



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SEXUAL IDENTITY
AND EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE
BETWEEN FEMININE AND MASCULINE BOYS**

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AND EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE
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BY

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A COMPARISON OF SEXUAL IDENTITY
AND EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE BETWEEN
FEMININE AND MASCULINE BOYS

by

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Chairman: Profesor Madya Dr Othman Mohamed

Faculty: Educational Studies

Feminity in males is considered a problem since it has been related significantly with transsexuality and homosexuality. This study attempted to describe and compare the childhood gender-typed interests, current gender identity, sexual orientation, and level of emotional disturbance among feminine boys and masculine boys.

Thirty five secondary-school feminine boys were matched with thirty five masculine boys in terms of their age, race, religion and school attended. The feminine boys were purposively selected and objectively identified using the Feminine Mannerism Checklist. The seventy respondents were administered five scales:



seventy respondents were administered five scales: Childhood Gender-typed Interests Scale (CGIS), Feminine Gender Identity Scale (FGIS), Body Image Scale (BIS), Sexual Orientation Scale (SOS) and Emotional Disturbance Scale (EDS).

Descriptive analysis showed that feminine boys recalled high level of feminine-typed and low level of masculine-typed interests during their childhood. Masculine boys, on the other hand, remembered high masculine-typed and low feminine-typed interests. Feminine boys also reported some degree of feminine gender identity while masculine boys reported almost none. Feminine boys were more dissatisfied than masculine boys with their body parts. In contrast with masculine boys, feminine boys were also found to have high preference for male and low preference for female sexual partners. Finally, feminine boys reported a higher level of emotional disturbance than masculine boys did.

t-tests revealed feminine and masculine boys were significantly different in all the five variables measured. It was concluded that feminine boys tend to be involved in feminine-typed interests since they were young. They are at risk of developing a feminine gender



identity, thus growing up into transsexuals. They also tend to develop a homosexual orientation, and suffer emotionally in social relations with significant others.

The findings support the importance of early intervention by helping feminine boys reorient their gender identity. This study also revealed the potential usage of these scales as a tool in detecting male adolescents with gender identity disturbance.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat
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sebahagian daripada syarat lulus Ijazah Master Sains.

PERBANDINGAN IDENTITI SEKSUAL DAN
GANGGUAN EMOSI DI ANTARA
PELAJAR LELAKI FEMININ DAN PELAJAR LELAKI MASKULIN

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Sifat feminin di dalam kaum lelaki dilihat sebagai masalah berikutan perkaitannya yang signifikan dengan kepondanan dan orientasi homoseksual. Kajian ini cuba menggambarkan dan membandingkan minat jenis-jantina semasa kecil, identiti jantina, orientasi seksual, dan tahap gangguan emosi di kalangan pelajar lelaki bersifat feminin dan pelajar lelaki bersifat maskulin.

Tiga puluh lima pelajar sekolah menengah yang bersifat feminin dan tiga puluh lima pelajar bersifat maskulin dipadankan dari segi umur, ras, agama dan sekolah. Lelaki feminin telah dipilih secara *purposif* dan dikenalpasti secara objektif menggunakan Skala Gaya Feminin. Tujuh puluh responden ini telah diberi lima



Feminin. Tujuh puluh responden ini telah diberi lima soal selidik: Skala Minat Jenis-Jantina Masa Kecil (CGIS), Skala Identiti Jantina Feminin (FGIS), Skala Imej Tubuh Badan (BIS), Skala Orientasi Seksual (SOS) dan Skala Gangguan Emosi (EDS).

