

# Gender Issues in Psychology (Psy512)

## Short Notes Lec (1-22)

Made by: ARTIST



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### Lesson 1:

#### Introduction:

**Misconception:** Psychological Study of Gender issues is only pertaining to psychology of women. Today we have a lot of research evidence available that explains both masculinity, or male roles, and femininity, or female roles.

#### **“Gender” versus “Sex”:**

Gender refers to the psychological aspect whereas sex refers to the physiological/physical aspect of the same phenomenon. “Gender” refers to culturally constructed categorization of “maleness” and “femaleness”. Biologically based distinctions between males and females are referred to as “Sex” of the person.

- Human beings are born as male or female babies but they become masculine or feminine as a result of child rearing practices and socio-cultural variables.

- Gender roles are the expectations of appropriate behavior for males and females set by the society.
- Gender Stereotypes are the widely held beliefs about females and male's abilities, personal traits and social behavior.

## Lesson 2:

### Feminist Movement:

A movement or way of thinking that proposes, advocates, supports, and struggles for social equality of the two sexes. The difference between men and women should be looked into from a "gender" perspective rather than a "sexist" perspective.

### Waves of feminist movement:

- First wave feminists are those early feminists who initiated the movement.
- They were active after 1960. They were working for equality, both economic and social and hence they fought for the right to contraception, birth control and sexual liberation.
- Third wave movement emerged in the 1990's. Third wave feminists tried to see how different groups of women may be having different needs, and circumstances, and requiring different solutions.

## The feminists advocate:

- The significance of change.
- Reintegration of humanity: all human traits are found in all humans (French, 1985).
- Equal rights and elimination of gender stratification.
- Curbing and bringing to an end all forms of violence against women.
- Promoting sexual autonomy.

## Varieties of Feminism:

- **Liberal Feminism:** Had roots in classical liberal approach that women should have equal rights than man.
- **Socialist Feminism:** Rather than seeking liberation at individual level, men and women should be together in this pursuit.
- **Radical Feminism:** Culture notion of gender need to be eliminated that man are the oppressors and women should be oppressed. Same as racial class operation model.
- **Cultural Feminism:** Social change is must. Society should accept and appreciate traditional feminine values.

## Women's Suffrage:

It was a reform movement for attaining the goal of suffrage to women. The movement had political and social

aimstoachieve.

**Suffragists:** Supporters and leaders of the suffrage movement who supported in the suffrage for women.

**Suffragettes:** Female supporters of the movement. Initially equal rather than universal suffrage was the demand.

**Equal suffrage:** Supporting the cause of abolishing the tradition and practice of graded votes.

**Universal suffrage:** Right to vote without any discrimination.

See History from Lesson 2

**Lesson 3:**

**Historical Background:**

Two main viewpoints exist in psychology regarding gender differences:

1. Gender variation is biological and evolution-based in nature.....hence fixed and unalterable. Biological differences are there, BUT it is the society that shapes and nurtures gender roles.

2. The biosocial approach has a broader perspective and benefits from knowledge and research in Sociology, Anthropology, Ethnology, and of course Biology.

## Nature versus Nurture:

It is a fact that men and women are biologically different, but are the roles adopted by us also predetermined? Or, is it that we are made to learn roles that suit our biological make-up? This study comes under “Nature vs Nurture issues”.

- **Maximalists** believe in huge, fundamental, differences between men and women.
- **Minimalist** believes and proposes that there are few fundamental, deep, differences.

## Earlier Schools of Thought in Psychology and Gender Differences:

**Structuralism:** Structuralists were primarily interested in the structure of human mind. Their interest was in the investigation of “generalized adult mind” which was a male mind.

**Functionalism:** It focused upon the functions of mind. Unlike Structuralists, their research included children, women, animals and even the feeble minded people and they emphasized “nature”. They studied intelligence and adaptability. **Typical findings of functionalism are:**

- Women were less intelligent than men.

- As compared to men women benefited less from education.
- Women, as compared to men, had a strong maternal instinct.
- Women were unlikely to produce examples of success or eminence.
- Women are intellectually deficient.

### Behaviorism:

The behaviorists emphasized “nurture”. Their primary interest was in learning and memory. Sex differences and sex roles along with other social factors were ignored, same as in Functionalism. Their research did not include women participants and if both men and women were participants, gender-related variables were not examined.

