

Femininity, Masculinity, and Androgyny

Minority Students' Gender Role Issues

Ipah Saripah and Nur Fitri Rosdianti

Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia
ipah_bk@upi.edu

Keywords: Gender role, Minority Students, Femininity, Masculinity, Androgyny.

Abstract: This study was intended to describe the minority students' gender orientation including their visible characteristics. To this end, this research used qualitative approach in narrative case study framework. It was carried out by analyzing three research subjects. The data was obtained from BSRI (Bem Sex Role Inventory) supported with interviews and observations. The result showed that the three research subjects have different gender role orientation; masculine, feminine and androgyny. It is implied that guidance and counselling programs at school are strongly required in order to develop the students' gender awareness.

1 INTRODUCTION

Each individual has a different gender role consistent with his gender and is influenced by the construction of his community culture. The role of gender is an expectation and role that determine individuals in their thinking, behaving and feeling either as men or women (Santrock, 2003)

Ideally, individual's gender role is supposed to be relevant to his sex. In fact, despite the assumption that male is supposed to have masculine identity and female is supposed to have feminine one, there are some research suggested that gender identity was not consistent with one's biological sex (Bem, 1974; Palan et al., 1999).

Based on Bem's gender scheme (1974), individual self-concept based on gender is influenced by how individuals' process information both based on their own experiences and others' experiences. He further claimed that individual with ideal gender identity (man as masculine and women as feminine) is likely to more rely on the gender scheme than individual inconsistent with their gender roles (e.g. men who see themselves more dominated by feminine character rather than masculine) (Palan et al., 1999).

One of the most challenging gender roles to observe is in the minority group of people including students at school. Minority school-age students often struggle in adjusting to the two different value systems; the value system they adopt and the

dominant value system in their surrounding (Santrock, 2003). Generally, this group of minority students is in crisis in many ways such as identity, gender, origin, culture, language, etc. (Office of The High Commissioner for Human Right, 2010).

In 2013, the National School Climate Survey recorded more than half of sexual minority teenagers in schools felt insecure because of their sexual orientation, and almost 38% of them felt insecure because their gender expression acted quite feminine for teenage boys and quite masculine for adolescent girls (Kosciw et al., 2014). The results of this study are also reinforced by Thorne's research in Golshirazian et al. (2015) which concludes that unsupportive schools can inhibit gender stereotypical attitudes and behaviors to their students.

In general, Bem (1974) and Santrock (2003) divide the individual gender roles into four categories; masculine, feminine, androgyny, and undifferentiated.

Masculinity is an individual outlook that has instrumental characteristics and is a male construct of males (Boe, 2015; Demartoto, A., 2010; Santrock, 2003). Masculinity is a component of a gender social construction that is usually associated with men and their characteristics (Johnson and Repta, 2012). The role of gender in masculine characters has personality traits such as assertive, self-reliant, competitive, ambitious, dominant, courageous, strong, confidence, and brave (Bem, 1974).

Conversely, femininity is an individual outlook that has expressive personality traits (Boe, 2015; Santrock, 2003). Femininity is also often associated with female gender behavior (Johnson and Repta, 2012). The feminine character has gentle personality traits; sensitive, subtle, sympathetic, happy, helpful, loving, cheerful, caring, and sociable (Bem, 1974).

Androgyny is the high combination of both masculine and feminine characters. The combination has made androgyny show such personality traits as patient, care, responsible assertive, self-confident and strong (Bem, 1974).

As for undifferentiated gender roles, according to Bem (1974), it was addressed to individuals who have a low masculine and feminine stereotype pattern.

Among those various issues, the issue of gender roles especially in minority students at school is relatively under-studied. Therefore, this study aims to explore the issue of femininity and masculinity especially regarding to gender role orientation displayed by male students in a female-dominated environment.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study used qualitative approach focusing on the central phenomena (Creswell, 2012). The central phenomenon of this research is the difference in gender role orientation displayed by male students as the minority students.

The design for this study was narrative case study so as to explore the answer for the question "What are the masculine and feminine characteristics that minority students demonstrate on any gender orientation?"

The participants were three Indonesian male students; RFS, ARN and BFS selected based on BSRI (Bem Sex Role Inventory) instrument.

The data were obtained from interviewing the subjects, their close friends and their guidance and counselling teachers. In addition, the observation was also undertaken to explore how the subjects behave and communicate based on their masculinity and femininity characteristics while doing their daily routines.

