

Relationship Between Sex Roles And Mental Disorders

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INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial it is an universally accepted fact that in any society the male member occupies a very important place in the family for being the bread winner. Women on the other hand play a secondary role by maintaining the family, rearing children and looking after the household chores. Both these individuals, while performing their respective activities, face certain problems.

Mental problem is an important disorder because of the role played by the two sex personalities. Mental disorder is considered as a behavioural disorder and is viewed as non-organic in origin. This disorder is classified into psychosomatic illness, neurosis, organic psychosis and functional psychosis.

The present study 'Relationship between sex roles and mental disorders' explores the different roles played by either sex and the mental problems caused by these roles.

Sex Roles

In any society sex acts as a master status in placing an individual into particular roles and determining the quality of one's interaction with others (Hughes 1945, Angrist 1969).

Women have more emotional problems than men because they occupy themselves with other roles unlike the men. Women have a restricted societal role of a housewife, whereas men have two societal roles namely that of the household head and the worker. So he has two sources of gratification – his family and his work, but for a woman it is only her family. In the family, if the husband does not find satisfaction in one role, he can focus his interest on the other role. But for the wife there is no alternative source of gratification

(Langner and Michael 1963).

The major instrumental activities of a large number of women are raising children and keeping of the house. No extraordinary skill is required for these activities. Women, whether educated or not, seem to be capable of being moderately competent housewives. According to Harrison and Rossi (1964), women feel that their position as a housewife is of a low status since it has

The present study "Relationship between sex roles and mental disorders" analyses the various findings of research regarding the sex roles and mental problems. All these findings reveal that the women whether they work outside or not, face various mental problems especially functional psychosis and neurosis. This finding is also proved by the research of National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) of U.S.A. They analysed the admissions and the treatment given for the psychologically affected persons in various hospitals and came across more women patients than the men. The research also formulates some possible suggestions to curb the mental disorders among the women.

no coherence with their education and their intellectual development.

There is no structured pattern or frame work for a housewife. She can do things whenever she likes and this provides her ample time to brood over her troubles and increase her distress. Whereas, her male counterpart has to be involved in his job to meet the structured demand, this prevents him from being obsessed with his worries. Since he is occupied with his job continuously, a condition of despair does not disturb him.

A working woman is typically in a

less satisfactory position than that of the male. A persistent decline in the status of women since 1940 as measured by occupation, income and even education is seen (Knudsen 1969). Discrimination against women in the job market is evident in the study of Harrison 1964 and Knudsen 1969. Harrison claims that the job of the working woman is only a supplementary income to the total family earnings. Working wives appear to be under a greater strain than their husbands. In addition to their job, they perform most of the household chores; which means that they work for considerably more hours a day than their husbands, (Walter R. Gove, Jeannette F. Tudon 1973). This finding is also supported by the study of Haaviomani (1967).

Observers have noted that the expectations confronting women are unclear and diffused (Angrist 1969). This lack of specificity creates problems for women (Friedan 1963). Rose (1951) found that women tend to perceive their career in terms of what men will do, whereas men perceive their careers in terms of their own needs.

Many researchers (Komarorowsky 1950; McKie and Sheriffs 1959; Friedan 1963, Mead 1949) have viewed the difficulties confronting women. As a result of the recent changes, the woman's role in industrial society is marked. Technological advancement in the industrial society has made the work of a housewife very easy. Earlier the male member was the bread winner and the wife played the family supporting role. With the development of industrialisation and the small nuclear families, the woman's child-rearing years are shortened, her domestic skills have been largely replaced by modern conveniences and she is no longer part of a family enterprise supporting the family.

In current years, both sexes are receiving more education. For the male, education produced occupational ad-

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vancement and diversity; for the female, education was accompanied by a role shrinking in importance. These changes in women's roles were accompanied by changes in the legal and ideological structure. However, instead of being treated as equals, women remained in their old institutionalized positions.

The rates of mental illness

To evaluate the rates of mental illness for males and females a look at some community surveys is needed. To get a good idea, the researcher utilizes the data provided by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) of the United States.

Table No. 1 reveals the cases of first admission to mental hospitals in United States.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health of the United States, first admission means, 'the person with no prior inpatient psychiatric experience'. In the case of functional psychosis women outnumber the men i.e. the number of women patients is 484 whereas the men have a total of 382. Under the category of neurosis which is another psychological problem, it is again evident that there are 347 women patients thus outnumbering the total 206 male patients. This indicates obviously that more women are affected psychologically than men.

Table No.2 explains the psychiatric care given in general hospitals in the United States. The treatment meted out to the patients under the functional psychosis category shows that there are 1340 women patients whereas the men

Table 1 : First Admissions to Mental Hospitals

Mental Problems	State & County	Private	Total
<u>Functional Psychosis</u>			
Male	293	89	382
Female	322	162	484
<u>Neurosis</u>			
Male	107	99	206
Female	165	182	347
<u>Total</u>			
Male	400	188	588
Female	487	344	831

number 816 and in the neurosis category 2079 women patients underwent psychiatric care compared to the men who number 963. The overall female patients (3419) outnumber the male (1779).

Expressive Character of Women

According to Philips and Segal (1969) women have a higher rate of psychiatric disturbance than men. They argue that this is not due to real sex differences in frequency of disturbance but, rather to men's ways of hiding unpleasurable feelings and sensation. They further put across that women

Table 2 : Psychiatric care in general hospitals in the United States

Psychological Problems	Non Federal Hospitals	Public Health Hospitals	Total
<u>Functional Psychosis</u>			
Male	816	0	816
Female	1334	6	1340
<u>Neurosis</u>			
Male	959	4	963
Female	2068	11	2079
<u>Total</u>			
Male	1775	4	1779
Female	3402	17	3419

readily express their difficulties because of their cultural background.

Suggestions

The possible suggestions to curb the mental disorders among the women are as follows:

1. Giving an identification to the women.

2. Sharing of the household chores.
3. Encouraging women to go for employment.
4. Providing comfort in times of distress.
5. Change of environment (weekend outings).
6. Family members should spare their time to listen to the thoughts and ideas of the women.
7. Attributing primary importance to the nature of job provided to them.

Conclusion

The review of various findings of research studies shows that the roles played by the two sex lead to experience various mental problems. Studies have also revealed that men admitted to mental hospital are less compared to their counterparts who rank high. Being considered as a weaker sex the women should be given importance in all walks of life, so that we can lessen their psychological problems.

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