

Self-Esteem and Academic Self-Efficacy: A Consideration of Sex Role Orientation

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ABSTRACT

The exploration of sex role orientation and its impact on self-esteem and self-efficacy presents a compelling avenue for understanding the intricate dynamics of gender identity and its influence on personal perceptions and capabilities. The current study's objective was to evaluate the relationships among sex-role orientation, self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescence. The study was based on cross-sectional survey research design. A questionnaire package comprised of a Personal Information Form along with Bangla version of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Owen & Forman, 1988) was administered to a purposive sample of 300 (149 boys and 151 girls) college students of various college around Gopalganj, Bangladesh. Data were analyzed computing mean, standard deviation, t-test, Pearson r and hierarchical regression in SPSS version 22.0. The findings of the t-test revealed girls exhibited higher scores on self-esteem and self-efficacy compared to boys. Results showed that androgynous and masculine adolescents scored higher on self-efficacy and self-esteem than feminine adolescents. When the contributions of masculinity, femininity and androgyny to self-esteem and self-efficacy were assessed, androgynous orientation is conducive to be a good predictor of self-esteem and self-efficacy among adolescents. The study is an important addition in the existing body of knowledge on self-esteem and self-efficacy in determining sex role identity by adolescents.

Keywords: Sex Role Orientation, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Adolescents

Adolescence is a critical time for the development of masculinity in males and femininity in females, according to traditional theories of sex-role development (Erikson 1950; Kohlberg 1966). Sandra Bem (1974) defined a new term, psychological androgyny, which refers to a person's flexibility in sex-role behavior, in response to the growing interest in shifting sex roles in the research field. Bem contends that

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restrictive behavior and a limited self-concept are the results of narrow sex type. Sex-role androgyny, on the other hand, should promote a more expansive self-concept and more adaptability in behavior because it incorporates both masculine and feminine personality traits. These theories have been validated by research conducted by Bem and colleagues. It has been discovered that psychologically androgynous people are more flexible with regard to sex roles and more psychologically well-off than sex-typed people (Bem, 1981). This means that the former can behave in a way that is appropriate for the situation, regardless of whether it is perceived as masculine or feminine, while the latter perform worse in circumstances that require them to act in a sex-reversed manner (Pleck, 1975).

Studies examining the connection between sex role orientation and psychological well-being have proliferated during the last decade. Self-efficacy and self-esteem have been utilized as well-being indicators in most of this research (Whitley, 1983). Furthermore, because it is widely believed that sex role orientation, self-efficacy, and self-esteem are crucial at the developmental stage, many of these studies have used teenagers as their subjects (Erikson, 1983; Kohlberg, 1966; Rosenberg, 1965). Three theoretical frameworks have often served as the foundation for research on the relationship between psychological well-being and sex role orientation. These models include the traditional congruence model (Erikson, 1963; Kagan, 1964; Mussen, 1969), which suggests that people's sex roles should only be congruent with their gender in order to promote psychological well-being; the androgyny model (Bem, 1979; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), which maintains that people's sex roles should incorporate a high degree of both masculine and feminine traits in order to maximize well-being; and the masculinity model (Antill & Cunningham, 1979; Kelly & Worell, 1977; Silvern & Ryan, 1979, Whitley, 1983), which suggests that people's well-being is a function of how much masculine traits, regardless of gender.

The androgyny model of psychological adjustment was put forth in an attempt to support the research findings regarding the favorable relationship between self-esteem and a masculine sex role identity (Kelly & Worell, 1977; Whitley, 1983). A high degree of either masculine and feminine sex role features, or an androgynous sex role identity, was considered best in the model because it promoted psychological adjustment by giving an individual the behavioral flexibility to respond effectively in every setting. Research findings suggested that the masculinity component of androgyny accounted for the majority of the relationship between androgyny and psychological adjustment, with femininity having little to no effect (e.g. Antill & Cunningham, 1977, 1980; Bassoff & Glass, 1982; Ickes & Layden, 1978; La Torre, 1978; Schiff & Koopman, 1978; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975). Because psychological adjustment was often measured by self-esteem, the findings also revealed information about the connection between masculinity and self-esteem.

