

## **GENDER DEVELOPMENT: A PILOT STUDY ON GENDER ROLE AMONG PDRM OFFICERS IN NEGERI SEMBILAN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A gender role is relatively mirrored by cultural expectations on both males and females. This expectation leads to gender stereotyping, which defines as masculinity and femininity. However, the dimension of gender role requires current description of what is known as masculine and feminine in the global era and gender role has been rapidly altered since the globalization. The purpose of the pilot study is to examine the variances of gender role development among PDRM officers in Negeri Sembilan. A total of 77 participants involved in the pilot study which included 37 males and 40 females. A convenience sampling had been selected for the pilot study. Four hypotheses had been formed in relation to the pilot study, which are the following: i) there are differences of gender role between males and females, ii) there are differences of gender role among ethnic groups, iii) there are differences of gender role in developmental stages, and iv) there are differences of gender role among individuals of different marital status. The result shows that there are significant gender role differences between males and females with  $t(75) = 2.539, p < .05$ . Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted. However, the other three hypotheses were rejected due to insignificant results.

**Keywords:** Sex; Gender; Masculinity; Femininity; Gender Socialization

### **INTRODUCTION**

No single parent ever excitedly exclaims, “It’s a black haired baby! It’s a white baby!” Most importantly, they will notice is the baby’s gender and announce that of the newborn’s sex. Most of parents around the globe are more excited to spot the biological sex of their newborn. Parents, family members and caretakers also notice how soon the children understand which sexes they belong to as the child grows. How do children learn the rules of masculinity and femininity? How do children know the activities and things that are different from what boys or girls do? To what extent children feel that they do or do not belong to the gender he or she is assigned to? From developmental perspectives, psychologists try to understand the phenomena in which an individual adult manage to sustain his or her traditional gender role identity and expectation or on the other hand, succumb from acculturate and the need to adapt androgyny of both ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ traits. This is true in 21<sup>st</sup> century of modern society in which more males and females engaged in cross-gender roles identity and activities. Apparently, more males are involving in careers previously dominated by females such as chef, child minding, fashion designer, and teacher, to name a few. On the contrary, females in the modern era tend to choose male dominated careers such as engineer, plumber, and bus/lorry driver, to name a few. Among Malaysian community, males and females are expected to behave differently due to the gender role expectation and gender role socialization that seem appropriate to males and females. Coon and Mitterer (2012) refer gender role socialization as the process of learning gender behaviours considered appropriate for one’s sex (either being a male or a female) in a given

culture. A gender role is the pattern of behaviours that are regarded as “male” or “female” by certain cultures, sometimes also referred to as a sex role (Coon & Mitterer, 2012). Delega, Winstead and Jones (2005) refer sex, as the biological aspect of being a male with XY chromosome and being a female with XX chromosome. On the other hand, gender more specifically refers to the behavioural, social, and cultural associated with sex. Infinite concerns are on gender relatively concomitant with gender roles and gender identities. The term sex and gender are interchangeably used, though both terms are much contrast in definition or even in literature. Thus, Derlega et al., (2005) defined gender as the dimension of masculinity or femininity that is much determined by the social and cultural atmosphere in one’s living society. Though, both vary, still a very much controversial debate upsurge in the discipline of developmental psychology.

Throughout the life-span development, males are encouraged to engage in instrumental behaviours, such as to control their emotions, and to prepare for the world of work, whereas females are expected to engage in expressive behaviours such as the expression or communication of emotion or personal feelings. The root of gender role socialization and the expected behaviours as stated above for males and females do not emerge out of the blue, but learning gender role begins immediately as a newborn interacts with his/her direct physical environment, encompassing the interaction with caregiver and immediate social contact. This is another important part of a person’s sexual makeup as expressed in gender identity (individual’s subjective sense of being male or female) as expressed in appearance, behaviour, and attitudes.

Similarly, Helgeson (2009) agreed on this and stated that most of human sex-linked behaviours are influenced by learning. Obviously, those expectation and socialization of males and females begins with labelling either “it’s a girl”, or “it’s a boy” (Eagly, 2001). Gender role socialization somehow reflects all the possible subtle pressure that one receives from parents, peers, and cultural forces that urge boys to act like boys and girls to act like girls. Witt (1997) confirmed that, by the time males and females reach just about 2 years of age, children are aware of gender role differences, and at 3 to 4 years of age, gender identity is usually well formed.

Gender permeates every aspect of one’s social environment. As in Bronfenbrenner’s (1997), gender is communicated through the cultural values and practices of the macrosystem, such as power and economic differentials between men and women, which as the results influences the microsystems of one’s experiences at home, school, and even the neighbourhood (Leaper, 2002). Moreover, early applications of social learning theory (Mischel, 1970) viewed gender development as proceeding through direct reinforcement for conformity to gender norms and observational learning. According to Damon and Lerner (2008), since early in life, children observe same-sex models, and they are assumed to act and behave about certain behaviour, the sequencing of certain events, and the consequences that are associated with the enacting behaviour. Thus, these initial contacts to understand certain behaviour will be carried to later development in adult life. Hence, adults become programmed to certain gender roles associated with them.

