

Is there a difference in self-esteem levels between 'masculine' and 'feminine' individuals?

Abstract

The topic under investigation is that of self-esteem and the correlation between masculine and feminine individuals, attempting to reveal which is more prone to lower self-esteem levels; the importance of this experiment was to try to better understand the correlation thus to present beneficial strategies to prevent further individuals in society from experiencing the same struggling mind set. Though many researchers have found correlations in the two variables, no solution has been created, thus aiming to possibly find this by presenting results from this particular experiment. Using well known practical questionnaires and common knowledge on the already investigated subject, this experiment discussed throughout will show a well thought-out approach to try understanding why the correlation still exists. By presenting the results, it will relay the mental health struggle the individuals experience to those who wish to help solve the problem; thus, proven beneficial to future research.

Introduction

The many characteristics an individual may possess is always something psychologist wish to explore, to understand how there have evolved, to better understand the human mind. Throughout this report; the chosen trait we wish to examine is that of self-esteem, 'confidence in one's own worth or abilities. (Dk Publishing, Inc, 1998), 'An overall sense of self-worth or personal value.' (Foundation Trust, 2020). This is due to common use of the term yet, to our knowledge, we are yet to fully understand it and why low self-esteem may occur. Society in recent years has had people experiencing such things as negative criticism, judgement, mental health conditions, and traumatic experiences. Negative criticism is a daily occurrence for most individuals, this can be experienced during any or most situations, from the closest people in said individuals' lives, complete strangers, and or possibly ourselves. The frequent use of negative criticism is something that can be damaging to someone's self-esteem levels, which in turn means the most damaging version of negative criticism is that of self-criticism. Often the people who have developed the habit of self-criticism are those who struggle with mental health, which outlines the importance of understand said topic, thus relieving people who already struggle with such issues, from struggling from other internal battles such as low self-esteem; 'literature indicates that self-criticism often is encountered in clients who are dealing with psychological difficulties such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse, personality disorders, suicide, and interpersonal problems.' (Kannan & Levitt, 2013). The topic of self-esteem has grown in interest over the years, especially that of the differences between men and women in relation to self-esteem, though it may seem that it would have been evidentially back that women would have lower self-esteem, 'During the past two decades, a large number of studies on age and gender differences in self-esteem have found that men have higher self-esteem than women' (Sliwa, 2016), it has been put under investigation to confirm the theory. It was important to consider that not all women are classed as feminine, as men are not all considered to be prominently masculine, many researchers observed this point when conducted experiments; this point was considered when an experiment was conducted by Jeffery Burnett, Wayne Anderson and Professor Paul Heppner, 'the women's movement and later the men's movement partially resulted in redefining the concepts of gender identity and gender roles.' (Burnett et al., 1995).' The experiment documented was that of examining the correlation between masculine and feminine individuals and the environmental impacts it had on said individuals. This study has proven valuable as it's results show that the masculine individuals did possess higher levels of self-esteem. 'This

study found evidence in support of a masculine bias in American society, such that individuals who possess a larger amount of masculine characteristics such as decisiveness, independence and competitiveness report greater self-esteem'. (Burnett et al., 1995). Yet throughout this experiment, we are not taking environmental factors into consideration as a variable; the results examined will be that of the people themselves and trying to better understand the correlation between just the masculine and feminine self-esteem levels in comparison to each other. Another experiment was conducted by James Rust and Anne McCraw; their aim was to examine the correlation between masculinity, femininity, self-esteem along with peer acceptance, as well as the previous study discussed, their addition variables will not be relative to the experiment conducted as evaluated in this report, yet it offered valuable insight to the field of masculine and feminine individuals and their self-esteem levels. As Rust and McCraw used a large number of volunteers in their experiment, the findings provided in their results present to be reliable and justifiably true after examination; they found that the masculine individuals presented higher levels of self-esteem, 'Additionally, high levels of masculine traits result in high self-esteem score in both sexes.' (Rust, McCraw, 1984). It can further confirm the previous findings that the masculine characteristics provide a better stance of higher self-esteem, also, showing that the definition that males are predominantly masculine, and females are predominantly feminine lays no truth. Wanting to better understand the field thoroughly, the experiment conducted will be evaluating the subjects discussed, which in turn helped to create the following hypothesis; the feminine individuals will score lower in relation to their self-esteem in comparison to the masculine individuals.

Methods

Participants

Voluntarily thirty-four participants ranging in the ages between eighteen to fifty-one; eighteen males and sixteen females took place in said experiment. Each participant was categorised as masculine or feminine to help focus not on gender but their own individual characteristics to which the experiment focused on.

Design

From the use of informative documents and two questionnaires, results gathering were then processed by using a method called a t test to help confirm or deny given hypothesis.

Materials

After the use of documentation and questionnaires chosen; A consent form, debrief form also a simple information sheet. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), 'The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) is one of Sandra Bem's most notable contributions to feminist psychology, measuring an individual's identification with traditionally masculine and feminine qualities.' (Donnelly, 2017), as well as Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, 'A 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.' Rosenberg, M. (1965). The data was then available to examine via the method of a t test.

Procedure

Thirty-four individuals were chosen at random online to participate with this study, when the individuals agreed to take part, they were presented with an information form dictating what would be involved, all ethical rules were presented on said form; once this was understood a consent form was sent out. Following this step, the use of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Rosenburgs self-esteem scale was put into place to gather the necessary data. Lastly, all participants were given a debrief sheet, thanking them for their involvement, stating all formation will be kept confidential and any questions or issue may still be brought to researcher's attention if needed.

Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to explore differences in levels of self-esteem between masculine people and feminine people. Results of the analysis indicate that masculine (M=27.72, SD=5.20) people reported significantly higher levels of self-esteem than feminine people (M=23.00, SD=5.80); $t(32) = 2.51, p = .009$.

The hypothesis that masculine people would score higher than those that are feminine on their levels of self-esteem can, therefore, be accepted.

Discussion

Evidently from the research conducted and the results presented, the correlation between feminine individuals and lower self-esteem is profound. There are many reasons that could be possible for this relationship; feminine individuals tend to be more sensitive to criticism or any kind of negative feedback that can impact self-esteem levels, thus possibly explaining the results found. Though it can not be fully proven as the reasoning behind such a delicate mind set, future experiments in this topic would proof beneficial the people in this society as it is very common in our generation for this subject to be found true. Hopefully some research on this topic could prevent future generation from facing the same troubling state of mind.

References

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Appendices

Information sheet

Consent form

Rosenberg's self-esteem scale

Bem's sex role inventory

Debrief form

SPSS output of t-test analysis