### Psychoanalytical Psychology:

Psychoanalytic Psychology, founded by Sigmund Freud, was the first to talk about sex differences, personality differences between men and women. Freud's theory gave an understanding of the conceptualization of sex and gender. He talked about the developmental stages of personality in terms of “**Psycho-sexual Development**”. This approach was strongly criticized all over the world, especially in the west, because it implied that Freud was

proposing and strengthening the idea of female subservience and a male dominated society. This gave rise to psychoanalytic Feminism.

## Lesson 4/5/6

### Gender Related Research + Research Methods + Quantitative Research:

#### Research focusing upon:

- The socio-psychological, economic, biological, and cultural-societal impact of gender stratification and gender roles.
- It also explores the various aspects of gender relations and gender differences.

#### Threats to Gender-related Research:

1. **Androcentricity:** Most gender research, especially the initial one, had been androcentric i.e., looking at issues from the male perspective.
2. **Overgeneralizing:** Studying only men and then generalizing the study for the whole mankind is overgeneralizing.
3. **Gender blindness:** Researchers fail to see the gender differences exist in almost all spheres of life,
4. **Double standards:** Researchers' personal attitudes, thinking, and prejudices lead to double standards.

**5. Interference:** At times the subject's perception of the sex of the researcher interferes with the accurate fact finding process.

### Steps of scientific research methods:

- Identifying a research
- Review of related
- Formulation of a hypothesis
- Designing & Conducting
- Analysis of data
- Drawing conclusion

### Feminist/Gender Research Methods:

- 1) Quantitative Methods
  - i- Descriptive
    - a- Surveys
    - b- Correlational studies
    - c- Observation (without intervention + with intervention)
    - d- Content Analysis
  - ii- Experimental
  - iii- Ex post Facto Studies (Quasi Experiments)

## 2) Qualitative Methods

- i- Case Studies
- ii- Interviews
- iii- Ethnography
- iv- Focus groups

Detailed definitions and explanations are in the lectures.

## Lesson 7/8

### Biological Differences between genders:

Differences are found in three ways:

- 1- Chromosomes
- 2- Hormones
- 3- Structure of Nervous Systems

- **Hormones and chromosomes** not only bases of masculinity and femininity and structural units of heredity, they play important role in various human behaviors.
- **Endocrine System** is a network of glands that produce and secrete chemical messengers that are called hormones, directly into the bloodstream.
- **Pituitary glands** (also called master glands) stimulate or inhibit secretion of hormones from other glands.
- Sex and reproduction hormones are called, **Steroid hormones**.

- Reproductive organs ovaries (in females) and testes (in males) are called **gonads**.
- **Sexual dimorphism** is existence of two sexes (male & female) in a species, including differences in genetics, gonads, hormones, internal genitalia and external genitalia.
- Human beings have 23 pairs of chromosomes. 23rd pair is sex chromosome. (XX in females and XY in males)

### **Sex Chromosomal Abnormalities:**

Sudden structural changes in the genes are called mutations. These mutations lead to negative consequences in individual's development.

### **Female Sex Chromosome Abnormalities:**

#### **Turner's syndrome:**

- This syndrome occurs when individual inherits only one X chromosome and their sex chromosomal structure is XO.
- They are short in stature, averaging 4 foot 7 inches as adults, and often have distinctive webbed necks (i.e., extra folds of skin), small jaws, and high arched palates.
- They generally lack prominent female reproduction ability.
- They have exceptionally small, widely spaced breasts, broad shield-shaped chests, and turned-out elbows.
- Their ovaries do not develop normally and they do not ovulate.

- Injection of growth hormones can increase their stature at childhood. Estrogen replacement therapy can result in some breast development and menstruation.

### Metafemales or triple-X females:

- Such females inherit three X chromosomes. Their chromosomal structure is XXX.
- As adults, these "superfemales" are usually an inch or so taller than average with unusually long body structure.
- They have normal development of sexual characteristics and are fertile.
- They may have slight learning difficulties and are usually in the low range of normal intelligence.
- They tend to be emotionally immature for their size during childhood.

### Male Sex Chromosome Abnormalities:

#### Klinefelter Syndrome:

- Individual with this syndrome inherits an extra X chromosome and their chromosomal structure is XXY.
- They characteristically have relatively high-pitched voices, feminine body contours as well as breast enlargement, and comparatively little facial and body hair.

- They are sterile or nearly so, and their **testes** and prostate glands are small. If Klinefelters syndrome boys are regularly given testosterone from the age of puberty on then the symptoms can be diminished.
- Klinefelters syndrome men are an inch or so above average height. They also are likely to be overweight. They usually have learning difficulties as children, especially with language and short-term memory.
- Klinefelters syndrome is not diagnosed until they are tested for infertility.

