

## **Gender Stereotypes and Emotional Self-Disclosure: Predictors of different Emotions in Young Adults**

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This study investigated the relationship between gender stereotypes and emotional self-disclosure in young adults. It was intended to determine the predictors of different emotions. A self-constructed Demographic Questionnaire; Gender Typicality Measure (Patterson, 2012) and Emotional Self Disclosure Scale (Snell, 1990) were administered to measure gender stereotyping and the level of emotional self-disclosure, respectively. The sample comprised of 300 young adults; 150 men and 150 women, ( $M_{age}=21.16$ ,  $SD=1.84$ ) recruited from two different educational institutes of Lahore. Reliability analysis was run to determine the reliability of the scales used in the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Multiple hierarchical Regression, independent Sample  $t$  Test and Cohen's  $d$  were computed. Results revealed a significant relationship between gender stereotyping and happiness. Gender, education and gender stereotyping emerged as significant predictors of happiness and fear. Women manifested higher emotional disclosure of happiness and fear. The current findings have implications for educational psychologists and for professionals focusing on gender related factors.

*Keywords:* gender stereotypes; emotional self-disclosure; young adults.

A stereotype is a firm notion, about a certain group in a society, which may not even have a strong factual base but is held as a belief

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by those who are unwilling to explore the matter more deeply (Mcleod, 2008). Men being considered as hypo-emotional and women as hyper-emotional (Barrett, 2009; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Heesacker, 1999) is an example of a gender stereotype regarding emotional expression, which is also quite prevalent in Pakistani culture. Over the years, researchers (Schafer, 2015; Thompson, 2010) have drawn attention to the cathartic value of expressing built-up tension as being not only good for psychological well-being but also being necessary for maintaining physical health.

Emotional self-disclosure refers to the communication of personal information with another individual, providing a valuable catharsis of the built-in emotions, enhancing the level of intimacy and trust in a relationship (Friedman & Tucker, 1993). It refers to disclosing personal and private aspects of one's personality to another person and consequently improving the quality of interpersonal relationships and fostering trust. Gender stereotypes have been observed to effect the length and depth of emotional self-disclosure, which can be more clearly observed among young adults. The influence of gender stereotyping is not very obvious during adolescence or younger age, however during adulthood it becomes very clear in the form of immense pressure to conform to the various socially held stereotypes (Mcleod, 2008).

Gender stereotypes lay the basis for the traits and attitudes expected from both men and women, one of which is emotion stereotypes. Emotion stereotypes tend to divide the different types of emotions as belonging to men and women, leading to the anticipation of different emotions being more commonly and frequently expressed by either of the gender (Simon & Nath, 2004). Such as, men are expected to express more anger and contempt, while women are expected to express more sadness, fear and sympathy (Johnson & Shulman, 1998). Gender roles and stereotypes can be viewed by taking Alice Eagly's social role theory. This theory helps to understand that both men and women are fundamentally different and this difference has led to their division in a society. Every social role is a sum of the rights, duties, assumptions and actions that the individual is expected to fulfil according to his or her role in the society. Because both men and women are granted different social roles, these differences culminate into the development of different societal expectations from an individual based on his or her gender, and lead to establishing

gender stereotypes. A commonly observed example is that women are expected and stereotyped to take domestic roles and men to take occupational ones (Eagly & Steffan, 1984).

Gender stereotyping of emotions helps to interpret or explain an individual emotional expression, but it also limits the individual growth of a person (Simon & Nath, 2004). Through the stereotyping of emotions, a society sets inherent boundaries for an individual which restricts him or her to explore his or her own personality, express freely the felt emotions, and understand him or herself better. These stereotypes restrain an individual's capacity to establish personal capabilities, follow the professional path of his or her choice or make simple to complex life choices (Shield, 2012). Emotional stereotyping can be damaging for an individual when in a situation he or she feels socially pressurized to express in the stereotype-consistent manner (Plant, 2000), thus curbing individual expression.

