

Transformations of Masculinity and Femininity in Modern Society: Dynamics and Implications

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ABSTRACT

The changing concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern society have had a major impact on gender dynamics and social interactions. Masculinity and femininity that were previously understood within rigid boundaries have now shifted, where they reflect a more flexible diversity of roles and expressions. This creates space for individuals to explore their identities outside of traditional social norms. Despite progress in the area of gender equality, challenges related to wage inequality, patriarchal dominance and tensions between traditional roles and new expressions remain. The influence of mass media and social media also reinforces or undermines existing gender stereotypes. Further efforts are needed to educate society to respond to these changes in a way that is more inclusive and respectful of diverse gender identity. An understanding of masculinity and femininity will lead to more positive changes in social interactions and social structures in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of masculinity and femininity have long been an important part of social constructs that define the roles, expectations and behaviors of individuals based on gender. Masculinity is often identified with dominant, loud and competitive traits, while femininity is more about gentleness, nurturing and cooperation (Sumra, 2019). As social changes occur in modern societies, gender roles begin to become more fluid and complex. Globalization, technological developments, and shifting social values have opened up space for individuals to express their gender identity in a more flexible and diverse manner (van Driel, 2020). More people in many countries are beginning to redefine their masculine and feminine roles, which are no longer limited to the traditional division between men and women.

The concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern societies are also increasingly influenced by rapid social change, especially with the growing role of women in the world of work, politics and education. Masculinity is no longer limited to the image of a strong and powerful man, but is starting to show more inclusive variations. There is a tendency for men to show their emotional and vulnerable side more often,

while women also hold important roles in sectors that were previously dominated by men (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016). This modern society demands a broader understanding of gender, leading to the formation of more open and diverse concepts of masculinity and femininity.

One of the main issues that arises from the shifting concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern society is the imbalance between social expectations and individual expression. Although society is increasingly accepting of different forms of gender expression, there is still a tendency to judge people based on traditional norms. For example, men who show tenderness or feeling are considered less of a masculinity, while women who are ambitious or independent may be perceived as deviating from the expected role of femininity (Homey, 2018). This creates tension within individuals who are trying to conform to social norms that do not always match their true identity (Connell, 2005). Individuals may feel stressed or confused because they feel trapped in gender roles (Martin & Doka, 2000). This can cause individuals to feel trapped in gender roles that they did not choose, which can hinder their personal development and psychological well-being.

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The problem of inequality in the application of the concepts of masculinity and femininity also remains an important issue. Although women are increasingly gaining more opportunities in various fields, there are still structural barriers that limit their access in certain sectors, such as politics and leadership (Iversen et al., 2010). Men sometimes also feel pressured to maintain their outdated masculine identities, even though social reality shows that men's roles are evolving and are not only tied to attributes of physical strength and dominance (Messner, 2011). Such mindsets influence individuals and shape society's views on what is considered 'normal' for each gender.

Looking at changes in concepts of masculinity and femininity is important, especially in a society that is increasingly open to diversity and inclusivity. A better understanding of how gender values have evolved in the modern world can help strengthen awareness about gender equality. This paves the way for individuals to live according to their true identity, without fear of judgment or discrimination. These changes also have an impact on public and educational policies that increasingly seek to accommodate diverse gender identities. Attention to the evolution of masculine and feminine roles in everyday life promotes a society that is not only more just, but also more respectful of individuals' freedom to express themselves according to their identity.

The purpose of this study is to understand how concepts of masculinity and femininity have changed in modern society, and how these changes affect social interactions and gender dynamics. It also aims to identify how these developments affect society's view of traditional male and female roles and how individuals articulate their gender identity in a social environment that is increasingly open to diversity.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature study approach in understanding the changing concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern society involves analyzing various scientific papers, articles and books relevant to gender issues. This method aims to comprehensively examine existing views and theories on the social construction of gender, as well as how values of masculinity and femininity evolve in the wider social sphere. Using existing literature, the researcher can identify common patterns, social trends and changes in society's perception of gender roles over time. This study also includes a review of various theoretical approaches, such as social constructionist gender theory and critical theory, which explain how culture and society shape our understanding of masculinity and femininity (Butler, 2004; Kimmel, 2012).

This literature review aims to examine previous studies that have addressed the impact of social change on concepts of masculinity and femininity in urban contexts, mass media, and globalization. The literature reviewed includes articles from academic journals, books on social theory, and research reports that discuss the implications of these changes on social and political life. For example, some studies show how social media, such as Instagram and Twitter, play a role in shaping and distributing images of masculinity and femininity in contemporary society (Gauntlett, 2008). By using this approach, researchers can gain a broader picture of the gender dynamics that occur in modern society and how individual gender identity is increasingly diverse and defined more flexibly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The changing concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern society have had a major impact on social interactions and gender dynamics. Masculinity in the past was often associated with physical strength, leadership and dominance, while femininity emphasized gentleness, nurturing and passivity (Dixon, 2021). These norms form rigid social expectations of how men and women should act, speak and behave. The boundaries are increasingly blurred, and the concepts have undergone major shifts over time. One of the factors driving this change is an increased awareness of gender equality and human rights, which opens up opportunities for individuals to express themselves outside of traditional gender stereotypes. Masculinity is no longer only associated with dominance or power, while femininity can also include strength and assertiveness that were previously considered incompatible with traditional female roles (Connell, 2005). Although there are still challenges in changing traditional views, this major shift provides hope for a more open and diverse future in terms of gender identity.

