

Summary

To Be or Not to Be “Man”: Masculinity/Manhood Studies from Social Psychological Perspective

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The purpose of the current review is to present studies on masculinity, manhood, and masculine gender role stress under three main subtitles as (1) masculine gender *stereotypes*, (2) *attitudes* regarding masculinity, masculine gender norms, gender role stress, and precarious manhood, and (3) men’s destructive behaviors toward themselves and others (e.g., gays and women) reflecting *discrimination*. Although the reviewed research mostly cover the studies on scale development (see Table 1), we also included many studies that used different methodologies such as in-depth interviews, correlational and experimental studies.

Masculine Gender Stereotypes

Literature on gender stereotypes suggests that women are defined with *communal* (i.e., caring for, relating with, and expressing oneself to others) whereas men are described with *agentic* goals (i.e., imposing oneself to others, aiming self-improvement, being confident and success-oriented) (e.g., Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975). These stereotypes reflect *descriptive*, *prescriptive* and *proscriptive* social norms of being a man or a woman in a given society. They idealize men as career-oriented, aggressive, assertive, competitive, and excludes men who do not follow these stereotypes. Ideologically, enactment of these stereotypes maintains the existing gender system by putting men in a dominant and negating those who carry feminine stereotypes (Rudman et al., 2012), and by punishing men who don’t coincide with prescriptive stereotypes (Brescoll et al., 2012). They also feed prejudice and discrimination in different ways. For example, men who define themselves with agentic stereotypes justify gender-based inequality and support traditional parenting roles more (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016). Similarly, men who told that they are not a stereotypical man perceive a threat and apply for sexist and homophobic jokes to reconstruct their manhood (O’Connor et al., 2017).

Bem’s groundbreaking research (1974), Bem’s Sex Role Inventory, assesses the characteristics that people have in terms of communal and agentic stereotypes. Similarly, Spence et al. (1974) developed The Personal Attributes Questionnaires, including the desirable characteristics for men and women. All these stereotypical characteristics are representative of societal approval, thus, they justify backlash resulting from the transgression of these stereotypes. For example, people perceive men doing feminine tasks and being polite as gay or less competent for the task (Rudman & Phelan, 2008).

Masculinity Studies from the Perspective of Attitudes

Stereotype research mostly focuses on masculine characteristics and attributions while attitude research focuses on the underlying factors of masculinity ideology and people’s endorsement of this ideology; reflecting two different approaches: trait and normative approach. Trait approach defines people’s gender standing in terms of having stereotypical characteristics. A man, for example, differentiates himself from other men and women as he avoids stereotypically feminine traits. The normative approach, on the other hand, works hand in hand with the ideological purpose of prescriptive/proscriptive stereotypes in a restrictive manner. Masculinity reflects a cultural ideology that shapes gender relations rather than psychological or biological characteristics (Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Masculinity ideology expects men to satisfy the expectations of idealized men (i.e., hegemonic masculinity). It is not people’s definitions of themselves as a man; rather, it is a definition of society about an idealized man, and to what extent people internalize and apply this definition in their relations (Pleck et al., 1993; Thompson et al., 1992).

Since the 1970s, research has uncovered the underlying factors of masculinity with different approaches such as stereotypes, norms, and ideologies etc. (Smiler, 2004). Table 1 presents the most important attitude

scales which define the underlying factors of masculinity (ideology) as status and success (success, career, resource management etc.), toughness (tolerance to discomfort, self-restriction, emotional detachment, physical power etc.), avoidance of femininity (avoiding feminine activities, degrading feminine, objectifying women etc.), acceptance of patriarchal assumptions, fear and hatred of homosexuality, self-confidence, aggressiveness, attitudes towards sexuality, and emotional restriction.

Studies on masculine gender role stress and strain

Researchers have suggested that masculinity ideology may lead men to experience gender role stress or strain when they don't obey gender role norms. O'Neil et al. (1986) argue that gender role conflict exists on success/power/competition, fear of homosexuality, restrictive emotionality, restrictive affectionate behavior between men, and conflict between work and family. According to the normative approach, the social construction of masculine selves is also shaped by negative experiences during the socialization process and this makes way for a feeling of discomfort/stress (Pleck, 1995). Transgression of gender norms creates individual or interpersonal conflict and prevents other forms of self-actualizations than the socially accepted ones. The stress / strain / conflict that a man would feel may change in terms of men's social context and their endorsement of masculinity ideology (O'Neil, 2008). The masculine gender role stress may be relevant to various issues such as physical inadequacy, emotional restriction, subordination to women, and intellectual inferiority (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987).

Precarious manhood

Pleck (1995) suggested that boys grow into men by learning that they should prove themselves to others while there are no such norms for girls growing into women. Similarly, Vandello et al. (2008) argued that people see manhood more of social status than womanhood. A man should earn his status and protect it via different social enactments. Once he loses it in the eyes of others, he needs to reaffirm this status by holding any "manly" (e.g., aggression, violence, toughness). Vandello & Bosson (2013) called this hardly-won, easily lost status as precarious manhood. They have experimentally studied precarious manhood for the first time by creating gender a threat in various ways. For example, they apply gender-knowledge test where people test men's gender-stereotypical knowledge and say that their score is close to feminine identity (Vandello et al., 2008); make men use flowery-feminine hand lotion (Weaver et al., 2013) or make them braid hair of a baby doll in front of others (Bosson et al., 2009). Men who took a gender threat re-

veal more aggressive (Vandello et al., 2008) and violent behavior (Bosson et al., 2009; Weaver et al., 2010) as well as making risky financial decisions (Weaver et al., 2013). Research on precarious manhood depicts that men are socially prone to perceive a gender threat easily and they experience manhood crisis while trying to get their lost social status back (Bosson & Vandello, 2011).

