



Behind the Stigma: The Impact of Gender and College Adjustment on Attitudes Toward Mental Health Disorders



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Introduction

- Stigma exists surrounding mental health disorders and psychological services.
- Research has explored the impact of demographic variables, such as age, culture, and gender.
- Gender research has been limited to a binary self-report, but current conceptions are more complex.
- Research has not focused on social variables, such as college adjustment.
- This study investigates the impact of gender role identification and college adjustment on attitudes towards mental health disorders.

Hypotheses

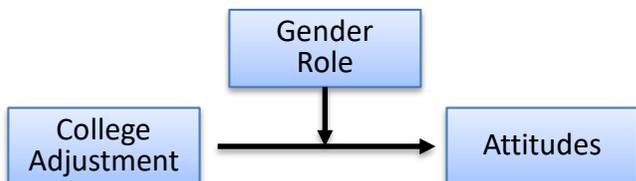
1

Endorsement of more feminine gender role traits will correlate with positive attitudes towards mental health disorders.

2

Poorer college adjustment will correlate with positive attitudes toward mental health disorders.

3



Methods

- Participants were 97 University of Dayton students (62 women and 35 men) from PSY 101 and other classes
- Participants completed the following measures:
 - Attitudes Towards Mental Health Problems Scale (ATMHP; Gilbert et al., 2007).
 - College Adjustment Scale (CAS; Anton & Reed, 1991).
 - Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem 1981).
 - Demographics questionnaire
- CAS and BSRI were counterbalanced

Table 1
Correlations of Main Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. BSRI T-Score	--		
2. ATMHP Total	0.25	--	
3. CAS Average	0.17	0.44**	--

Note. ** p < .001 level

Results

1. Gender role identification did not correlate significantly with ATMHP score (Table 1)
2. College adjustment correlated significantly with ATMHP score, $r = 0.44$, $p < .001$ (Table 1)
3. Moderation model was not significant; the correlation between CAS and ATMHP scores did not change with additional of BSRI t-score

Results (Continued)

- No gender differences across all scales
- Prior treatment did not predict ATMHP scores, but perceived helpfulness of treatment was correlated with more accepting attitudes, $r = +0.49$, $p < .05$
- More feminine BSRI t-scores were more likely to have prior treatment, $r = -0.21$, $p < .05$

Discussion

- Gender was not found to play a role in attitudes towards mental health disorders. This could be because of increasing gender equality and more acceptance of non-stereotypical traits.
- College adjustment does play a role. Research supports this in that shared experience may actually increase negative evaluation of others (Rutten, McDonnell, & Nordgren, 2015).
- These results have important implications for stigma prevention; we should target poor college adjustment instead of gender identity.

Selected References

- Enochs, W. K., & Roland, C. B. (2006). Social adjustment of college freshmen: The importance of gender and living environment. *College Student Journal*, 40, 63-73.
- Hinkleman, L., & Granello, D. H. (2003). Biological sex, adherence to traditional gender roles, and attitudes towards persons with mental illness: An exploratory investigation. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 25, 259-270.