The data analysis was done through display reduction, and data verification procedures. The conclusion was drawn after validating the data through triangulation process. This research followed the following figure 1:

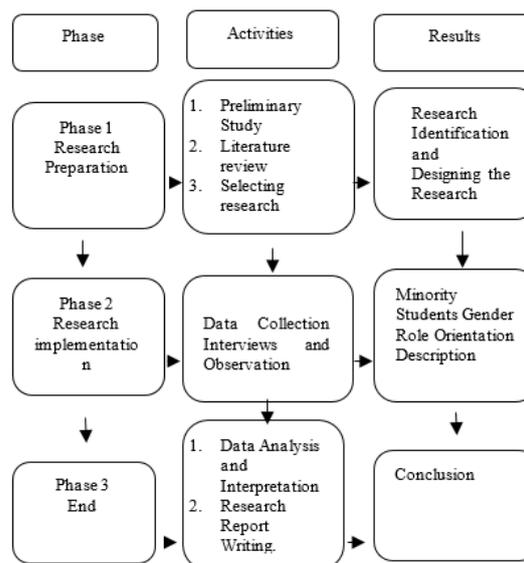


Figure 1: Research procedures.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Participant 1 (RFS)

From the analysis, it has revealed that RFS has feminine role dominated characteristics. It was observed that RFS was so expressive when communicating to his friends. He was also deemed cheerful and easy-going. This was confirmed from interviewing his guidance and counselling teacher.

"... it is obvious that he was more girly and act more like a girl in a way that he was coquettish, more talkative, more cheerful more sensitive and emotional. It was often observed that he had woman way of thinking.

As a boy, RFS is such an easy-going individual that he can easily interact both to his male and female friends. Gender differences do not make him awkward when he is hanging out with his female friends.

His supple way of move was clearly visible to his fellow classmates. When talking, RFS acted and behaved like a woman. The non-verbal gesture augmented his interaction with others.

As a teenage boy, RFS has more knowledge on womanly stuffs. He is more interested in discussing make up or fashion than talking about game or other manly things. Despite his expressive appearance, RFS was not too feminine in his style, he looked more like a rabble individual at school.

However, the tendency that shows his feminine side from his expressive gesture has characterized him to be feminine. It is in line with Boe (2015) and Santrock (2003) that expressive individuals are characterized as feminine.

Feinman and Martin (Santrock, 2003) revealed that feminine boys tend to attract more negative reaction than masculine acted girls. Nevertheless, RFS seems to find no rejection or negative reaction from his female classmates. He was deemed as an adored icon by his fellow female classmates. This has led to the condition that the intimacy between RFS and his female classmates has amplified his feminine gender role (see in figure 2).



Figure 2: RFS along with his female classmates at school.

3.2 Participant 2 (ARN)

Based on the BSRI analysis, ARN's gender role tends to be masculine. At school, ARN was a neat looking individual. Both his uniform and hairstyle always look neat especially when he is around the teacher's room or when around his female classmates, and his close female friend in particular. It is in contrast with the condition when he is with his playmates. ARN looks so boorish that he often looks messy. It was confirmed by his teacher's statement.

"...ARN often looks messy, his hairstyle portrays his masculinity. He sometimes his neat looking appearance at school. He was also a former OSIS leader.

Based on the observation and the interview from the subject, his classmates and his guidance and counselling teacher, it was obtained that ARN has some dominant characteristics. As for example, he was capable of being a leader, wise, moody, adaptable yet closed. ARN is not an expressive individual. Although he is characterized as masculine individual, ARN is not reluctant in

hanging around with his female classmates. He is very popular at school and was adored by his fellow female schoolmates. Many of his female schoolmates like him and want to get closer to him since ARN is a popular student.

ARN is a closed person. When having problem, he prefers to keep it himself. He is not the type who easily believe in others, especially in telling the problems he has.

Donaldson (Demartoto, 2010) said that a great man is capable of conquering many women's hearts, because it is an image especially for a masculine man to be regarded as a true man. As what happened to ARN, the female dominated school environment is often used as a test of self-ability, especially in captivating women. However, ARN feels more comfortable when he is among his male classmates rather than among his female classmates (see in figure 3).



Figure 3: ARN and his classmates.

3.3 Participant 3 (BFS)

BFS that looked more coquettish has high masculinity side. It can be seen from he chooses the way he looks; from his appearance. It was also confirmed from the interview result from his friend.

"...BFS always looks neat, and has a life style. I like him."

According to Beynon (Demartoto, 2010) this type of masculine individual is categorized as metrosexual. This type of boy concern with his own physical appearance and has well-ordered life style, analyze things in detail and is perfectionist. It is relevant to BFS characteristics.

Although BFS has high masculine gender role, he seems expressive when talking especially when telling a story to others. This expressive behavior makes BFS popular among his female classmates. This expressive characteristic is one of the main characteristic in femininity characteristics.

BFS is quite easy-going in hanging out with his fellows. He will act more masculine when he is with his fellow male classmates but more feminine when he is among his female classmates. It is in line with Bem (1974) statement stating that individuals with high masculine and feminine characteristics will act based on the needs and contexts. In other word, they are more adaptive.

