotionality (RE), restrictive affectionate behavior between men (RABBM), conflict between work and family relation (CBWER). The conducted research in many countries especially in the United States have showed that there is a meaningful relationship between gender role conflict and a wide variety of clinical variables such as depression and anxiety (7,8), sex obligation (9), low self-esteem (10), paranoia and psychoneurosis (11), inter-personal problems like family violence (12), inter-personal sensitivity, lack of social comfort, enmity (13), sex aggression toward women (14), attitude toward seeking psychological help (15), alcohol use (16), professional decision making (17), and psychological depression (13,18). Researches have also showed

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that there is meaningful relationship between gender role conflict and negative attitudes and/or dualism toward asking for psychological help and council (19,20). Moreover, high level of GRCS may prevent men from asking for professional psychological help (21), which may intensify psychological disorder. Several studies have showed positive relations between GRC and psychological depression but conversely they have showed a negative relationship between GRC and seeking for psychological help. Gender role conflict presents itself mainly in intimate relationship between men which may be perceived as homosexual behavior.

With the emphasis on the fact that positive health is something beyond the lack of illness, Ryff (22) states that psychological well-being is referred to everything one needs for their well-being. People with high feeling of well-being generally experience more positive emotions and have a positive evaluation of their environment. On the other people with low well-being evaluate their environment unfavorable and experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression and anger [23]. In their research Irina, Igal and Mark [24] showed that people with high psychological well-being get satisfaction from their family lives, develop a good relationship and have many friends; moreover they showed that there is a relationship between psychological well-being and internal motivations and high levels of happiness will improve social skills and prevent depression. Similarly in a research titled alcohol and to overcome stress and the effect of social support on health and wellbeing, Lee [25] showed that there is a meaningful relationship between social support of friends and family in practical and affective dimensions and variables of depression, alcohol use and physical and mental health. In a research Yamaoka [26] showed that social people and those with more friends are of high levels of psychological well-being. Sarracino's research [27] indicated that social people with more social associations express more satisfaction from their lives and enjoy from higher levels of psychological well-being. Wood et al [28] reported a negative relationship between psychoneurosis and all dimensions of psychological well-being.

It is noteworthy that one of the goals of psychological researches is to identify factors endanger healthy life and to identify variables related to psychological well-being and to show ways and strategies to eliminate or decrease unfavorable effects of such factors. Review of literature showed that gender role conflict is related to many psychological issues that can affect

psychological state of a person. On the other hand it has become clear that there is a significant relationship between social, personal and psychological issues and psychological well-being. Although from the obtained results we can infer that gender role conflict can be of negative relationship with psychological well-being, such claim has not yet scientifically been examined. This research aimed to assess the relationship between gender role conflict and psychological well-being.

Materials and Methods

In this descriptive- correlational study, research subjects were all male students from Mohaghegh Ardabili University in 2014. Due to the fact that in correlational studies especially of multi-variant kind sample volume must be rather high (favorably 200 people), hence 200 subjects were selected and studied from the abovementioned population. Through a multistage cluster sampling we selected 3 colleges from among 6 colleges of Mohaghegh Ardabili University, randomly. Then from each selected colleges 3 departments and from among each department 2 levels (totally 18 levels) were selected randomly, then all subjects from different levels (n=200) were studied. All selected subjects were studying for their bachelor's degree at the age ranging from 18 to 24. The criteria for the selection were being: male, at the age between 18-24 and university student; and the criteria for not selecting were: having any psychological and physical disorder and drug abuse. All subjects under study expressed their satisfaction to participate in this research; we assured subjects of protecting the privacy of their information, and for encouraging their participation they had been provided with a free training course about the manner of using SPSS₂₀ in statistical analysis. For data collection the short form of Gender Role Conflict Scale and Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being were used.

Research instruments

- *The short form of Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS)*: The original version of Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) that is developed by O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman (6) evaluates men's responses to homogeneous and inhomogeneous gender role expectations. This scale, which consists of 37 items and is of suitable psychometric indicators, decreased into 16 items and four subscales (power and competition; restricted emotionality; restrictive affectionate behavior between men; conflict between work and family relation) by Wester, Vogel, O'Neil and Danforth. Each factor is measured with four items

and responses to the items were provided on a 6-point Likert's scale (ranging from totally disagree=1 to totally agree=6). In their factorial analysis Wester et al. (29) have showed 4-factored structure of the short form of Gender Role Conflict Scale and approved its competence (RMSEA=0.057; $\chi^2=430.83$ and $P<0.001$). In this research validity of the abovementioned scale with Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the dimensions of restricted emotionality, Success, power, and competition, restrictive affectionate behavior between men, and conflict between work and family relation are 0.78, 0.74, 0.82, and 0.79, respectively.