One of the significant changes in the concept of masculinity is the decline of patriarchal influence in social structures. Society in the past tended to judge men who showed emotion or vulnerability as unmasculine. More men in recent decades are comfortable showing their emotional side, both in personal relationships and in social settings. This has led to a redefinition of masculinity, where men are no longer just considered physically "strong", but are also valued for their ability to empathize, listen and collaborate. Definitions of masculinity are increasingly diverse, and this creates space for men to develop their identities without being tied to traditional models (Kimmel, 2004).

Femininity has undergone a similar transformation. Traits such as tenderness, care and dependence that were once often seen as the only feminine traits are now more inclusive and more complex. Modern women are now more often involved in careers that were previously dominated by men, such as science, politics and business (Sumra, 2019). Femininity now encompasses more aspects, such as independence, ambition and even aggressiveness that were once considered masculine qualities (Franklin II, 2012). These changes help women to access more opportunities and fight for equality in the public sphere and in the workforce (Kerr, 2011). Along with this, popular culture and mass media have also played a role in introducing a more diverse range of female models

One of the most striking gender dynamics resulting from these changes is the acceptance of more flexible expressions of gender identity. Society in the past tended to see gender as a binary category limited to men and women (Scott, 2007). We are now witnessing a growing awareness of non-binary and transgender gender identities that demand recognition and acceptance. This poses a challenge for society to accommodate a wider variety of gender identities. Gender identity is no longer limited to two categories defined by biological sex, but rather more individuals identify themselves outside the traditional definition (Butler, 2004).

These shifts in gender roles also affect interpersonal relationships, especially those related to family and friendship. For example, in romantic relationships, there is a decline in the traditional expectation that men should be the breadwinners and women should take care of the household (Oláh et al., 2018). The division of roles within the household has become more flexible with more women working and achieving success in the same fields as men. Social interactions between men and women are based more on equality and mutual understanding, rather than on norms that prioritize rigid gender role differences (Ridgeway, 2011).

While there has been much progress in terms of gender equality, there are still significant challenges related to inequalities in social and economic practices. Although many women have managed to break through the boundaries of traditional roles, the wage gap between men and women is still a major problem in many countries. The patriarchal culture that still exists in some societies often limits women's roles in politics and leadership. Masculinity also often remains associated with dominance, which can inhibit the development of greater emotional sensitivity in men (Connell, 2005).

One of the issues arising from the changing concepts of masculinity and femininity is the increased pressure on individuals to conform to new and more flexible gender roles. Despite the acceptance of wider gender variations, most societies still struggle with more open concepts of gender. In some cases, men who adopt more "gentle" traits and women who adopt more "aggressive" roles may still be considered incompatible with certain social norms. This dynamic creates tension in individuals' attempts to express themselves authentically, which in turn can lead to emotional stress and confusion about their gender identity (Kimmel, 2012).

Mass media plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Idealized images of how men and women should act and dress are often still maintained in movies, advertisements and social media. These form social standards that greatly influence the way individuals are viewed and expected to behave. Despite efforts to introduce more inclusive and diverse representations, traditional images of masculinity and femininity still often dominate existing narratives. Social media, while offering a platform for more gendered voices and expressions, also often reinforces existing gender stereotypes. Despite efforts to break down rigid gender roles, the media still has a huge influence on how these concepts are accepted in society (Gauntlett, 2008).

Shifts in the concepts of masculinity and femininity also affect the education sector. There is a push to erase gender stereotypes that steer children towards specific career paths based on their gender. With more women pursuing careers in engineering, medicine and science, and men gravitating towards more socially-focused professions and education, the education sector is working to instill the value of equality early on (Unterhalter, 2007). Curricula have begun to emphasize the importance of equality and respect for gender diversity, prompting changes in the way young people perceive traditional roles (Ridgeway, 2011).

Despite progress in the education sector, major challenges remain in changing the traditional ways in which gender is translated in family structures and the world of work. For example, although many women are actively working outside the home, they are still often the ones responsible for household chores, while men, although more involved in childcare, are still often stuck in dominant roles in formal employment and certain industries. This creates inequalities in workloads at home and in the workplace, which limits efforts to achieve true equality between masculinity and femininity (Kimmel, 2012).

Globally, changing concepts of masculinity and femininity also present challenges in challenging traditional norms that are still dominant in many cultures. These changes are often met with resistance from communities who perceive them as a threat to long-established social structures. Despite progress in gender equality in many countries, understandings of masculinity and femininity remain diverse and are often hampered by social and cultural forces that maintain rigid gender hierarchies (Connell, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The changing concepts of masculinity and femininity in modern society have led to significant transformations in gender dynamics and social interactions. Gender concepts that were once rigid and dominated by traditional stereotypes have become more flexible and inclusive, creating space for individuals to express themselves in more authentic and diverse ways. Masculinity that was once synonymous with dominance and power now embraces more of an emotional side, while femininity is no longer limited to softness and dependence, but rather includes independence and assertiveness. These changes open up space for individuals to express themselves in more authentic and diverse ways, without being trapped in a narrow mindset. Despite positive changes in terms of gender equality, many challenges remain, especially in terms of the wage gap, patriarchal dominance, and the tension between traditional norms and more progressive gender expressions.

At the same time, it is important to continue to explore and understand these dynamics, especially in the context of media, education and broader social structures. To promote more inclusive change, society needs to work hard to address the gender inequalities that still exist, especially in the workforce and in the division of roles in the household. Society should also continue to promote education that emphasizes equality and eliminates outdated gender stereotypes. With a more complete and sensitive approach to the diversity of gender identities, a shift towards more genuine equality can be realized, creating a more inclusive and just society.

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