The process of self-disclosure involves two steps; at first the individual makes a self-disclosure which is neither overt nor covert, and second this self-disclosure should be received with empathy, respect and care (Schafer, 2015). Self-disclosure tend to be reciprocal, i.e. when one involves himself or herself in emotional self-disclosure the other person responds by emotional self-disclosure of similar nature (Higgin, 2012). Mutual self-disclosures help to build and foster trust, and evenly-paced disclosures help to ensure that the relationship is moving forward at a steady pace (Schafer, 2015). The meaning and importance of self-disclosures can be better understood with the help of the social penetration theory, given by Altman, and Taylor. This theory proposes that while a relationship develops, interpersonal interaction moves from lower levels of intimacy and depth to higher ones. The partners, as the relationship progresses and goes deeper and intimate, feel vulnerable while enhancing their trust and compassion at the same time (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

As emotional self-disclosure makes an individual become vulnerable, it is reinforced only by appropriate active listening, empathy and reciprocity. without these elements, it damages the trust and breaks the relationship (Brody & Hall, 2000). Furthermore, there are certain barriers that makes an individual hesitant in making self-disclosure. Such as, gender, religion, socio-economic status, race, cultural norms, etc. It is important for any two individuals engaging in the process of self-disclosure not only to be compatible and

comfortable but also to approach emotional self-disclosure with non-judgmental thinking (Schafer, 2015).

Gender stereotyping is also visible when emotional self-disclosure is considered. Women are encouraged to express and disclose, and men are encouraged to refrain from it. As the literature points out, Higgins (2012) investigated the gender differences concerning self-conscious emotional experience by conducting a meta-analysis. The emotions studied included guilt, pride, embarrassment and shame, and these were named as the moral emotions. The outcomes of that meta-analysis added to the literature about gender and presented a view that the stereotyping of women as being hyper-emotional was not true.

Under an emotionally charged situation, the pressure to conform to the emotion stereotypes can overwhelm an individual, not only affecting the interpretation and expression of emotions but also limiting the level of emotional self-disclosure (Lopez-Zafra, & Gartzia, 2014; Mcleod, 2008). These societal boundaries regarding when, how much, and to whom a person can self-disclose based on his/her gender is likely to cause unnecessary stress for the individual, and it acts as an added pressure. This can become the root cause for physical and psychological distress for both men and women (Thompson, 2010).

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To Ascertain relationship between gender stereotyping and level of emotional self-disclosure in young adults.
- To explore gender difference in the level of emotional self-disclosure.
- To determine gender, education and gender stereotyping as predictors of depression, jealousy, happiness, calmness, fear, anger, apathy and anxiety in young adults.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- There is a significant relationship between gender stereotyping and the level of self-disclosure in young adults.
- There is a significant gender difference in the levels of emotional self-disclosure in young adults.

- Gender, education and gender stereotyping are likely to predict the levels of depression, jealousy, happiness, calmness, fear, anger, apathy and anxiety in young adults.

## Method

### Research Design

Between group research design was used in the present study.

### Sample

The present study included a convenient sample of 300 participants including 150 men and 150 Women ( $M_{age}=21.16$ ,  $SD=1.84$ ). They were recruited from different educational institutions of Lahore. Majority of the participants were in their Bachelors program. As per the inclusion criteria, only young adults were selected. Whereas, those diagnosed with any form of physical or psychological disease were excluded from the study.

### Assessment Measures

**Demographic Questionnaire.** It was devised by researchers to obtain demographic information of the participants such as age, gender, and level of education.

**Gender Typicality Measure (Patterson, 2012).** It is based on the gender typicality model given by Egan and Perry (2001), and was used to measure gender stereotyping. It tends to determine how an individual feels about him/herself and how much he/she is similar to most boys or most girls. The range of possible scores on the gender typicality scale was 1-4, higher score indicated higher level of self-assumed typicality. For this sample, the scale's reliability was 0.59.

**Emotional Self Disclosure Scale (Snell, 1990).** This scale involved 40 items related to various types of feelings and emotions experienced by individuals in their life. Higher the score higher was the level of self-disclosure in each type of emotion. The scale has 8 subscales, each consists 5 different items. These subscales are labelled as different emotions and contain separate items; Depression (1,9,17,25,33); Happiness (2,10,18,26,34); Jealousy (3,11,19,27,35); Anxiety (4,12,20,28,36); Anger (5,13,21,29,37); Calmness (6,14,22,30,38); Apathy (7,15,23,31,39); and Fear (8,16,24,32,40). For

current sample, the scale's reliability was 0.88, and the subscales reliability was depression (0.56), happiness (0.74), jealousy (0.56), anxiety (0.60), anger (0.52), calmness (0.50), apathy (0.53), and fear (0.67).

### Procedure

Permission was taken from the head of the respected universities, and participants. Demographic Questionnaire; Gender Typicality Measure and Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale were administered. One time approach to the participants was made. Total time involved in the administration of tools was 15 to 20 minutes approximately.

### Ethical Considerations

Permission was sought from authors to use assessment measures. Permission was sought from respected institutes to collect data. Participants were informed about the purpose of study and were given informed consent. Participants had full independence to withdraw from the research at any given moment. Furthermore, they were assured that all the data and information gathered from them will be kept confidential and it will be used only for research purpose.

