

The Role of Gender Characteristics in Lifestyle Choices

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ABSTRACT

Lifestyle is a way of expressing oneself in life, taking into account individual social opportunities and bio-socio-psychic potentials. A healthy lifestyle is a unified system of individual life manifestations that affect the self-actualization of the spiritual and physical efforts of the human personality. The structural model of lifestyle includes semantic values, content-structure, social role and social time components.

Lifestyle is not only about physical activities, but also about how people understand the social world and how they feel about it. Lifestyle refers to the way people engage in meaningful behaviors within a social and cultural framework. In this sense, a person's lifestyle reflects their relationship to society and how they see their place in that society.

The impact of gender identity, and gender characteristics to lifestyle has been described in this manuscript. The literature analyzing, and comparative approach has been chosen as the main method of the study.

Keywords: gender identity, interpersonal relationship, lifestyle, socialization

INTRODUCTION

The differences in the social status of women and men, their unequal rights, have been wrongly explained by biological reasons for

centuries. However, gender equality is called equality between women and men and implies the following: equal material well-being; equal opportunities; similar system of values; equal participation in the decision-making process; equal control over resources and earnings. Gender equality does not mean that men and women behave in the same way. It simply means that a person has equal rights, regardless of whether they are born male or female. That is, being born female should not cause any restrictions, and at the same time, gender equality should not imply sexual discrimination and isolation against men. The movement for gender equality has begun to cover the whole world since the second half of the last century. The scale and relevance of the problem have even prompted important organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the OSCE, and the Council of Europe, which determine the political atmosphere of the world, to strengthen their efforts in this direction. The UN adopted the Conventions on the Political Rights of Women in 1952, on the Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages in 1962, and on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979. These documents reflect the responsibility and role of governments in ensuring the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality was put forward by researchers in the social and human sciences in 1980 with the emergence of the concept of gender as the basis of modern feminist theory. In 1986, a resolution on the work of the “UN Commission on the Status of Women” was adopted. The Commission appealed to all organizations in the UN system, including regional commissions and specialized agencies, to develop a common strategy on the problem of gender equality and to implement it in their long-term programs (Women, U.N.,2020).

Gender equality means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men. Equality does not equate men and women, but requires taking into account their different needs, priorities and interests. Gender equality is based on the equal partnership of men and women in the family, public life, as well as within society. Countries are increasingly realizing that they cannot achieve development and progress without involving half of the population in political and social governance. Where women have access to quality education, work, land and other activities, growth and stability also increase (Wood, 2009).

Gender mainstreaming is a long-term strategy that goes hand in hand with various policies for the advancement of women. There is a broad consensus on the effectiveness of a dual approach to gender equality, which combines gender equality and concrete measures for the advancement of women, to better shape policies and use resources more effectively. Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy that ensures that the needs, priorities and experiences of women and men are reflected as an integral factor in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, so as to prevent the continuation of inequalities between women and men. This approach not only

prevents the emergence of gender inequalities, but also involves analyzing the current situation with a view to eliminating the mechanisms that give rise to inequalities.

Research question 1. What is gender identity, and how it can impact lifestyle of people?

Gender identity is a basic structure of social identity that characterizes a person in terms of their belonging to a male or female group, and most significantly, how a person defines themselves (I.S. Kon, 1999).

Gender identity is self-awareness in connection with cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. Having arisen as a result of the interaction of the Self and others, gender identity manifests itself as a subjective experience of psychological interiorization of male or female traits (Big Explanatory Sociological Dictionary, 1999).

Gender identity is the unity of behavior and self-awareness of an individual who considers himself to belong to a certain gender and is guided by the requirements of the corresponding gender role (Psychology. Dictionary, 1990).

Gender identity is the correlation of personality with the physical, psychophysiological, psychological and sociocultural meanings of masculinity and femininity (V.E. Kagan, 1991). According to this definition, the following types of gender identity are distinguished:

- basic identity – correlation of the personality with traditional, phylogenetic, sexual differences, ideas about masculinity and femininity;
- role identity – correlation of the behavior and experiences of the personality with the gender role stereotypes existing in a given culture and at a given time; this type of identity is determined by the influence of the environment;
- personal identity – integration of the first and second, which characterizes the correlation of the personality with masculinity and femininity in the context

of individual experience of interpersonal communication and joint activities.

