THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER ROLE BELIEFS AND MENTAL HEALTH
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ABSTRACT
This study explores the relationship between gender role ideologies and instances of poor mental health in respondents (n=2184) of the 2016 General Social Survey. I hypothesized that due to the mixing ideologies of transitional gender roles, individuals who still hold traditional views regarding gender roles will experience higher instances of poor mental health. Results from multiple regression models suggest that gender role ideology was still a significant predictor of the number of poor mental health days reported in the past 30 days, controlling for several other variables; however, gender role ideologies no longer significantly predicted respondents’ mental health, mood, and ability to think when controlling for those same variables. The results show some support that belief of traditional gender role ideologies can increase instances of poor mental health. This can be attributed to role imbalance and role strain theory.

INTRODUCTION

Gender roles dictate many societal norms including behavior. Women who act assertive or independent may be viewed as competent at work, but lack social skills, whereas women who behave in a communal manner are viewed as better partners and perceived as friendlier.

Studies have shown lower levels of depression can be associated with masculine traits, while feminine traits are more commonly identified with higher levels of physiological stress, subjective stress, phobic reactions, and anxiety.

Men and women experience role balance differently. Men gain more extrinsic rewards and experience from their career. Women, however, suffer from reduced role balance and higher instances of role strain due to child rearing.

Individuals who demonstrate both masculine and feminine characteristics are said to have androgynous gender role. Androgynous gender roles are associated with positive mental health, positive coping strategies and a wider variety of behavioral responses.

Traditional masculine ideologies encourage boys and men to ignore emotions. Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women. Research suggests that women are not suited for politics, as well as respondents sex, age, and race were significant predictors of how many days of poor mental health were reported. However, for the second measure of mental health, rating of mental health, mood, and ability to think only the respondent’s sex, and level of education were significant predictors, gender ideology no longer significantly predicted the respondent’s instances of poor mental health.

These findings only partially support the hypothesis that those who hold traditional gender role ideologies will experience more instances of poor mental health.

RESULTS

The results of the independent t-test supported my hypothesis that women experienced more days of poor mental health over a 30-day period than men.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

The Pearson correlation results yielded mixed results regarding support of my hypothesis that respondent’s who hold traditional gender role ideologies will demonstrate higher instances of poor mental health.

One positive significant correlation was found, as the number of poor mental health days increased so did the score for man to work and woman to tend home.

As the number of poor mental health days increases the score for the question of women being suitable for politics decreased significantly.

A significant correlation was calculated, showing the score in poor mental health, mood, and ability to think increasing along with the scores for variables concerned with mothers working.

A significant negative correlation was calculated showing the score for poor mental health, mood, and ability to think increasing while the score for man to work and woman to tend home decreases.

Regressions results show that only one measure of gender ideology (women are not suited for politics), as well as respondents sex, age, and race were significant predictors of how many days of poor mental health were reported.

However, for the second measure of mental health rating of mental health, mood, and ability to think only the respondent’s sex, and level of education were significant predictors, gender ideology no longer significantly predicted the respondent’s instances of poor mental health.

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REFERENCES