Masculinity, Femininity, and the Bem Sex Role Inventory in Turkey

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The aim of this study was to examine the masculinity and femininity scales of Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) among Turkish university students. Five hundred thirty-six students (280 men and 256 women) volunteered to complete the short-form of the BSRI and answer demographic questions. In factor analyses, the original factor structure (Bem, 1981) was found both in the men's and women's data. Comparisons of the factor structures with target rotation (Procrustes rotation) and comparison indexes showed no difference between the factor structures found among men and women. The internal consistency of the masculinity and femininity scales was acceptable, and *t*-tests showed that women scored higher on the femininity scale, and men scored higher on the masculinity scale. There were significant differences between men and women only on two masculinity items, but significant differences were found in 8 (of 10) femininity items.

KEY WORDS: BSRI; factor structure; Turkey.

Gender stereotypes refer to "the beliefs people hold about members of the categories man or woman" (Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 19). Many social psychological studies have shown that these gender stereotypes vary among different cultures and ethnic groups (Harris, 1994). The first aim of the present study was to examine those stereotypes in Turkish cultural context.

One of the most frequently used instruments for measuring gender stereotypes is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974). In the BSRI, self-descriptions are used to measure the extent to which men and women describe themselves in terms of personality traits that make up the stereotypes for their own and the other sex (Archer & Lloyd, 2002). Thus, gender stereotypic traits of men and women were defined according to their social desirability determined by society. An individual's gender role was defined as a function of the expression of masculine and feminine traits rather than biological sex. Hence, traits were called "masculine" if they were evaluated to be more suitable for men than women in society. Similarly, "feminine" traits were those that were evaluated to be more suitable for women than men. In addition to masculinity and femininity scores, the BSRI can be used to calculate scores that indicate "androgyny" and "undifferentiated" classifications. Androgynous people are those who score similarly high on the masculine and feminine scales (Bem, 1974), whereas a person who shows low levels of both masculine and feminine traits is called "undifferentiated" (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975).

A multitude of studies have been conducted to investigate similarities and differences among countries in gender stereotypic traits and to assess the cross-cultural validity and the structure of the BSRI (e.g., Ballard-Reisch & Elton, 1992; Blanchard-Fields, Suhrer-Roussel, & Hertzog, 1994; Lara-Cantu & Suzan-Reed, 1988; Martin & Ramanaiah, 1988; Schmitt & Millard, 1988; Waters, Waters, & Pincus, 1977; Wong, McCreary, & Duffy, 1990). However,

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the findings have been mixed. Although some authors have suggested that gender stereotypic traits are universal (Basow, 1984; Pitariu, 1981), others have not demonstrated the universality (Kaschak & Sharratt, 1983; Ward & Sethi, 1986). This inconsistency might be due to several factors. Different research methods, samples, and problems with translation, and adaptation of the instruments to non-English speaking cultures might lead to conflicting results. In addition to methodological differences, inconsistency of results might be related to the characteristics of gender stereotypes themselves. For example, gender stereotypes do not remain unchangeable even within one culture, but change with time together with general cultural values (Twenge, 1997). The second aim of the present study was to obtain current data on gender stereotypes in Turkish society.

Bem (1979) emphasized the role of culture by defining the purpose of the BSRI to "assess the extent to which the culture's definitions of desirable female and male attributes are reflected in an individual's self-description" (p. 1048). By this definition, it is reasonable to expect that the definition of gender stereotypes will vary among cultures and ethnic groups (Harris, 1994; Landrine, 1985). Williams and Best (1990) found that the gap between men and women on the variance of the gender stereotypes was small in highly developed countries, whereas it was larger among countries in which the difference between men and women in educational achievements was large. In addition, they suggested that gender roles are closely associated with socioeconomic development, the importance of religion, urbanization, and high latitudes. In this way, gender stereotypes would be results of many different cultural and environmental factors.