One of the psychological notions that has been studied the most is self-esteem. It is a personal assessment of oneself, either favorable or negative (Rosenberg, 1965). A person's assessment of their own self-worth is shaped by how they see themselves in relation to other people in terms of their social identities, beliefs, skills, and interpersonal interactions. Understanding the elements and mechanisms that contribute to one's self-esteem is necessary. While self-esteem is influenced by a variety of elements, gender is one of them (Mir & Mushtaq, 2021). Gender and self-esteem are significantly correlated, according to Zareh (1994). Males and females have significantly different levels of self-esteem depending on their gender (Tafreshi, 2006). Additionally, studies reveal that during adolescence, boys tend to express better self-esteem than girls, and that these disparities are caused by the gender roles that adolescents have been taught (Agam et al., 2015).

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Another psychological concept is self-efficacy, which refers to one's belief in one's own capacity to complete a task or succeed at it (Bandura, 1977, 1982, and 1986). Academic self-efficacy (ASE), often known as self-efficacy in the context of education, is the belief in one's own ability to achieve at specific academic levels in a given endeavor (Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Research has demonstrated that there are gender variations in academic self-efficacy, which primarily begin in early adolescence and are subject-specific (Huang, 2013). According to a meta-analysis, male students perceived their academic self-efficacy to be marginally higher than that of female students (Huang, 2013). Similar results were observed by Vogt (2007) and Nartgun, Kahraman, and Coskun (2019); they showed that male students had higher levels of academic self-efficacy than did female pupils. According to Choi's (2004) study, there was a substantial difference in the means of academic self-efficacy between the masculine and androgynous groups and the feminine groups.

An engaging way to comprehend the complex dynamics of gender identity and how it affects one's perceptions and skills is to investigate the relationship between sex role inventory and self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bandura, 1982). The idea of a "sex role inventory" includes expectations and standards from society about gender roles, actions, and characteristics associated with femininity and masculinity (Bem, 1981). Comprehending the manner in which these roles interact with an individual's self-efficacy and self-esteem is crucial for grasping the psychological and social aspects of personal growth. Gender roles and the prejudices that go along with them still influence people's chances, habits, and perceptions in today's society (Kagan, 1964). Examining how these roles affect self-efficacy and self-esteem can help people understand the challenges they encounter when negotiating their identities within social frameworks (Mir & Mushtaq, 2021). The goal of this study was to examine the complex connections between the sex role assessment and two essential components of psychological health—self-efficacy and self-esteem.

By shedding light on the possible effects of sex role inventory on people's psychological health and self-perceptions, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of existing knowledge and provide insightful advice for both individual growth and societal understanding. Comprehending the impact of sex role inventory on self-efficacy and self-esteem has significant implications for various disciplines, including education, psychology, and sociology. The knowledge acquired from this research may help develop interventions, policies, and tactics that support improved and fair gender perceptions, improved self-esteem, and increased self-efficacy in a variety of populations. This study is therefore well-positioned to make a substantial contribution to the multidimensional nature of gender-related conceptions, as well as to academic discussion and practical applications.

Research Objectives

1. To understand gender differences of self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescence.
2. To assess significant associations among sex-role orientation, self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescence.
3. To determine the impact of sex-role orientation on self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescence.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study's participant pool comprised of 300 college students (149 boys and 151 girls). The age range of the participants was 16 to 18 years. They were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design.

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Measures

All participants in this research answered to the following self-report questionnaires, along with the demographic form. Questionnaires were administered in the following sequence:

1. Personal Information Form (PIF)
2. Bem Sex Role Inventory Scale (BSRI)
3. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale
4. Academic Self Efficacy Scale (ASE)

Personal Information Form (PIF)

The PIF gathered data on respondents' age, gender, educational qualification, designation, economic status, and living place. Almost half of the participants were boys and the rest were girls.