## Results

Table 1

*Psychometric Properties of the Major Study Variables (N =300)*

Measures	<i>K</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	Skewness
Emotional Self-Disclosure	40	66.37	23.04	0.88	0.17
Depression	5	7.59	4.01	0.56	0.29
Happiness	5	9.65	4.25	0.74	0.04
Jealousy	5	7.42	3.86	0.56	0.64
Anxiety	5	8.40	3.97	0.60	0.29
Anger	5	8.78	3.94	0.52	-0.01
Calmness	5	8.13	3.92	0.50	0.02
Apathy	5	7.23	3.92	0.53	0.36
Fear	5	8.42	4.62	0.67	0.43
Gender Typicality Measure	10	28.00	4.71	0.59	0.12

*Note.* *M*= mean, *SD*= standard deviation, *K*= number of items,  $\alpha$  = alpha value.

Reliability analysis was run to determine the reliability of the scales used in the study. The calculated Cronbach alpha reliability of Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale was high, and all its subscales had

moderate reliability. The Cronbach alpha reliability of Gender Typicality Measure was weak. All variables were normally distributed.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was run to identify the relationship between gender stereotyping, emotional self-disclosure and its subscales. The results in the table 1 show that the relationship between gender stereotyping and happiness is highly significant. The relationship is also significant between emotional self-disclosure and depression, happiness, jealousy, anxiety, anger, calmness, apathy and fear. There is no significant relationship between gender stereotyping and emotional self-disclosure, depression, jealousy, anxiety, anger, calmness, apathy and fear.

Table 2

*Inter-correlations among Gender Typicality Measure, Emotional Self-Disclosure and its Subscales; Depression, Happiness, Jealousy, Anxiety, Anger, Calmness, Apathy and Fear in Young Adults (N =300)*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.GTM	-	0.06	-0.03	0.16***	-0.03	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.04
2.ESDS		-	0.73***	0.57***	0.67***	0.74***	0.70***	0.73***	0.71***	0.71***
3.Dep.			-	0.31***	0.40***	0.54***	0.53***	0.46***	0.48***	0.39***
4.Hap.				-	0.36***	0.25***	0.23***	0.32***	0.17***	0.31***
5.Jeal.					-	0.50***	0.32***	0.39***	0.41***	0.37***
6.Anx.						-	0.51***	0.43***	0.46***	0.51***
7.Ang.							-	0.51***	0.47***	0.41***
8.Calm.								-	0.58***	0.44***
9.Apathy									-	0.48***
10.Fear										-
<i>M</i>	28.00	66.44	7.43	11.47	7.41	8.29	8.56	8.00	7.10	8.17
<i>SD</i>	4.70	23.08	3.95	5.25	3.97	3.89	3.94	3.88	3.81	4.52

Note. *M*=mean; *SD* =standard deviations; GTM=Gender Typicality Measure; ESDS = Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale; Hap.=Happiness; Jeal.=Jealousy; Anx.=Anxiety; Ang. = Anger; Calm.=Calmness.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3 presents the results from Multiple Hierarchical Regression analyses to determine the predictors of depression, happiness, jealousy, anxiety, anger, calmness, apathy and fear. It was run six times separately to identify predictors of sources of emotional disclosure such as depression, happiness, jealousy, anxiety, anger, calmness, apathy and fear in the sample. In block 1, gender and education were entered as control variables (Smith, 2004). In block 2, gender typicality measure was entered as independent variable. Results, in table 3, indicated that only happiness and fear were

significantly predicted by control variables and gender typicality together. It shows that men and women differ in the self-disclosure levels of happiness and fear, and these differences are also influenced by their educational level and gender stereotyping. In model 1, gender and education were added as control variables and the model significantly predicted for happiness,  $R^2 = 0.02$ , indicating 2 % variance,  $F(2, 297) = 3.32$ ,  $p = 0.4$ . In model 2, gender typicality measure was added that doubled the variance and the model still significantly predicted for happiness,  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(3, 296) = 4.22$ ,  $p = .006$ . When the effect of control variables was excluded from model 2, the model remained significant,  $R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(1, 296) = 5.91$ ,  $p = .02$ . As far as the contribution of individual predictor is concerned, woman gender and gender typicality measure emerged as significant positive predictor of happiness.