Traditionally, Turkey has been seen as a geographical and cultural bridge between East and West. This mediator role of Turkey is seen in social values too. In studies of collectivism and individualism, Turkish culture has repeatedly been described as a "culture of relatedness" (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996). As a result, the modern urban family is defined as an emotionally (but not economically) interdependent unit with "a combination, or coexistence, of individual and group (family) loyalties" (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996, p. 89). Kağıtçıbaşı (1996) also suggested that child socialization is characterized by a trend toward "autonomous-relational" rather than an independent or interdependent self. Other scholars have called this Turkish family characteristic "agentic interdependence" (a combination of task-related independence and relatedness) or "balanced differentiation and integration" (İmamoğlu, 1987, 1991). The special role of Turkish culture as a synthesis of "modern" Western values and the "traditional" values of the East should be manifested also in gender stereotypes.

Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar (1992) pointed out that the socialization of gender roles begins in the Turkish family even before the child is born. In Kağıtçıbaşı's (1982a) study, Turkish parents preferred a son (84%) to a daughter (16%) in a forced choice question. Preference for a son especially in the rural traditional context seems to be related to parents' wish that a male child would carry the family name to next generation, contribute to the family's welfare through financial and practical help, and take care of the aging parents. However, a daughter is perceived as "the property of strangers" (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c; Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992). These expectations are likely to be the driving forces to make a child to fit his or her gender stereotype. For instance, Turkish parents let their sons behave more independently and aggressively, whereas more dependence and obedience is expected from their daughters; this difference increases with the child's age (Başaran, 1974).

Sex segregation continues because the family's morality and honor (namus) depends on the chastity of women. It results in supportive same sex-kinship and friendship networks (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982a; Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1982), which provide women with emotional support and strength. Gender role differentiation can be seen in the division of labor between man and woman. For example, men are responsible for farm-related tasks, physically heavy jobs, and external relations. Women are responsible for household tasks, gardening, care of domestic animals, and childcare. It is considered as a shame if men do "women's work" (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982c; Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992; see Ortaylı, 2002, for a comprehensive monograph for family relations and role of family members).

In addition to different work roles, men and women are considered to have different personality traits. In Sunar's (1982) study, Turkish men evaluated Turkish women as more childish, more dependent, less intelligent, more emotional, more irrational, more submissive, less straightforward, more passive, more ignorant, more honest, more industrious, and weaker than men. Gürbüz (1985) found that the BSRI items "affectionate," "cheerful," "gentle,"

"sympathetic," "soft-spoken," "eager to soothe hurt feelings," "sensitive to the needs of others," and "loyal" were equally descriptive for both sexes. Also, "independent," "aggressive," and "individualistic," which are instrumental characteristics, were undesirable for both sexes, whereas "dependency" was desirable for both sexes in Turkey. These findings support the notion of Turkey as having a "culture of relatedness."

It seems that gender stereotypes in Turkish society differ from those of Western countries. According to some studies, the content of Turkish gender stereotypes can be mostly accounted for by instrumental and expressive dimensions (Gürbüz, 1985; Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992; Sunar & Fişek, in press). Kavuncu (1987) conducted a validity and reliability study of the BSRI in Turkey. Even though test–retest reliabilities of masculinity and femininity scales were found as high as 0.89 and 0.75, respectively, the BSRI was not considered a valid instrument for men. Small sample size and a problematic criterion variable (i.e., the masculine and feminine subscales of the MMPI) were given as reasons for the lack of validity. By taking into account these concerns, Dökmen (1991) showed in her study that the BSRI is a valid instrument for measuring masculinity and femininity among both sexes. It was found that men scored higher on the BSRI masculinity scale than women did, but no significant differences between the sexes on the BSRI femininity scale were found.

In addition to the historical role of Turkey as a melting pot of Western and Islamic values, recent rapid social transition in Turkey makes it an especially interesting country in which to study gender issues. In the last decade, Turkey has gone through a period of fast urbanization, industrialization, and Westernization supported by large-scale exposure to European and North American culture through the mass media. The current candidate status of Turkey for the European Union has seemed to accelerate this movement. In addition, international and regional migration, increasing educational opportunities, the emphasis on secularism, the newly acted civil code of equal property division, the recognition of the value of housewives' unpaid labor, and the increased protection of the rights of working women might also have facilitated changes in gender roles and stereotypes. Therefore, the findings of the previous studies about gender stereotypes in Turkey may not hold any more. It is necessary to replicate these studies and upgrade the knowledge of gender stereotypes in Turkey.