- *Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being*: This questionnaire was developed by Ryff in 1989 and revised in 2002. This questionnaire evaluates components of autonomy, Environmental Mastery, personal growth, Positive relations with others, Purpose in life and self-acceptance. These six elements together form psychological well-being. This test is a kind of self-evaluation in a six point scale ranging from totally agree to totally disagree (totally disagree = 1, rather disagree = 2, slightly disagree = 3, slightly agree = 4, rather agree = 5, and totally agree = 6). The original form consists of 120 questions but in later studies we can see 84, 54, 18, and 14-itemed and even shorter forms. Validity and reliability of Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being were reported high in different studies. The coefficient of reliability through retesting Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being is reported 0.82 and subscales of self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in life and personal growth are reported 0.71, 0.77, 0.78, 0.77, 0.70, and 0.78 (22). Iranian studies reported the appropriate validity and reliability of this scale among student populations (30). In this research we used a 14-itemed form.

Results

200 male subjects with the average, minimum and maximum ages of 22.25, 18 and 24 were participated in this research. 176 subjects (92.6%) were single and 14 subjects (7.4%) were married. All subjects would get their bachelor's degree at the end of their course.

Table 1 summarizes and describes the obtained data from the samples under study. According to the information from crooked and stretched indicators, scores' distribution was normal for all variables under study.

Table 1. Descriptive indicators for components of gender role conflict and psychological well-being among subjects under male students

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD	crookedness	Stretchiness
Restricted emotionality	4	24	13.23	4.75	0.002	-0.73
Success, power, and competition	4	24	15.54	5.19	-0.46	-0.51
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	4	24	12.57	4.85	0.09	0.52
Conflicts between work and family relations	4	24	13.80	4.86	0.10	0.58
Total score of GRC	22	86	55.14	11.81	-0.16	0.16
Self-acceptance	3	18	12.54	3.00	-0.44	-0.17
Positive relations	5	18	12.57	2.98	-0.09	-0.62
Autonomy	3	18	12.07	2.91	-0.40	0.34
Environmental Mastery	6	18	13.01	2.84	-0.31	-0.30
Personal growth	7	18	13.25	2.76	-0.05	-0.85
Purpose in life	4	18	12.50	2.66	-0.35	0.22
Total score of psychological well-being	36	95	70.98	11.12	-0.23	-0.07

For predicting the components of psychological well-being from GRC components we used multi-variant regression analysis. It is summarized in Table 2.

The results from table 2 indicate that components of psychological well-being can predict well components of restricted emotionality, Success, power, and competition, and conflict between work and family ($P<0.01$); from among the components of GRC only restrictive affectionate behavior between men cannot predict the components of psychological well-being significantly.

Table 2. The results of multi-variant regression analysis for predicting components of psychological well-being from the components of GRC

Components of GRC	λ value	F*	Sig.	η^2
Restricted emotionality	0.92	2.32	0.03	0.07
Success, power, and competition	0.91	2.94	0.01	0.09
RABBM	0.97	0.67	0.67	0.02
CBWER	0.91	2.80	0.01	0.09

Df_s = 6 and 180*

For examining the effect of each components of GRC on each components of psychological well-being, we considered single variant analysis in the context of multi-variant regression analysis. Table 3 is the summary of these results.

Table 3. The results of single variant analyses for predicting the components of psychological well-being from the components of GRC

Predictor	Criterion variable	F*	Sig	η^2
Restricted emotionality	Self-acceptance	0.06	0.81	0.00
	Positive relations	2.98	0.04	0.03
	Autonomy	0.02	0.88	0.00
	E mastery	0.10	0.75	0.00
	Personal growth	6.52	0.01	0.05
Success, power, and competition	Purpose in life	0.25	0.00	0.62
	Self-acceptance	11.35	0.00	0.06
	Positive relations	0.36	0.54	0.00
	Autonomy	5.65	0.02	0.03
	E mastery	4.94	0.03	0.03
Conflicts between work and family relations	E mastery	0.23	0.63	0.00
	Personal growth	0.81	0.37	0.01
	Purpose in life	0.81	0.01	0.37
	Self-acceptance	1.13	0.28	0.01
	Positive relations	3.62	0.03	0.05
	Autonomy	0.49	0.48	0.00
	E mastery	10.99	0.00	0.09
	Personal growth	0.33	0.56	0.00
	Purpose in life	3.40	0.04	0.03