Bem Sex Role Inventory Scale (BSRI)

The original Bem Sex-Role Inventory (1974) has 60 items in checklist format comprising of 60 personality traits on which respondents are asked to rate themselves among 7-point Likert-type choices ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). Among them, 20 represented stereotypically feminine traits like, affectionate, sympathetic, and gentle (item no. 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41, 44, 47, 50, 53, 56, 59); 20 represented stereotypically masculine traits, for example, independent, forceful, and dominant (item no. 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58), and the rest 20 are gender or neutral traits (item no. 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42, 45, 48, 51, 54, 57, 60). The 20 neutral items are used as measures of 'social desirability' among which 10 items are equally desirable for both sexes (e.g., adaptable, sincere), whereas the rest 10 are undesirable for both sexes (e.g., inefficient, jealous). To calculate the masculinity scale score, individual ratings obtained for 20 masculine items are added and divided by 20; similarly, to calculate the femininity scale score, individual ratings obtained for 20 feminine items are added and divided by 20. If anyone scores above the median score (4.9) on both masculinity and femininity scales, then he or she will be classified as 'androgynous' on BSRI.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg, a sociologist and psychologist, in 1965. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The score given for SA = 3, A = 2, D = 1 and SD = 0. For negative items (2, 5, 8, 9, and 10) scoring is in reverse order. That is SA = 0, A = 1, D = 2 and SD = 3. Then the scores of the 10 items are summed together. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem.

Academic Self Efficacy Scale (ASE)

Psychometric properties of the academic self-efficacy scale for higher secondary students. In the present study, the translated Bangla version (Rahman, Nahar, Tany, & Khatun, 2015) of the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Owen, & Froman, 1988) was used. It is 33-items self-report measure to assess students' academic self-efficacy. Participants responded to each item about their confidence to perform the described task using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very little) to 5 (quite a lot). Internal consistency reliabilities (ranged from .90 to .92) were reported by the authors of the scale (Owen, & Froman, 1998). Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the translated version of the ASE was .98, and test-retest reliability was .98.

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Procedure

For main data acquisition, a standard data collection procedure was followed. In order to acquire information 300 respondents (149 boys and 151 girls) have been selected purposively from different schools in Gopalganj. Each participant received information about the study's general purposes and an assurance that their responses would remain confidential. For getting consent on the self-esteem, and self-efficacy scale, general instructions were spoken to participants verbally about how to respond before going through the items of the scale. Before going through the items, they were requested to provide basic demographic information (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, age etc.) and also asked to report for further clarifications whenever they had any difficulty in comprehending the items. On average, it took a few minutes to finish the task.

Data Analyses: Each participant's response was scored according to the scoring principle of the sex role inventory, self-esteem, and self-efficacy measuring scales. At first, for the primary analysis, descriptive statistics (i.e., mean & standard deviation) have been computed for all of the major variables. Next, an independent sample t-test was used to ascertain the distinctions between boys and girls. Then, the relationship among all the variables (masculinity, femininity, androgyny, self-esteem, and self-efficacy) was examined using Pearson product moment correlation, and finally, the data were analyzed using hierarchical regression to find out the individual contributions of the predictors.

RESULTS

The results (mean, standard deviation, independent sample t- test, correlation, regression) of the present study are depicted serially in the following table.

Table 1 Mean Comparison of Boys and Girls on Self Esteem and Self-Efficacy.

Variables	Boys		Girls		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Self Esteem	17.37	4.373	18.36	3.992	2.045	.042	0.24
Self-Efficacy	103.44	18.944	109.11	17.658	2.682	.008	0.31

Note. N= 300 (Total number of participants), SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 revealed significant mean differences on self-esteem with $t(298) = 2.045, p < .05$. Findings showed that girls exhibited higher scores on self-esteem ($M=18.36, SD=3.992$), compared to the boys ($M=17.37, SD=4.373$). The value of Cohen's d was 0.24 (<0.50) which indicated modest effect size. Findings also revealed significant mean differences on self-efficacy with $t(298) = 2.682, p < .05$. That's, girls exhibited higher score on self-efficacy ($M = 109.11, SD = 17.65$), compared to the boys ($M = 103.44, SD = 18.94$). The value of Cohen's d was 0.31 (<0.50) which indicated modest effect size.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix among Masculinity, Femininity, Androgyny, Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Masculinity	-				
2. Femininity	.28**	-			
3. Androgyny	.34**	.33**	-		
4. Self-Esteem	.27**	.25**	.41**	-	
5. Self-Efficacy	.20**	.17**	.34**	.36**	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, N= 300

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Table 2 revealed that masculinity, femininity and androgyny are significantly positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = 0.27$, $r = 0.25$, $r = 0.41$) and self-efficacy ($r = 0.20$, $r = 0.17$, $r = 0.34$). But in androgynous character type, these correlations are stronger than masculinity, femininity.