At the same time, if the basic identity is stable, then at the level of role and personal identity there is an ongoing process of gender identification (Crawley, 2008).

Three levels of phenomena can be distinguished that explain the emergence and transformation of the identity of women and men:

1. The biological level is an individual resource and life potential of a person, starting from cells and ending with the organ system. These are the possibilities of functioning, conditioned by the structural and functional abilities of the organism.
2. The psychological level is a personal resource that a person uses to construct his identity, i.e. a complex of psychological characteristics, including cognitive abilities, motivational-volitional potential, dominant orientations, values, etc.
3. The social level is the dominant ideology in society and social changes, influencing men and women as participants in social relations. The process of social change creates conditions for the process of changes at the behavioral level.

Thus, gender identity is associated, first of all, with somatic characteristics, on the basis of which a person's identity is formed as a representative of a certain biological sex. Gender identity is the first place socio-cultural parameters of the categories "male" and "female", according to which a person identifies himself with a specific gender group, constructing his identity as a representative of a specific gender. It should be emphasized that the concept of "gender identity" is not equivalent to the concept of "sexual identity", which can be described in terms of the characteristics of self-perception and a person's ideas about himself in the context of sexual behavior (Crawley et al., 2008).

In modern foreign literature, the concept of "gender identity" is mainly used, rather than "sexual identity", because it reflects a person's awareness of their connection with cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. This concept covers subjective experience and represents the psychological interiorization of male or female traits in the process of interaction between the Self and others. Gender identity is associated with ideas about one's gender - whether a person feels like a man or a woman.

The general concept of both sex role and gender identity is the category of "masculinity/femininity", which is a marker of male or female identity.

Masculinity and femininity are normative ideas about the somatic, mental and behavioral properties characteristic of men and women (Psychology. Dictionary, 1990). Masculinity is what should be added to anatomy to obtain a male gender role (Dictionary of Gender Terms, 2002).

There are three different meanings of the concept of "masculinity" / "femininity" (I.S. Kon, 2001).

1. Masculinity (femininity) as a descriptive category denotes a set of behavioral and mental traits, properties and characteristics objectively inherent in men (women) in contrast to women (men).
2. Masculinity (femininity) as an ascriptive category denotes one of the elements of the symbolic culture of society, a set of social ideas, attitudes and beliefs about what a man (woman) is, what qualities are attributed to him (her).
3. Masculinity (femininity) as a prescriptive category is a system of prescriptions that do not refer to the average, but to the "ideal" real man (woman), it is a normative standard of masculinity (femininity).

The social constructivist approach defines masculinity in terms of gender expectations. Masculinity is what a man should be and what

is expected of him. According to this approach, masculinity is constructed both by society as a whole and by each individual male. The social construct of masculinity is a derivative of the gender ideology of society and is formed under the influence of traditional views on the male role, modern economic realities and the socio-cultural situation. At the individual level, masculinity is constructed as gender identity in accordance with the requirements of gender norms that prevail in a particular social group and are realized in interaction with others.

The situationality of masculinity is manifested through the socio-cultural dependence of intensification and inflationary changes occurring with some of its characteristics. For example, during wars, sports competitions and conflict situations, existing models of masculinity are intensified and such characteristics as aggressiveness and a tendency to compete come to the fore. In relatively calm times, inflationary processes occur, as a result of which the value of these characteristics is significantly reduced and the concept of masculinity is smoothed out.

Femininity (femininity) - characteristics associated with the female sex (Large explanatory sociological dictionary, 1999), or characteristic forms of behavior expected of a woman in a given society, or the social expression of a position, inherent in a woman, according to society. Traditionally, femininity was believed to be biologically determined, and such traits as passivity, responsiveness, gentleness, absorption in motherhood, caring, emotionality, etc. were attributed to it. These characteristics corresponded to the idea that women live in the private, not the public sphere. However, feminist studies have challenged the biological determination of these qualities: femininity is not natural, but rather created from childhood: a girl is condemned if she is not feminine enough. According to French feminist theorists, femininity is a derivative category that

patriarchy has endowed women with. There is also a view that femininity is a special "equal-but-different" opposite of masculinity, which has also been criticized, since the value of masculine traits applies to all people, including women, while feminine traits are valuable only for women. Psychologist J. Miller suggested that such traits of femininity as emotionality, vulnerability, and intuition are not a weakness, but a special strength that can play a significant role in building a better society, and that men can develop these traits in themselves. The modern crisis of masculinity indirectly testifies to this position. The modern gender approach to the study of psychological problems of gender is based on the understanding of gender identity as a multipolar construct.