The socialization process of an individual comprises four level of socialization; gender socialization in the family, at school, by peers and observational learning from the media. Socialization in the family usually provides the child with many types of socialization

experiences, including models of gender roles and differences in the ways sons and daughters are raised. This includes the encouragement of gender-typed activities and interests, gender-typed personal-social attributes, role models in the home, parental attitudes and values, alternative family structure, and sibling effects (Leaper, 2000; Lindsey & Mize, 2001; McHale et al., 2003; Gelman, Taylor & Nguyen, 2004; Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002; Patterson, 2006).

On the other hand, gender socialization at school provide a wide array of gender-related messages to young children through the different positions held by men and women, teachers' differential treatment of boys and girls, as well as opportunities for the individual child to learn the consequences of certain behaviours through observing peers (Damon & Lerner, 2008). Nevertheless, gender socialization by peers serves as reinforcement and role modelling. This could lead the individual child to exposure of the same-sex activities (due to sex-segregation), and subsequently, the child selectively learns behaviours and interaction styles associated with their sex (Damon & Lerner, 2008; Harrison & O'Neill, 2000). Lastly, media such as television, the Internet, magazines and social media provide boys and girls with messages about gender role and the expected gender behaviour (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2001). This process continues until the individual reaches adults life. Moreover, all forms of media still typically convey stereotypical messages, teaching and reinforcing traditional roles to the viewers (Ruble et al., 2006).

Based on the above discussion, the current pilot study is conducted to examine the gender role development amongst the PDRM officers in Negeri Sembilan. Gender role in this pilot study refers to the gender identity in adapting feminine roles in one's gender expectation and socialization. Thus, the researcher determines four main objectives, which are as follows: i) to study the differences of gender role between males and females, ii) to study the differences of gender role among ethnic groups, iii) to study differences of gender role in developmental stages, and iv) to study differences of gender role among individuals of different marital status.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional design and convenience sampling were selected for the purported study. The researchers used survey method to collect the data for this research.

### **Participant**

The participants were recruited from Polis Di Raja Malaysia (PDRM), Negeri Sembilan. The participants consisted of 37 males and 40 females. Out of the total participants, 69 were Malay, three Chinese, two Indian participants and three participants from 'the other' category. Among the 77 participants, 62 were married, 14 single, and one did not state his/her marital status. All participants were aged between 18-year old and 60-year old and were divided into three different developmental stages; early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. In this research, 18-year old participants were regarded as young adults as they are currently embraced the life of young adult and financially independent.

## Instrument

The gender role was assessed with the Attitudes toward Feminism Scale: A (Strongly Agree= 1), B (Agree= 2), C (Disagree= 3), D (Strongly Disagree= 4). The questionnaire consists of 42 items. Half of the items were phrased in a pro-feminist and the other half in an anti-feminist direction. Reverse scores were required for the following items (+ 2 become - 2, etc): 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 35, 36, 37, and 42. The scores may range from + 84 to - 84. The instrument was translated to the Malay language by using back to back translation and had been proofread before it was distributed among the participants. Based on the pilot study, it was shown that the instrument has moderate reliability of 0.6 Cronbach alpha values.

## Procedure

The research was conducted by getting the permission from PDRM, Negeri Sembilan. Once approval was obtained, the researchers administered the questionnaires to the participants. The participants were given 20-30 minutes to answer the questionnaires. Instructions were given to participants and items were explained to participants where necessary. The data were keyed in and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical analyses employed were t-test and ANOVA.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of demographic information of the participants

Category		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	48.1
	Female	40	51.9
Ethnic group	Malay	69	89.6
	Chinese	3	3.9
	Indian	2	2.6
	Other	3	3.9
Developmental Stage	Young Adult	32	41.5
	Middle Adult	20	26
	Late Adult	25	32.5
Marital Status	Married	62	80.5
	Single	14	18.2
	Other	1	1.3

The above table 1 shows that the total number of participants involved in the pilot study were 77 PDRM officers. Male participants were 37 (48.1%) and female participants were 40 (51.9%) in total. There were three main different ethnic group involved in the study which Malay participants were 69 (89.6%), followed by Chinese 3 (3.9) and Indian 2 (2.6%), other ethnic category consists of 3 participants (3.9%). In term of developmental stage, young/early adult 32 participants (41.5), middle adult 20 (26%) and late adult only 25 (32.5%). Marital status shows that married participants were 62 (80.5%), single 14 (18.2%), and other category only 1 (1.3%).