The high masculine and feminine characteristics in BFS make him androgynous. Androgynous individuals will live more happily and can adapt the surrounding s more easily compared to individuals with one dominant gender characteristic. This result confirmed Martin and Gnoth (2009) stating that androgynous man can act and behave appropriately based on certain social contexts. In figure 4, there are the BFS propinquity with his close friends.



Figure 4: BFS propinquity with his close friends.

Gender is supposed to be natural. However, it can change and be exchanged in individual depending on the local culture and moment (Puspitawati, 2012). The various gender roles expressed by the participants have confirmed what Bem and other researchers claimed. Masculine, feminine and androgynous roles are ultimately inseparable from expectations about the different roles of men and women and the differences between the gender stereotypes are not as large as those believed (Eagly, 1987). Thus, it is possible to disparity the characteristics of each gender role which also depends on the individual characteristics of each participant.

Skitka and Maslach (1990) reveals that one of the things that must arise and get attention in gender issues and roles that remain unclear is the issue of individual differences. To accommodate and follow-up the gender role differences among the participants, this research suggests the urgencies of guidance and counselling at school.

Further, Bem (1974) and Skitka and Maslach (1990) the individual gender role and scheme are influenced by cognitive and information process as the framework of thinking. Therefore, based on the result, this pedagogical implication of this study leads to the maximizing the role of guidance and counselling in providing the information on gender role and gender disorientation. The information can be used as one of the strategies in developing students' self-control in functioning appropriately relevant to their gender roles.

Personal counselling is also recommended dealing with anticipating the conflict and inconvenience that the participants may encounter. The focus of this personal counselling is to develop students' gender role in the male minority students. The importance of that personal counselling is in fact relevant to the process of providing personal assistance for individuals in coping with and solving their personal problem such as self-adjustment, conflict management.

4 CONCLUSIONS

There is different gender role orientation among the minority students, they are: feminine, masculine and androgynous. The subject with feminine role was characterized by expressive way of speaking, coquettish way of acting, but ill-mannered way of style. The subject with masculine role was characterized by assertive way of talking with no unnecessary gesture and neat looking style. The subject with androgynous role was characterized by quite expressive way of speaking, somewhat coquettish way of acting, but neat style.

The variety of these gender roles pedagogically implied that guidance and counselling teachers are supposed to create school guidance and counselling program developing their student's awareness on gender and other related information on the gender identity disorder so that the students can behave in relevant to the acceptable norms.

REFERENCES

- Bem, S. L., 1974. The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155-162.
- Boe, O. 2015. A possible explanation of the achievement of gender and gender identity. *Journal at Procedia-Social and Behavioral Science* 190 (2015) pp. 17-23.

- Creswell, J. W., 2012. *Education Research, Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. 4th Edition, Pearson. Boston.
- Demartoto, A., 2010. *Konsep Maskulinitas dari Jaman ke Jaman dan Citranya dalam Media*. [Online]. Diakses dari <http://argyo.staff.uns.ac.id/files/2010/08/maskulinitas-ind1.pdf>.
- Eagly, A. H., 1987. *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-Role Interpretation*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers. New Jersey.
- Golshirazian, S., Dhillon, M., Maltz, S., Payne, K., Rabow, J., 2015. The Effect of Peer Groups on Gender Identity and Expression. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies* Volume 2, Issue 10, October 2015, PP 9-17.
- Johnson, J., Repta, R., 2012. Sex and gender: Beyond the binaries. In *J. Olliffe, & L. Greaves (Eds.), Designing and conducting gender, sex, and health research*. (pp. 17-39). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Kosciw, J., Greytak, E., Palmer, N., Boesen, M., 2014. *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. New York.
- Martin, B. A. S., Gnoth, J., 2009. *Is the Marlboro man the only alternative? The role of gender identity and self-construal salience in evaluations of male models*. Springer Science published online. Market Lett (2009). 20:353-367.
- National School Climate Survey, 2013. *The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York, NY: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.
- Office of The High Commissioner for Human Right, 2010. *Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation*. New Year and Geneva: United Nations.
- Palan, K. M., Areni, C. S., Kiecker, P., 1999. *Reexamining Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Identity Scales*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Manufactured in The Netherlands, pg 363-377.
- Puspitawati, H., 2012. *Gender dan Keluarga: Konsep dan Realita di Indonesia*, PT IPB Press. Bogor.
- Santrock, J. W., 2003. *Adolescence Perkembangan Remaja*, Erlangga. Jakarta.
- Skitka, L. J., Maslach, C., 1990. *Gender Roles and the Categorization of Gender-Relevant Behavior*. Articles of Sex Roles. Vol.22, Nos 3/4.1990.Plenum Publishing Corporation.