Three components can be distinguished in the structure of gender identity. More over it can be observed in lifestyle of people in these spheres:

1. Cognitive – awareness of belonging to a certain gender and description of oneself using categories of masculinity-femininity. This is the “I-image” of a man or woman, awareness of the degree of typicality-atypicality of one’s qualities as a representative of a gender group.
2. Affective or evaluative – involves assessing personality traits and features of role behavior by correlating them with standard models of masculinity-femininity (the concepts of “positive or negative identity” concern precisely the evaluative component).
3. Behavioral – self-presentation of oneself as a representative of a gender group, as well as resolution of identity crises by choosing behavior in accordance with personally significant goals and values.

Research question 2. What kind crisis can be observed related to gender identity?

According to literature materials two types of gender identity were mentioned in both men and women: the first type can be called crisis

identity, and the second - agreed (non-crisis) identity.

A gender identity crisis is generated by a situation in which men and women, realizing their discrepancy in the main characteristics of the generally accepted and normatively defined model of masculinity or femininity, actualize this problem in public discourse as personally and socially significant. Thus, a gender identity crisis is not a problem of an individual, but a state of psychological distress characteristic of a significant portion of men and women as representatives of gender groups (Gaunttlet, 2008).

Problems and difficulties of male identity. Basic, essential characteristics of male identity are distinguished, which form its basis and are designated as basic constants of male self-affirmation:

- 1) focus on professional self-realization;
- 2) the need to be different from women;
- 3) an attitude towards emotionally restrained behavior (a man should not demonstrate excessive emotional reactions); restraint and prudence are attributes of the behavior of a "real man";
- 4) an attitude that a man should earn and provide for his wife and children, be a breadwinner.

The listed constants act as a kind of support for the male self, and when they are unstable or under threat, a feeling of internal disorganization and violation of the boundaries of male identity appears, which is reflected in inadequate behavior. A crisis of masculinity is a situation when it is impossible to realize the values, needs, and attitudes on which male self-identification is based. The main factors initiating such a crisis are external social conditions (Gaunttlet, 2008).

The basic constants of female self-affirmation, the impossibility of realizing which leads to crises of female identity, include the following:

- 1) focus on motherhood as the main sphere of self-realization;
- 2) the desire to be a good housewife;
- 3) orientation toward the sphere of interpersonal relations and toward achieving competence as a subject of interaction;
- 4) attractive appearance and an attitude toward maintaining attractiveness as an important female resource for interaction with others, appearance as a component of the "I-image". In modern literature, the crisis of female identity is called the crisis of the female role or the crisis of double identity, since this phenomenon is mainly caused by the aggravation of the conflict between family and work.

Gender stereotypes are socially constructed categories of "masculinity" and "femininity" that are confirmed by specific behavior depending on gender, different distribution of social roles and statuses among men and women, and which are supported by a person's psychological need to behave in accordance with social expectations and to feel their integrity and consistency (Rhoda, 1979).

The substantive characteristics of stereotypes emphasize their coherence, schematic nature, homogeneity, non-contradiction, pronounced evaluative and value coloring, and loading with the so-called "erroneous" component.

The dynamic characteristics of stereotypes emphasize the stability, rigidity, and conservatism of social stereotypes, indicating their ability to successfully resist information aimed at changing them.

The following characteristics of gender stereotypes are also distinguished: coherence, schematic nature and simplification, emotional and evaluative loading, stability and rigidity, and inaccuracy (A.I. Dontsov, T.G. Stefanenko, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The diversity of social characteristics of women and men in the world and the fundamental identity of biological characteristics allow us to conclude that biological sex is not the basis for differentiating their social roles that exist in different societies.

- It is not biological characteristics, but sociocultural norms that ultimately determine the psychological qualities, behavior patterns, types of activities, and professions of men and women.
- Being a man or a woman in society does not simply mean having certain anatomical features, it means fulfilling certain gender roles prescribed by representatives of different sexes

Gender characteristics in lifestyle choices also evolve over time, in response to social and cultural changes. Increasing initiatives for gender equality are enabling individuals to pursue different lifestyles and choices without conforming to traditional gender norms in society.

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