### XYY syndrome:

- The individual with this abnormality receive extra Y chromosome and their chromosomal structure is XYY.
- As adults, these "super-males" are usually tall (above 6 feet) and generally appear and act normal. However, they produce high levels of **testosterone**.
- During adolescence, they often are slim, have severe facial acne, and are poorly coordinated. They are usually fertile and lead ordinary lives as adults. Majority remain unaware that they have a chromosomal abnormality.

## Sex Differentiation in Reproductive System

Both male and female have sex-related internal systems:

**Wolffian system:** The system with a capacity to develop into the male internal reproductive system.

**Mullerian system:** The system with a capacity to develop into the female internal reproductive system.

- External sex organ development starts after six weeks of conception.
- Testosterone is androgen and estradiol is common estrogen.  
**Progesterone** is another gonadal hormone that plays an important role in females during pregnancy.
- Production of Testosterone (androgen) is determined by Y chromosome and stimulates **Wolffian system** and results in degeneration of the **Mullerian system** that results in development of internal male reproductive organs.
- In female fetus X chromosome stimulates **estrogen** hormone that further leads to **Mullerian system** development and generation of **Wolffian system**, which results in the development of female internal reproductive organs.
- Pituitary glands also release follicle stimulating hormone (**FSH**) and luteinizing hormone (**LH**) that is involved in production of androgen and estrogen hormones.

## **Hormonal influences in both sexes:**

Endocrine glands are the vital glands that release chemical substances, called hormones, into the bloodstream.

Hormones thus circulate throughout the body.

**Gonads** are the reproductive organs, glands, testes in males and ovaries in females, related to the steroid hormones. **Hypothalamus** causes the production of **Releasing hormones**. Gonadotropin-releasing hormone is one of them. **Gonadotropin-releasing hormone** has active influence on the pituitary; as a result of this action, the pituitary releases a number of other hormones. The release of Tropic hormones (one is Gonadotropin) results from this action. Circulating through the bloodstream these hormones impact the testes and ovaries, which are subsequently stimulated to produce their respective hormones.

## **Hormonal Abnormalities:**

### **Adrenogenital Syndrome:**

Excessive prenatal production of **androgen** from adrenal glands causes this syndrome. In male fetus it doesn't cause major problems.

But in female fetus this results in birth of female with physical structure resembling boys.

### **Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome:**

Found in normal XY male fetus with body cells insensitive to androgens. Cause: abnormal functioning of androgen receptors. Individuals with this syndrome have XY chromosomal structure. But inability of androgen receptors does not allow the proper development of masculine characteristics.

Lesson 9/10/11/12/13:

### Theories of Gender Development:

#### Nature and Nurture:

Is it nature that influences nurture, or is it nurture that modifies nature? Psychologists have tried to explain the phenomenon of gender differences according to their respective theoretical approaches. Psychological approaches to explaining gender differences:

The Biological Approach

The Behaviorist/Social Learning Approach

## The Biological Approach

According to biological theory differences in chromosomes (X/Y) and hormones (testosterone/estrogen) determine the behavioral differences between boys and girls. Males are more aggressive in almost all cultures and male child has higher mortality rate than female child. Biological view explains this phenomenon with the findings that Androgen hormones are linked to disruptive and aggressive behaviors in males and the hormone estrogen seem to make women less vulnerable to physical problems so women live longer.

### Biological Differences in Brain:

Men's left side of brain is more developed that is responsible for conventionally logical thought, abstract and analytic thinking. Women's right side of brain is more developed that is responsible for imaginative, artistic activity, holistic & intuitive thinking, visual and spatial tasks.

## The Behavioral Approach

According to the behavioral approach, learning of gender roles can be explained in terms of a result of:

- Classical conditioning

- Operant Conditioning or the use of 0: positive, negative, punishment, or no reinforcement
- Learning by observation

### **Cognitive Approach:**

The term cognition refers to “knowledge” as well as “the process of knowing”. Cognitive approach emphasizes thoughts, feelings, thinking, values, expectations etc.

### **Lawrence Kohlberg’s Cognitive Development Theory: The concept of Gender Constancy:**

Children understand gender just as they understand anything else. Children have experiences with people of both genders, they think about their experiences, having made sort of mental notes of what males and females do, and adopt behaviors performed by people of their own sex. Children do their own gender typing themselves.