Moreover, in model 1, gender and education were added as control variables and the model significantly predicted for fear,  $R^2 = 0.03$ , indicating 3 % variance,  $F(2, 297) = 4.81$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . In model 2, gender typicality measure was added that doubled the variance and the model still significantly predicted for fear,  $R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(3, 296) = 3.24$ ,  $p = .02$ . When the effect of control variables was excluded from model 2, the model became insignificant,  $R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 296) = 0.13$ ,  $p = .72$ . Thus, only women gender positively predicted the level of fear.

Table 3

*Multiple Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Depression, Happiness, Jealousy, Anxiety, Anger, Calmness, Apathy and Fear from Gender, Education and Gender Typicality Measure (N=300)*

Predictor	Source of Emotional Self-Disclosure															
	Dep.		Hap.		Jeal.		Anx.		Anger		Calmn.		Apathy		Fear	
	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.01		.02*		.00		.00		.01		.01		.01		.03**	
Gender <sup>a</sup>		.05		.12*		.06		.04		.10		.08		.04		.16**
Edu		.09		.02		.05		-.03		-.03		-.04		-.06		-.04
Step 2	.00		.02*		.00		.00		.00		.00		.00		0.00	
GTM		-.05		.14*		-.05		.02		.01		.06		.02		.02
Total $R^2$	.01		.04**		.00		.00		.01		.02		.01		.03*	

Note.<sup>a</sup> = coding for gender (men = 1 ; women = 2); Dep.= depression, Hap.= happiness, Jeal.= jealousy, Anx. = anxiety, Calmn.= calmness, GTM = Gender Typicality Measure.



Furthermore, Independent Sample *t* test was run and table 4 shows that there is a significant gender difference in gender stereotyping, emotional self-disclosure, particularly in the expression of happiness and fear, with women showing higher difference.

Table 4

*Gender Differences in Gender Typicality Measure, Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale and its subscales; Depression, Happiness, Jealousy, Anxiety, Anger, Calmness, Apathy and Fear in Young Adults (N =300)*

Variable	Men		Women		<i>t</i> ( <i>df</i> )	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
1.GTM	27.18	3.95	28.82	5.24	-3.04(276)	0.00	-2.68	-0.57	-0.35
2.ESDS	63.41	22.72	69.46	23.12	-2.28(298)	0.02	-11.2	-0.84	-0.26
3.Dep	7.32	3.90	7.54	4.00	-0.48(298)	0.63	-1.11	0.67	-
4.Hap.	10.72	5.22	12.22	5.20	-2.50(298)	0.01	-2.69	-0.32	-0.28
5.Jeal.	7.24	3.67	7.58	4.26	-0.74(298)	0.46	-1.24	0.56	-
6.Anx.	8.10	3.73	8.48	4.05	-0.84(298)	0.40	-1.26	0.50	-
7.Ang.	8.14	4.09	8.97	3.65	-1.82(298)	0.06	-1.71	0.06	-
8.Calm.	7.61	3.97	8.39	3.77	-1.74(298)	0.08	-1.66	0.10	-
9.Apathy	6.88	3.60	7.32	4.02	-0.98(298)	0.32	-1.30	0.43	-
10.Fear	7.38	4.12	8.95	4.76	-3.04(292)	0.00	-2.58	-0.55	-0.35

*Note.* *M*=mean; *SD*=standard deviations; *df*=degrees of freedom; *CI*=confidence interval; *LL*=lower limit; *UL*=upper limit.

### Discussion

Present research focused on the relationship between gender stereotypes and the level of emotional self-disclosure among young adults. It further explored gender stereotyping and demographic variables as predictors of different emotional expressions.

The results showed that gender and gender stereotyping are significantly related to the level of happiness expressed. This can be attributed to gender stereotyping which leads to an individual behaving in a stereotype-consistent manner in order to gain social acceptance

and approval. Therefore as a typical man or a woman, an individual expressing emotional disclosure of happiness is viewed more favorably. The method used included self-report measures of emotional expression, which could have impacted the objectivity of the obtained information as researches show that the self-report measures of emotional expression, based on general questions that do not specify the kind or duration of any particular emotion, are more susceptible to social desirability (Shields 2002; Kelly & Hutson-Coemau, 1999). Additionally, it was found that emotional self-disclosure has a significant relationship with happiness, depression, jealousy, anxiety, anger, calmness, apathy and fear. This can be because all these emotions were used as the subscales of the actual scale, and they had high inter-reliability. These findings are in line with different researches (Higgins, 2012; Simon & Nath, 2004) that found similar relationship.

Furthermore, the results indicated that only happiness and fear were significantly predicted by gender, educational level and gender stereotyping together. It shows that men and women differ in the self-disclosure levels of happiness and fear, and these differences are also influenced by their educational level and gender stereotyping. This can be because both men and women are given different roles in a society, the educational opportunities and environments vary, and this is likely to lead to the differences in their social and affective behaviors. These findings are also supported by various researchers (Briton & Hall, 1995; Smith, 2004; Scott, 2014).