### **Descriptive Discussion**

The researchers had formed four hypotheses to measure the gender roles identity differences amongst the participants. The hypotheses were: i) there are differences of gender role between males and females, ii) there are differences of gender role among ethnic groups, iii) there are differences of gender role in developmental stages, and iv) there are differences of gender role among individuals of different marital status. The results are stated as below:

#### **Hypothesis 1:** *There are differences of gender role between males and females*

Table 2: Independent sample t-test of gender role differences between males and females

Category	df	MD	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	75	-3.8047	-2.539	0.013

There is a scant research on gender role differences between males and females. The research that exists typically compares African American to European American (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). According to Hyde (in Santrock, 2007) there are no differences of gender role between males and females. However, from the above Table 1 it can be seen that there are significant differences of gender role between the two groups of males and females,  $t(75) = -2.539$ ,  $p < 0.5$ . Thus, based on the result both males and females are still embraced the traditional values of gender role though globalization has taken place. As such, the differences are minor and only confined to certain domain. This is to confirm that both males and females are still carrying the traditional roles and values as expected from them. Moreover, Matsumoto and Juang (2008) also stated that many Asian American families have carried on their traditional gender roles. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

According to Derlega, Winstead & Jones (2005), two perspectives could be used to explain the above findings which relates to biological and social aspect of gender development; Essentialism and Constructionism. From the perspective of Essentialism the ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ values are the traits that differentiate from being a male or female. It also emphasized that there are biological interaction in which some brain structure

and hormonal differences between male and female that contribute to the gender role differences in life-span development (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). On the contrary, Derlega, Winstead & Jones (2005) also stated that gender role development is actually just a mental representation that is created by human. Furthermore, it is a general perception of the society. This perspective is in line with constructionism which emphasized on the social factors in determining the gender role development instead of biological factor. Constructionism also stressed on the social learning in which one would internalize the gender role identity and behavior expectation (Damon & Lerner, 2008).

**Hypothesis 2:** *There are differences of gender role among ethnic groups*

Table 3: One way analyses of variance (ANOVA) result of gender role differences among ethnic groups; Malay, Chinese and Indian

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between groups	170.0443	56.681	1.237	
Within groups	3344.268	73	45.812	
Total	3514.312	76		

The above result shows that gender role did not differ much from all three ethnic groups; Malay, Chinese and Indian, with  $F(3) = 1.237, p > 0.5$ . Although all ethnic groups differed on the basis of their cultures, norms, and belief systems, perhaps they are still sharing the same common collectivistic culture as Asian people. Matsumoto and Juang (2008) also found that gender role differentiation could be influenced by other factors such as the passage of time, increased interaction with people of other cultures and mainstream American culture, as well as the movement towards urbanization. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** *There are differences of gender role in developmental stages*

Table 4: One way analyses of variance (ANOVA) result of gender role differences in developmental stages; young adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between groups	81.602	3	27.201	.578
Within groups	3432.710	73	47.023	
Total	3514.312	76		

Based on the above Table 4, the result shows  $F(3) = .578, p > 0.5$ . Therefore, gender role differences between developmental stages; young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood did not differ. Several reasons could be used to explain the condition. Currently, there is scant literature on gender role differences between developmental stages; young adult, middle adult and late adult. It also could be caused by culture inhibition in which the adults males and females are experiencing androgyny (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008) in which, across developmental stages, adults easily adapt to both traditionally ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ situations or vice-versa. Furthermore, the upbringing environment of the participants could be also another reason there was no significant differences found between developmental stages. Social environment, family interaction, parenting values and skills, and the community expectation are much embedded in one’s transitional development from childhood to adulthood (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013; Damon & Lerner, 2008). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 4:** *There are differences of gender role among individuals of different marital status*

Table 5: One way analyses of variance (ANOVA) result of gender role differences among individuals of different marital status.

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between groups	26.388	3	13.194	.280
Within groups	3487.924	73	47.134	
Total	3514.312	76		

The result from Table 5 shows that, between married couples, single, and others did not differ much on the gender role development. One way analyses of variance shows,  $F(3) = .280, p > 0.5$ . Though it is expected that marriage couples would have more ‘feminism attitude’ due to the adaptability in marriage life such as taking care of baby, doing household chores, as well as to exchange responsibilities between spouses and to name a few, yet the differences are low compared to those single people. Again this could be due to the individual values that he or she possessed since the childhood life, as it is very difficult to change it although one got marriage (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013; Damon & Lerner, 2008). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

**CONCLUSION**

Examining gender role development differences amongst the PDRM officers in Negeri Sembilan is especially challenging because of the cultural and ethnic diversity within this country as well as the influences of interactions with the mainstream American culture. Each ethnic group; Malay, Chinese, Indian has its own cultural preferences for gender differentiation, but with some blending of the traditional and modern appears to be taking

place. Many people still harbour many of the traditional values of their ancestral culture and this is somewhat true when females have highest 'Feminism Attitude' than males. On the other hand, adapting either 'masculine' or 'feminine' traits in one's life would not lead to any humiliation as a man is no less a man if he cooks, sews, or cares for children and similarly, a woman is no less a woman if she excels in sports, succeeds in business, or works as an auto mechanic. Thus, we have to respect these differences, rather than attempt to change them to be consistent with our own individual or cultural preferences. There are several limitations that obviously existed in this pilot study. Researchers need to recruit more divergent group of participants in order to get a clearer perspective on the gender role development issue. Acculturation also would play a major limitation in this study, which researchers did not observe closely. For future study, it is recommended to include various respondents from different background such as occupation, living area either in rural or urban, education level. Future researcher also highly recommended using mix method of qualitative and quantitative as to have an in-depth understanding of the gender role development issue in local context.

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