**Gender stability:** Realization of boys and girls that they will grow up as men or women respectively.

**Gender consistency** is the awareness that gender remains the same no matter what one wears, how one behaves, whatever hairstyle one has.

### **Gender Schema Theory:**

“A schema is a mentally organized network of gender-related information that influences behavior”. According to this theory, first of all children learn what sex they are. Then they develop a concept of what it means to be male or female in their culture, and on the basis of the development of this concept they begin to take on gender roles

- **The gradual process of development of gender schema:**
  - Gender Identification (2-3.5 yrs)
  - Gender Stability (3.5-4.5 yrs)
  - Gender Consistency (4.5-7 yrs)

**Self Socialization** is a three-step process. Children identify and note gender behaviors, identify and note their gender identity, and make effort to remove disparities between the two.

### Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development:

#### **Preoperational Stage (2-4 years)**

Thinking is concrete, not logical, judges on appearance. Uses cues such as dress, hair.

#### **Concrete operational Stage (7-12 years)**

Thinking is logical, but limited to concrete Cognitive understanding of permanence of gender develops

**Formal Operational stage (12 years) adulthood**

Thinking is scientifically logical, can be applied to abstract concepts. Adolescents become more rigid in sex-typing.

## The Psychodynamic Approach

Psychodynamic approach is based on Freud's theory of psychosexual development. Family dynamics influence individuals at a subconscious level and this leads to the development of internal gender identities.

### **Gender Development Freud's perspective:**

Gender roles develop as a result of resolution process of conflict at phallic stage. Feelings of rivalry and hatred develop against the father at this stage. The father is seen as stronger and unconquerable; this leads to a conflict. The defense mechanism of identification is used for resolving the conflict. This gender identification leads to sex-typed behavior and development of gender roles.

### **Gender Development Karen Horney's perspective:**

Horney emphasized upon the significance of social forces. She hypothesized that men envy women's ability to reproduce i.e., womb envy. According to Horney, men seek and struggle for, achievement because they are trying to overcompensate for the lack of ability to reproduce. In comparison to women, men feel inadequate, and as a result they attribute evil to women.

### **Nancy Cowdoro's Theory:**

She described pre-oedipal stage where children identify with their mothers. She proposed the idea of the significance of the pre-oedipal period that occurs in early childhood, prior to the onset of Oedipus complex. She proposed that the course of personality development for males and females was different.

### **Antigone Phase: Kaschak's Theory**

Kaschak acknowledges the usefulness of the application of the legend of Oedipus in Freudian theory, but disagrees with the way he treated women in his concept of female Oedipus complex. Antigone represents a typical good daughter in a patriarchal family.

Patriarchal societies are those societies in which men are born, grown and developed grant power to them in the society as well as in their families.

## **The Humanistic Approach**

This approach is based on Roger's theory that does not directly explain the process of gender role development. According to him, to achieve positive regard gender appropriate behavior becomes an ideal self for an individual.

## **Some Gender Role Stereotypes**

### **Male Attributes**

Acts as a leader, Aggressive, Ambitious, Dominant, Forceful, Independent

### **Female Attributes**

Compassionate, Gentle, Loves children, Sensitive to needs of others, Tender, Understanding

Lesson 14/15/16

## **Gender Typing and Stereotyping**

### **Sex-Typing**

Sex-typing is a process of categorizing men and women on the basis of some traits.

### **Development of Sex-Typing**

Development of sex-typing starts with sex-identity that is sense of being male or female, mostly children acquire this identity at the age of 3 years. Mostly at the age of five children can associate certain traits like brave or weak with men and women.

Social scientists present two models about development of gender-typed stereotypes. According to first model gender characteristics like physical appearance or gender biased activities are learnt in earlier childhood as they do not involve abstract concepts and personality traits about activities and occupations developed in later childhood because of need perceptual variations.

Second model emphasizes the presence of cues and gender biased activities that aids understanding of personality traits stereotypes in earlier childhood.

### Theories of Sex-Typing:

**Psycho-analytical Theories:** Freud view that sex-typing is natural process due to biological differences of male and female. This approach explains that child identifies with the parent of same sex.

**Social Learning Theory** emphasizes that individual's gender development is process of observational learning and imitation, modeling and reward and punishment guide a child towards gender appropriate and

inappropriate behavior.

**Cognitive Development Theory** explains that child develops the concept of being male or female first and then gender behaviors are learnt. They view that sex identity is facilitated by people around child but it is not imitation.