Analisis deskriptif menunjukkan bahawa lelaki feminin mengingati minat jenis-perempuan yang tinggi dan minat jenis-lelaki yang rendah sewaktu mereka kecil. Lelaki maskulin sebaliknya mengingati minat jenis-lelaki yang tinggi dan minat jenis-perempuan yang rendah. Lelaki feminin juga melaporkan kecenderungan ke arah identiti jantina feminin manakala lelaki maskulin tidak melaporkan demikian. Lelaki feminin lebih tidak berpuashati dari lelaki maskulin dengan bahagian-bahagian tubuh badan mereka. Berbanding dengan lelaki maskulin, lelaki feminin juga mempunyai kecenderungan yang tinggi kepada pasangan seksual lelaki dan kecenderungan yang rendah kepada pasangan seksual perempuan. Akhirnya, lelaki feminin melaporkan tahap gangguan emosi yang lebih tinggi dari lelaki maskulin.

Ujian t menunjukkan bahawa lelaki feminin dan lelaki maskulin berbeza secara signifikan di dalam kelima-lima pemboleh-ubah yang diukur. Adalah dirumuskan bahawa lelaki feminin cenderung untuk



melibatkan diri dengan minat jenis perempuan semenjak mereka kecil lagi. Mereka berisiko untuk membentuk identitas feminin, dengan itu membesar kelak menjadi pondan. Mereka juga cenderung kepada orientasi homoseksual, serta mengalami tekanan emosi dalam perhubungan sosial dengan orang-orang yang signifikan.

Dapatan kajian ini menyokong tentang pentingnya campur tangan awal dengan membantu pelajar lelaki feminin mengubah arah identitas jantina mereka. Kajian ini juga mendedahkan potensi kegunaan soal selidik ini sebagai alat untuk mengenalpasti remaja lelaki yang mengalami kecelaruan identitas jantina.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background Of The Study

Feminine behavior in boys is generally not accepted by parents and peers because males are expected to appear masculine, not feminine. Boys who appear masculine are perceived as normal and socially attractive. On the other hand, boys who appear feminine would be teased as "sissies", rejected by their male peers, and labeled "disturbed".

Gender Role Development

Masculinity in males and feminity in females have been extensively discussed and emphasized by psychologists and sociologists as an important factor influencing individual's gender role development. Gender role or sex-role stereotype is a set of behaviors that are expected of males and females within a particular society. Such behaviors include appearance, dressing, social skills, and activities.



This set of behaviours becomes the primary guidance in social interactions. First, people are usually categorized as male or female before they are described as young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Secondly, gender role helps to define individual's expected behaviours and responsibilities, which will facilitate social interactions since people share similar assumptions. For example, in a packed bus, a male is expected to give up his seat to a female; a son is expected to help remove heavy furniture and a daughter to help in the kitchen. Thirdly, gender role teaches children the social skills required when they grow up, whether they will be parents, leaders, or workers.

Children learn about gender roles from social agents such as parents, teachers and peers. Parents treat boys and girls differently from the moment of birth. Studies have shown that parents were more likely to label their baby daughters as smaller, softer, cuter, more delicate and less attentive than their baby sons. Fathers who had seen but not handled their babies were more extreme than mothers in emphasizing the size, strength, coordination, and alertness of their sons,



compared to the fragility and beauty of their daughters (Rubin, Provenzeno & Luria, 1974).

As they grow up, children are taught the distinction between male and female gender roles. Girls are told to be nice, gentle, pretty, and to help mother around the house. Boys are not allowed to cry, are allowed to be aggressive, are involved in rough-and-tumble games, and are encouraged to join father's activities.

In many societies, boys are somehow pressured more than girls to conform to gender appropriate roles. Parents, especially fathers of 2 to 9 year-olds were more concerned if their male rather than female child chose cross-sex activities (Langlois & Downs, 1980). Parents also perceived a wider range of appropriate behaviours for girls than for boys (Fagot, 1978). Parents obviously play an important role in shaping children's gender role by providing gender-typed toys and by directing children to gender-typed chores (Etaugh and Liss, 1992).



The Importance Of A Healthy Sexual Identity

Evidently, a smooth learning of gender roles helps in developing a healthy and integrated sense of self, or self-concept. That is, being a male or a female means having a set of beliefs about appropriate gender role, sexual orientation, personal attributes, and physical appearance. In addition, a healthy learning of gender roles helps individuals establish a healthy gender identity, which is an awareness and sense of knowing confidently to which category of sex one belongs to.