Table 3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Sex Role Orientation on Self-Esteem

Variables	B	95% CI		SE	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.16	.16***
Constant	9.65	7.49	11.81	1.09			
Androgyny	1.7	1.27	2.16	.22	.40***		
Step 2						.19	.09***
Constant	7.41	4.69	10.14	1.38			
Androgyny	1.49	1.03	1.96	.24	.35***		
Masculinity	.74	.18	1.29	.28	.20***		
Step 3						.19	.009
Constant	5.51	2.10	8.92	1.74			
Androgyny	1.38	.89	1.86	.25	.33***		
Masculinity	.64	.08	1.20	.29	.18***		
Femininity	.58	-.05	1.22	.32	.10		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL= lower limit; UL= Upper limit

*** $p < .001$

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three control measures (androgyny, masculinity, femininity) to predict levels of self-esteem. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Androgyny was entered at Step 1 explaining 16% of the variance in self-esteem with $F(1, 298) = 58.43$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny positively predicted self-esteem ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). At step 2 masculinity was entered and by these two scales (Androgyny, Masculinity) explained 19% of the variance in self-esteem with $F(2, 297) = 33.21$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) and masculinity positively predicted self-esteem ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$). The ΔR^2 value of .09 revealed that 9% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with F change (1, 297) = 16.85, $p < .001$. After entry of femininity at final step the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 19% in the self-esteem with $F(3, 296) = 23.39$, $p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$) and masculinity ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$) positively predicted self-esteem ($\beta = .10$, $p > .073$). The ΔR^2 value of .009 revealed that 0.9% change in the variance of model 2 and model 3 with F change (1, 296) = 3.80, $p > .073$.

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Sex Role Orientation on Academic Self-Efficacy

variables	B	95% CI		SE	β	R ²	Δ R ²
		LL	UL				
Step1						.12	.12***
Constant	75.83	66.09	85.59	4.95			
Androgyny	6.36	4.37	8.36	.10	.34***		
Step 2						.13	.06***
Constant	70.28	57.89	82.68	6.30			
Androgyny	5.83	3.70	7.95	1.08	.31***		
Masculinity	1.83	-.69	4.34	1.28	.17***		
Step 3						.14	.002
Constant	66.52	50.90	82.14	7.93			
Androgyny	5.59	3.38	7.79	1.12	.30***		
Masculinity	1.64	-.93	4.20	1.30	.16***		
Femininity	1.16	-1.75	4.06	1.48	.04		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL= lower limit; UL= Upper limit

***p < .001

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three control measures (androgyny, masculinity, femininity) to predict levels of academic self-efficacy. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Androgyny was entered at Step 1 explaining 12% of the variance in self-efficacy with $F(1, 298) = 39.38, p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny positively predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = .34, p < .001$). At step 2 masculinity was entered and by these two scales (Androgyny, Masculinity) explained 13% of the variance in self-efficacy with $F(2, 297) = 20.78, p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny ($\beta = .31, p < .001$) and masculinity positively predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = .17, p < .001$). The ΔR^2 value of .06 revealed that 6% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with F change $(1, 297) = 13.65, p < .001$. After entry of femininity at final step the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 14% in the self-efficacy with $F(3, 296) = 14.03, p < .001$. The findings revealed that androgyny ($\beta = .30, p < .001$), masculinity ($\beta = .16, p < .001$), and femininity positively predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = .04, p > .435$). The ΔR^2 value of .002 revealed that 0.2% change in the variance of model 2 and model 3 with F change $(1, 296) = 0.61, p > .435$.