dfs = 1 and * 185

The results of single-variant analyses in table 3 indicate that the effect of restricted emotionality on the two components of Positive relations ($P<0.05$) and personal growth ($P<0.01$) is significant but its effect on other components of psychological well-being is not significant. Moreover the effect of success, power and competition is proven to be significant on three components of self-acceptance ($P<0.01$), autonomy ($P<0.05$), and Environmental Mastery ($P<0.05$). Finally the effect of conflict between work and family relations on three components of Positive relations ($P<0.05$), Environmental Mastery ($P<0.01$) and Purpose in life ($P<0.05$) is proven to be significant.

For predicting total score of psychological well-being from total score of gender role conflict simple regression was used the results indicated that prediction model of psychological well-being from GRC is significant ($F_{(1 \text{ and } 188)}=14.31$ and $P<0.01$). The value of β indicates that GRC can predict psychological well-being with the value of 0.42.

Discussion

The aim of present research was to study the relationship between gender role conflict and psychological well-being among population under study. The results indicated that components of psychological well-being are well predictable through components of restricted emotionality; success, power and competition; and conflict between work and family relations. The findings are in line with the findings of other studies (7,8,10,13,15,19,20,21,26,28). These researchers showed that there is a relationship between gender role conflict and a wide variety of clinical variables

such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal problems such as family violence, interpersonal sensitivity, lack of social comfort, enmity, and seeking psychological help; and there is significant relationship between higher levels of gender role conflict among men and the increase in some behaviors such as anger, alcohol use and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and the decrease in healthy behaviors. Psychological well-being includes positive feelings about life and getting general satisfaction from life (i.e., self and others) in different areas such as family, job and the like. Therefore, people with high psychological well-being experience more positive emotions and have a positive evaluation from their environment. On the other hand people with low psychological well-being experience more negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger and have an unfavorable evaluation from the situations in their life.

The results of this research indicate that the effect of success, power and competition is significant on the three components of self-acceptance, autonomy, and Environmental Mastery, which is in line with the findings from other researches (4,10,28,31). There is a negative relationship between success, power and competition (SPC) and obsession and SPC can predict high self-esteem positively. Moreover in this study restricted emotionality could predict Positive relations and personal growth. This finding is in line with Schwartz, Waldo and Daniel (10), Hayes and Mahalik (13), Lee (25), and Yamaoka (26). Restricted emotionality means lack of open and easy expression of feeling and being vulnerable with regard to self and others; it is related to the lack of intimate relations, marital problems and lack of relationships with the society; therefore it can restrict or damage social relations and weaken self-actualization and its basis; the less expansion of social relation the less psychological well-being would be.

Finally the results of this research indicate that the effect of conflict between work and family relations on three components of positive relations, Environmental Mastery and Purpose in life is significant. It supports the findings from previous researches (4,7,10,13,15,26). Ambiguity, weariness and role conflict are among the major factors decreasing work energy that pave the way for weakening performance, function, creative tendencies, and organized civil behaviors. On the other hand the decrease in work energy paves the way for experiencing cognitive and affective imbalances (such as inability in correct decision-

making, realistic processing of conditions, experiencing moods of anger and inability) and this may lead to turnover and deviated behaviors and as a result endangers one's psychological health and well-being.

There were some limitations for this research which must be considered in data interpretation and generalization. Since research method was descriptive- correlational we cannot take the obtained relations as of cause and effect kind. Beside the above-mentioned methodological limitation, the population under study was students and this limits its generalization to other populations. Giving the related errors in self-assessment tests more attention must be paid to interpret the results of this research.

Conclusion

The results of present research indicated that,

components of restricted emotionality; success, power and competition; and the conflict between work and family relation can predict well the components of psychological well-being. Moreover the results showed that the effect of success, power and competition is significant on the three components of self-acceptance, autonomy, and Environmental Mastery. The effect of the conflict between work and family relation on the components of positive relations, Environmental Mastery and Purpose in life was found to be significant. This research supports and enriches research literature about gender role conflict and psychological well-being. With regard to the obtained results it is necessary for experts and managers in the field of psychological health to consider more the effect of gender role conflict along with other effective factors on physical and psychological health.

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