Green (1975) proposed that the three aspects of self mentioned above, namely, gender role, gender identity and sexual orientation, are the three components of an individual's sexual identity. Each of this developmental phases is inter-related and highly influential of each other. Thus, a healthy development of gender role will affect a healthy development of gender identity and sexual preference.

Most children easily and smoothly learn the gender role behaviours expected of their sex. They have a clear-cut definition of what is male and what is

female. A few children, however, are observed as consistently rejecting their sex-appropriate games and activities while preferring cross-gender behaviours. A boy who occasionally tries on his mother's high heels or bracelet, would not be considered abnormal. On the other hand, a boy who always plays with dolls, dresses in skirts, or appears effeminate would be seen as not behaving normally. Parents of such a boy should be worried and should intervene before their son's preference for the feminine gender role becomes serious.

Boys who consistently appear feminine in appearance and engage in feminine activities are viewed more negatively than girls who appear masculine and engage in boys' games. This is evidenced by the pejorative terms feminine boys are teased with, such as "sissy", "faggot", or "drag queen" as compared to the neutral term masculine girls are called, which is "tomboy". In Malaysia, feminine boys are ridiculed as "lembut", "pondan" and other hurtful names, while masculine girls are only referred to as "tomboy".



Since feminine boys usually show strong interests in girls' games and companionship, parents are concerned that the boys do not get involved in masculine games and activities. In the long run, such boys may not develop a healthy masculine gender identity. Instead, they may develop a feminine gender identity, similar to the identity of male transsexuals who believe that they are actually a female trapped in a male body. Observing such parallelism, parents fear that if their son does not outgrow his femininity he will later grow up to be a transsexual.

In believing that they are actually females, male transsexuals try to emulate the appearance and role of a female. They also gear their sexual preference to other males, which they perceive as a heterosexual orientation. However, such relationship is still considered to be homosexual, which commonly is not approved of by the society. Again, observing such phenomenon, parents are concerned that if their feminine boy grows up to be a transsexual, he would necessarily engage in homosexual activities.



Are such fears well founded? The literature on gender-disturbed males convincingly support the assumptions that feminity in boys is not healthy and is a source of clinical problems. The stress of confused gender identity in these boys, along with the pressure to conform to the assigned biological sex role, usually resulted in high anxiety, poor concentration in school, difficulty in making friends, and difficulty in dating (Fleming and Feinbloom, 1984).

Feminine boys have also been shown to have childhood background similar to that of adult homosexuals and transsexuals. Studies have found that adult homosexuals and transsexuals reported childhood interests in girls' games and companionship, cross-dressing, and preference for the company of girls and older women significantly more than adult heterosexuals. Adult homosexuals and transsexuals also remembered being called "sissy", being teased and ridiculed by peers (Whitam, 1977, 1983; Zuger, 1984; Billingham and Hockenberry, 1987; Khairuddin, 1987; Tsoi, 1990 and Phillips and Over ,1992).



The severity of the problems faced by feminine boys is underscored by the fact that gender disturbance is listed under the category of 'Disorders Usually First Evident in Infancy, Childhood, or Adolescence' in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III-R) edition 1987. Feminine boys could be diagnosed as suffering from *Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood*. This disorder is diagnosed when a boy is persistently and intensely distressed about being a boy while desiring to be a girl. He is either preoccupied with female activities, female friends, and female dress, or he hates his genitals, wishing that his genitals would disappear.

When this boy reaches puberty and still maintains a sense of inappropriateness about being a male, he is diagnosed as suffering from *transsexualism*. Male transsexuals are preoccupied with getting rid of their primary and secondary sex characteristics and acquiring those of the females, either through sex-reassignment surgery, or hormonal treatment. They cross-dress and adopt feminine gestures and voice inflection in order to become female-like.