DISCUSSION

The present study delved into the intricate relationships between sex-role orientation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy among adolescents, with a particular focus on a sample from Gopalganj, Bangladesh. The findings unveiled notable gender disparities in self-esteem and self-efficacy indicating that gender plays a pivotal role in shaping these psychological constructs during adolescence. Existing literatures oppose to such findings, which suggests that boys tend to express better self-esteem and academic self-efficacy than girls, and that these disparities are caused by the gender roles that adolescents have been taught (Agam et al., 2015; Huang, 2013). The inconsistencies between this study and previous research is that, the results of present study revealed significant gender differences in self-esteem and self-efficacy, with girls exhibiting higher scores than boys. Such studies indicating that societal gender norms and expectations often shape adolescents' perceptions of themselves and their capabilities (Agam et al., 2015; Tafreshi, 2006). The higher self-esteem and self-

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efficacy observed among girls may reflect the influence of cultural factors and socialization processes that prioritize certain traits and behaviors traditionally associated with femininity in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of androgynous orientation in fostering positive psychological outcomes. Adolescents who displayed a blend of masculine and feminine traits (androgynous individuals) demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy compared to those with more rigidly defined gender roles. This aligns with Bem's (1974) proposition that psychological androgyny facilitates greater adaptability and psychological well-being by allowing individuals to draw from a broader range of behaviors and characteristics. Consistent with the androgyny model, the study's findings revealed that individuals with an androgynous orientation exhibited higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy compared to those with masculine or feminine orientations. These results align with previous research demonstrating the positive relationship between androgyny and psychological well-being (Kelly & Worell, 1977; Whitley, 1983). Furthermore, the hierarchical regression analyses underscored the predictive power of androgyny in determining self-esteem and self-efficacy levels, highlighting its significance in understanding adolescent development.

Additionally, masculinity emerged as a significant predictor of both self-esteem and self-efficacy, albeit to a lesser extent than androgyny. This suggests that while adherence to certain masculine traits may contribute to positive psychological outcomes, rigid adherence to traditional gender norms may also pose challenges for adolescent development. Future research could explore the nuanced ways in which masculinity influences self-esteem and self-efficacy, considering factors such as emotional expression and help-seeking behaviors (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). On the other hand, femininity's relatively no contribution to self-esteem and self-efficacy raises important questions about the societal valuation of feminine traits and behaviors. While girls may demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy overall, the study suggests that traditional feminine traits may not be as strongly associated with positive psychological outcomes. This underscores the need to challenge stereotypes and promote a more comprehensive view of gender that recognizes the value of diverse expressions of femininity.

The study's findings also shed light on the cultural nuances of gender identity and psychological health among Bangladeshi adolescents. While existing literature has predominantly focused on Western contexts, this research contributes valuable insights into the intersection of gender roles, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy within a South Asian cultural framework. By examining these dynamics in a diverse cultural setting, the study enriches our understanding of how societal norms and expectations shape individuals' perceptions and capabilities across different contexts. Moreover, the result of the study highlights the significance of addressing gender disparities in self-esteem and self-efficacy through targeted interventions and policies. By promoting gender equality and challenging restrictive gender norms, stakeholders can create environments that foster positive self-perceptions and psychological well-being among adolescents. This aligns with broader efforts to promote social justice and equity in education and society at large.

While this study contributes insightful information about the relationships between sex role orientation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy among adolescents, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study assessed participants' gender identity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy at a single point in time, which may not capture potential fluctuations or changes

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over time. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how these constructs evolve throughout adolescence and whether patterns of association persist or change over time. The study did not inspect the impact of social context, such as peer relationships, family dynamics, or media exposure, on participants' gender identity and psychological outcomes. These contextual factors may play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of gender roles and could confound the relationships observed in the study.

The study primarily focused on Bem's conceptualization of gender identity through the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), which assesses masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. However, gender identity is a complicated and multidimensional construct that extends beyond these traditional categories. Future research could incorporate more comprehensive measures of gender identity to capture its nuances effectively. The study did not control for potential confounding variables that could influence the relationships among sex role orientation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Factors such as socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and exposure to gender stereotypes may impact participants' psychological outcomes and should be considered in future research. Addressing these limitations in future research endeavors would enhance the validity and applicability of findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between gender identity and psychological well-being during adolescence.

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Conflict of Interest

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