**Cerebral Lateralization Theory** explains that there is a difference in the cerebral hemispheres of both male and female. In females, the left hemisphere is developed earlier and is responsible for their active language faculties, and males acquire mathematical and analytical abilities earlier due to early development of the right hemisphere.

### Factors Influencing Sex-Typing

Sex-typing occurs at both intentional and unintentional levels. At the unintentional level, biological determinants play a role, and at the intentional level, it is affected by psycho-social determinants.

### **Biological Determinant of Sex-Typing**

The first determinant of being male or female is biological. Chromosomes are structural units of heredity and carry genetic information.

## Psycho-social determinants of sex-typing

### Socialization

Socialization is a process of learning sex-roles from different agents of society.

- 1- Child receives inheritance from family and it guides for social, emotional development. Family provides basic knowledge of sex-typing and teaches cultural sex-stereotypes.
- 2- Parents are responsible for transmitting their own sex-roles and stereotypes to their child.
- 3- Teacher's behavior, style of punishment and different play activities with boys and girls facilitates sex-typing.
- 4- Schools where boys and girls are stressed sex stereotypes, sex-typing is developed earlier but in institutions where children are allowed to play according to their interest and cognitive abilities boys or girls can enjoy any kind of play.
- 5- Peer influences style of conversation, play activities, ideas and religious activities. Peer approval forces child to adopt sex-biased behaviors in case of same sex peer group.
- 6- In socialization process of Pakistani culture females are generally victims of sex discrimination.
- 7- These practices promote sex-discrimination, negative stereotypes and inferior concept of gender-identity. When a girl

or boy see his/her mother and fathers singing these lullabies, negative sex-identities for females are developed.

- 8- Media transmit sex-typed behaviors via novels, stories, and cartoon movies. Children learn sex-biased roles and values.
- 9- Community greatly influences the decision making, achievement of goals or taking responsibilities. In the same way when an individual tries to violate norms, values or prevailing sex-type behaviors, community opposes his/her and forces him/herself to follow traditional patterns.
- 10- In choosing an occupation, sex-typed behavior is very important. Male and female both think while selecting an occupation that it is according to his/her sex-role or not. Sex-typing also affects the behavior at the working environment.

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the typical characteristics and behaviors of men and women. Some stereotypes are culture-specific, whereas most are universal. A stereotype can be thought of as a schema about a member of an identifiable group. "Racism" and "Sexism" are the two main contexts in which stereotypes are mostly held and applied.

### How are Gender Stereotypes formed?

The formation of gender stereotypes can be understood and explained in the light of these approaches:

- Psychoanalytic Approach
- Behaviorist Approach
- Authoritarian Model Approach
- Observational Learning Approach
- Feminist or Patriarchal Approach

## DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

The development of gender stereotypes takes place in three stages.

### **Stage 1:**

- About 3 years of age.
- Characteristics and behaviors directly associated with males and females have been learnt.

### **Stage 2:**

- About 6 years of age.
- The development of indirect associations for behavior associated with gender begins to develop.

### **Stage 3:**

- About 8-10 years of age.

• Indirect associations with not only own, but the other gender have been learnt. An 8-10 year old is capable of stereotypical judgments concerning men as well as women.

## Approaches to the Formation of Gender Stereotypes

The formation of gender stereotypes can be understood and explained in the light of the following approaches:

- Psychoanalytic Approach
- Behaviorist Approach
- Authoritarian Model Approach
- Observational Learning Approach
- Feminist or Patriarchal Approach

## Implications and Consequences of Stereotyping

The major implication of stereotyping is in the form of:

- Prejudices
- Discrimination
- Faulty perceptions and interpretations of gender-related behavior

## Two aspects of Sexism:

### Hostile sexism:

Negative in nature; i.e., having negative attitudes towards women.

### Benevolent sexism:

Having positive attitudes towards women, which in turn actually lead to belittling women, and to their subservience.

## Lesson 21

### Cognitive Differences

It is stereotypically believed that men and women are intellectually very different. Men are thought to be more intelligent, and capable of wise and quick decision making. Women, it is thought, are overwhelmed by their emotion, rather than logic or intellect.

Similar trends are found in terms of verbal ability, but in favor of the females. Females, in all age groups exhibit better verbal ability and skills than males on average. Female children start speaking a little earlier than boys do; in their school years, girls have better reading scores and high vocabularies.

## Lesson 22

### Gender and Media

This lesson is essay-like where the obvious things are phenomena are highlighted. Media is a major source of observational learning and it is proved in Lesson 22. See the handouts for details.



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