

Influence of gender role-specific personality aspects on depressive symptoms in the context of gender

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Background

Higher prevalence and incidence rates regarding unipolar depressive disorder in women compared to men are among the recurring findings from epidemiological and clinical studies [1]. The literature suggests that this is not due to a lower need for treatment in men [2]. In the literature and especially in the context of the concept 'male depression' it is argued that men tend to have 'non-typical' depressive symptoms [3, 4]. These symptoms (like aggressiveness, irritability, consumption of alcohol, risk behavior, antisocial behavior) are little considered in a diagnosis of depression, which can lead to an underdiagnosis [2]. With regard to these symptoms, arguments are often made about the importance of masculine personality aspects [2]. To what extent gender role-specific personality aspects as masculinity and femininity are related to 'non-typical' and 'typical' depressive symptom severity will be the question of this poster.

Methods & Sample

Data from a clinical sample (original data, cross-sectional design, multicenter study) will be analyzed using linear regression analysis. Data refer to patients (female & male; ≥ 18 years; $n \geq 800$) admitted to an inpatient setting or dayclinical setting with a main diagnosis F32.- or F33.- (ICD-10) during 2018 and 2019. Depressive symptoms were obtained by GMDS and BDI II (self-report). Gender role-specific personality aspects were obtained using GEPAQ (self-report).

table 1: sample characteristic

characteristics	women n = 446 (55 %)	men n = 359 (45 %)	p
age, mean (sd)	36 (15)	39 (14)	** a
setting	inpatient (n = 411, 51 %)	243 (55 %)	* b
	dayclinical (n = 394, 49 %)	203 (45 %)	
main diagnosis (ICD-10)	F32.- (n = 282, 35 %)	149 (33 %)	n.s. b
	F33.- (n = 523, 65 %)	297 (67 %)	
gender role-specific personality aspects	feminine (n = 167, 22 %)	127 (30 %)	*** b
	masculine (n = 126, 16 %)	53 (12 %)	
	undifferentiated / androgynous (n = 474, 62 %)	246 (58 %)	

note: sd = standard deviation; ^a t-Test; ^b χ^2 -Test; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Results

depressive symptom severity:
Both women and men express 'non-typical' (GMDS) as well as 'typical' depressive symptoms (BDI II), with symptom severity being higher in women than in men (**table 2**).

gender role-specific personality aspects:
Majority express androgynous or undifferentiated personality aspects. More women than men express feminine personality aspects. More men than women express masculine personality aspects (**table 1**).

gender role-specific personality aspects & depressive symptom severity:
In women, gender role-specific personality aspects seem not to be related to depressive symptom severity (**table 2**). In men, feminine personality aspects seem not to be related to depressive symptom severity. Masculine personality aspects seem to be related to depressive symptom severity in men. The expression of more masculine personality aspects is associated with a reduction in depressive symptom severity (**table 2**).

table 2: multiple linear regression analysis, results

predictor: gender role-specific personality aspects (median split)	criteria: sum score GMDS (model 1)				criteria: sum score BDI II (model 2)			
	women n = 426 corrected R ² = .0023		men n = 341 corrected R ² = .0134		women n = 426 corrected R ² = .0086		men n = 341 corrected R ² = .0291	
	b-coeff	s.e.	b-coeff	s.e.	b-coeff	s.e.	b-coeff	s.e.
feminine	.36	.64	1.44	.98	1.27	1.02	.91	1.63
masculine	-1.29	.89	-1.37*	.77	-2.33	1.41	-4.19**	1.28
constant	25.23	.37	23.61	.38	33.96	.59	32.09	.63

note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$;

criteria GMDS, cut-off: 0-12 = no depression, 13-19 = depression possible, 20-39 = clear signs for depression

criteria BDI II, cut-off: 0-13 = no depression, 14-19 = mild depression, 20-28 = moderate depression, 29-63 = severe depression

predictor feminine personality aspects: median = 36
predictor masculine personality aspects: median = 22

constant: undifferentiated or androgynous personality aspects

Conclusion

Results of this study do not show that feminine gender role-specific personality aspects leads to an increase of 'typical' depressive symptom severity in women. Moreover results of this study do not show that masculine gender role-specific personality aspects leads to an increase of 'non-typical' depressive symptom severity in men. Gender-role specific personality aspects do not appear to be related to depressive symptom severity, except masculine personality aspects (men). Results tend to argue against previous theoretical assumptions. Furthermore women and men with a diagnosis of depression have 'non-typical' and 'typical' symptoms, with symptom severity being higher in women. This is also against the theoretical assumptions of the concept 'male depression'. In the linear regression analysis the coefficient of determination is very low. This could be an indication that gender-role specific personality aspects are not sufficient to explain gender effects in depressive symptom severity. A more comprehensive evaluation of the study also examined the influence of psychiatric comorbidity and further personality traits like aggressiveness, irritability, emotionality and burden. The result of this evaluation was that personality traits take on a greater meaning than gender role-specific personality aspects or psychiatric comorbidity.

References

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