Destructive Outcomes of Masculinity/Manhood Reflecting Discrimination

Many men experience psychological, physical and intergroup problems as they are restricted by masculinity ideology. In general, these problems can be classified under two subtitles as individual and interpersonal/intergroup problems.

At the individual level, men may experience many problems if they transgress masculinity norms and prescriptive stereotypes. For example, men are not satisfied with their muscles (Frederick et al., 2017), have eating disorders and complain about their body fat (Griffiths et al., 2015) as they conform to hegemonic masculinity ideals (Parent & Moradi, 2009). They also refrain from some positive health behaviors such as healthy diet and exercises (Eisler et al., 1988) or using condoms in sexual relations (Pleck et al., 1993) as they feel high levels of gender role stress (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). In addition, the more they experience gender role conflict, the more they are afraid of being close to others (Good et al., 1995), the more likely to have psychological problems such as depression, high anxiety, and low self-esteem (O'Neil, 2008). The same masculinity ideologies may create a barrier to psychological help-seeking among men (Yousaf et al., 2015). Instead, they may increase their alcohol consumption as they face gender role stress (Whitley et al., 2018).

At the interpersonal/intergroup level, endorsement of masculinity ideology (Thompson & Pleck, 1986) may lead many discriminatory behaviors against women and gay men such as increased violence towards partner (Moore et al., 2008) or fear of homosexuality (Thompson et al., 1985). In short, men try to protect their social status in the case of threat and stress via direct tools such as violence (Lisco et al., 2015) or indirect tools such as protecting male-dominant gender system in the society (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016).

Masculinity/Manhood Studies in Turkey

A few researchers have studied gender stereotypes in Turkey. Kandiyoti (1978) developed Gender Roles Stereotypes Scale (e.g., emotionality, self-sacrificing, toughness, assertiveness). Baykal (1988) examined the relationship between gender stereotypes and self-acceptance. Dökmen (1991) translated Bem's sex role inven-

tory into Turkish. The most recent study about stereotypes reflects more emic and current values about being a man/woman that people stereotype men mostly as jealous, strong, selfish, emotional, ambitious, angry etc. (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018a). Considering the importance of marriage in Turkish culture, Sakallı-Uğurlu et al. (2018b) presented that college students describe married men with their gender roles such as being a father, breadwinner, responsible, hard-working, self-sacrificing and protecting family. They define single men only with their appearance and characteristics such as being a playboy or irresponsible. In general, Turkish men are perceived as dominant, masculine, and independent.

Qualitative research on the issue reveals that the concept of multiple masculinities is prevalent in Turkey. For example, men from different geographical areas (Üstünel, 2017) and socio-economic status (Bolak-Boratav, 2014) construct and perform their masculinity differently. Despite this plurality, the hegemonic masculinity is still defined as being a breadwinner, responsible, and working fathers (Sancar, 2009; Türkoğlu, 2013b).

There are also other studies exploring the societal touchstones of masculinity. Accordingly, the most important touchstones to be entitled as “a real man” in Turkey are being circumcised (Kırımlı, 2010), the first sexual experience (Selek, 2008), having military duty (Sünbuloğlu, 2013), starting a family and being a breadwinner (Türkoğlu, 2013), being a father (Zeybekoğlu, 2013), and having a baby boy (Ataca et al., 2008). Although the literature confirms socially-constructed and precarious nature of manhood, a recent study (Bolak-Boratav et al., 2017) found that men from different regions of Turkey defined being a man as they always felt like “they are a man.” The result evokes a question that “whether manhood is a precarious status in Turkey or not?”. Türkoğlu (2019) answers this by replicating precarious manhood studies in Turkey. She found that manhood is seen as an achieved social status compared to womanhood. However, both (manhood and womanhood) can be lost in cases of culture-specific gender threats.

Looking at the scale construction studies, we see that Turkish men also endorse masculinity glorifying status, avoiding femininity and being a tough man (Lease et al., 2009). Besides, they feel a conflict between holding power/status, hiding their emotions, and family relations. The more they endorse these ideologies, the less they invest in their romantic relations (Lease et al., 2013) and so their marriage quality decreases (Kalkan & Odacı, 2017).

Conclusion and Suggestions

We reviewed research on masculine gender stereotypes, attitudes related to masculinity ideology, precari-

ous manhood, and the destructive outcomes of masculinity ideology. We draw a picture of how research on masculinity, masculinity ideology and manhood can be examined in the field of social psychology. Both trait and normative approaches were presented. Traits approach conceptualizes masculinity as a personality characteristic. Normative approaches include ideological endorsements and practices (e.g., Smiler, 2004). Attitude research shows that traditional/hegemonic type of masculinity is still defined as having status and power, avoidance of femininity and emotionality, and being tough (Levant et al., 2010; Mahalik et al., 2003). In addition, research conducted in Turkey adds the importance of being a father and breadwinner and carrying responsibility for hegemonic Turkish masculinity (Bolak-Boratav et al., 2017; Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018a).

Idealized masculinity may also create stress and strain when a man falls short of these gender roles. Men may feel stressed when they feel subordinated to women, intellectually inferior to others, physically inadequate (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987), and this may lead to some physical (Griffiths et al., 2015) and psychological (Westler et al., 2006) health problems as well as prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors towards outgroups (e.g., women, gay men) (Baugher & Gazmararian, 2015). It seems that we need more research focusing on the masculinity/manhood codes/norms and the possibility of changing these norms in order to create more egalitarian life for all genders. Further, supporting social policies targeting violence-free masculinity would be beneficial to improve the existing discriminatory gender system in Turkey.