As far as individual variables are concerned, woman gender emerged as significant positive predictor of happiness and fear, and gender stereotyping alone of happiness. It means that individuals who conform to the expectations linked with their gender (i.e. are typical men or women) are more likely to disclose happiness and fear, particularly women. This can be because the social roles that are mostly associated with women in a society, such as a housewife or a mother, require a more frequent expression of soft emotions such as happiness and fear. Therefore, women can be better predictors of these emotions. This is supported by researchers (Brody & Hall, 2000; Smith, 2004; Vogel, 2003) who state that men are more likely to express the power-oriented emotions, such as anger, pride, etc. whereas women express 'soft' emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, etc.) more frequently.

Moreover, the results presented significant gender differences in the levels of emotional self-disclosure, particularly in happiness and fear. One of the main reasons for these differences can be that emotions expressed by both men and women are given different interpretations and are also attributed differently. As a result, they are expected to express certain emotions more freely than others. Especially in Pakistani culture, social roles given to men and women differ on every aspect of the society, where women are mostly given family-oriented nurturing roles and men are viewed as the breadwinners of the family. This social division can lead to different expectations linked with individuals, based on their gender, and emotional expectations are no exception. The results can be supported by the studies conducted by researchers (Adams, & Kleck, 2010; Barret, 2009; Briton & Hall, 1995; Hess, Thibault, Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999; Khan & Amin, 2013; Sultan & Chaudhry, 2008) who reported that men and women differ in their levels of emotional self-disclosure.

Additionally, these gender differences can also be supported by Eagly's social role theory which postulates that both men and women are fundamentally different (Fabes & Martin, 1991; Simon & Nath, 2004) and these differences lead to different expectations of the society from an individual based on his or her gender, consequently developing gender stereotypes. These stereotypes as a result can affect the levels of emotions expressed by people, based on their gender (Mirowsky & Ross, 1995).

The emotional expressions of men and women are mostly interpreted in a stereotype-consistent manner and this is likely to have wide implications for active social interactions and the preservation and continuation of emotional gender stereotypes (Plant, 2000). When a person's expressions are interpreted in the light of gender stereotypes linked with emotion, he or she is viewed to be conforming to these stereotypes. As a result, this conformity increases the interpreter's belief in the existence of gender differences in the expression of emotions (Brody & Hall, 2000). Furthermore, gender differences in emotional expression, that is an overt and observable aspect of deeply internal emotional understanding, may strengthen, preserve, and eventually replicate cultural views about emotions and gender (Pollack, 1995). This is a significant issue, not only for the researchers focused on gender and emotions but also for sociologists more

commonly, since cultural views about the emotional expression of both men and women may continue to be referred to when trying to explain the gender inequality in different social settings, such as family, society, workplace, etc. (Kelly & Hutson-Comeaux, 1999; Sheilds, 2002).

### **Implications of the Study**

The present study adds to the mounting literature on emotions, both overall and when associated with gender, especially in Asian culture. The findings have significant implications for the study of social relations, the route of active interactions and the communication of emotional expression. These can be used by educational psychologists who can work to initiate efforts to provide similar opportunities and experiences to both men and women students in order to reduce the effect of gender stereotypes on their behavior. Social psychologists can use the current study to raise awareness regarding the need and importance of appropriate emotional self-disclosure in order to benefit both physical and mental health. The study can become a part of a meta-analysis studying the gender stereotypes prevalent in Asian culture and how these stereotypes affect an individual's emotional behavior.

The current study can also be used by Gender specialists who work for gender equality and develop programs that foster awareness about the factors that add to gender inequality in a variety of social settings. Moreover, sociologists of gender and emotion can use the findings of the current study in order to thoroughly determine the various ways in which modern social settings, involving the people's structural ranks, gender role experiences as well the cultural views and norms regarding gender and emotion, influence the affective behavior and experiences. However, there is still a lot to be determined about the complex relationship between gender and emotion.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

Future researches in this field should determine the social contexts that evoke emotions in men and women, and also identify the goals and psychological results of these emotions and their expression. These should involve emotion specific self-report measures of emotional expression based on particular time frames. Similarly, as emotional experiences and expressions are overt aspects of one's

personality, observational information should also be considered in future researches. Furthermore, if a longitudinal approach is taken for the current study, it can help to determine the changes in the levels of emotional self-disclosure overtime.

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