METHOD

Participants

Five hundred thirty-six student volunteers participated in this study. The mean age of the male university students was 21.94 years (range = 19–33, $SD = 1.85$), and the mean age of the female university students was 21.56 years (range = 18–36, $SD = 2.42$). Only two students did not report their age.

Measures

The BSRI was developed to measure masculine, feminine, and androgynous personality styles among men and women. The original BSRI includes 60 items (20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 neutral). The scale reliability coefficients reported in the BSRI manual range from 0.75 to 0.90. In the present study, gender stereotypes were measured with the short-form of the BSRI (Bem, 1981). The masculine scale (10 items) includes characteristics that are perceived as men's characteristics (e.g., assertive, strong personality, and dominant). The feminine scale (10 items) includes characteristics that are perceived as women's characteristics (e.g., emotional, sympathetic, and understanding). The rest of the inventory (10 items) is composed of neutral items, which are perceived neither as men's nor women's characteristics (e.g., conscientious, unpredictable, and reliable). Participants assessed how well each of the 30 personality characteristics describes themselves by using a 7-point scale (1 = almost never true, 7 = almost always true). The short-form of BSRI was translated to Turkish by using the translation-back translation method.

Procedure

The data were collected in psychology courses at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. They were also offered an extra course credit point for their participation. The participants filled out the short-form of BSRI (Bem, 1981) and items related to demographic variables.

RESULTS

Factor Structure of the Short-Form of BSRI Among Turkish Men and Women

Factor analyses (principal axis factor analyses with promax rotation) were conducted on the 10 masculine and 10 feminine items separately for the men's and women's data. The neutral items from the BSRI were not included in factor analyses. We decided that there is no reason to expect that the perception of the neutral adjectives would have changed over time. The criteria used to determine the number of factors were Cattell's scree plot and parallel analysis. The results of the factor analysis for the men's data can be found in Table I and for women's data in Table II.

Both the scree plot and the parallel analysis supported the two-factor model in both women's and men's data. Oblique promax rotation was used because correlations between two factors were found, $r = 0.27$ in women's data and $r = 0.48$ in the men's data. In both data sets, the masculinity items loaded on the first factor and the femininity items loaded on the second. In the men's data, reliability coef-

ficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the masculinity and the femininity subscales were 0.80 and 0.73, respectively. In the women's data, reliability coefficients for masculinity and femininity subscales were 0.80 and 0.66, respectively. Although the alpha reliability coefficients for both the men's and women's data were lower than in original studies (Bem, 1981), they were acceptable.

Target Rotation and Agreement Coefficients

Visual comparison of the men's and women's data indicate that the BSRI has the same factor structures among male and female students. In addition to visual inspection, target rotations of the men's and women's factor matrices were carried out to test the similarity of the factor structures. Proportionality (Tucker's phi) coefficients were calculated to assess the similarity of the BSRI factor matrices found in the men's and women's data sets. Proportionality coefficient values above 0.90 indicate sufficient similarity between the factors. The values for Tucker's phi were 0.97 for the masculinity factor and 0.95 for the femininity factor. Hence, the factor structures found

Table I. Factor Structure of the BSRI Among Men

Item-total correlation	Factor loadings		Items
	Factor 1 Masculinity	Factor 2 Femininity	
.71	.84		Dominant (22)
.58	.76		Assertive (7)
.60	.63		Has leader abilities (16)
.48	.63		Willing to take risks (19)
.40	.50		Independent (4)
.53	.47		Self-sufficient (13)
.52	.43		Strong personality (10)
.30	.42		Willing to take a stand (25)
.41	.38		Defends own beliefs (1)
.36	.34		Eager to soothe hurt feelings (17)
.66		.79	Compassionate (14)
.64		.72	Affectionate (23)
.50		.63	Gentle (29)
.46		.60	Understanding (11)
.42		.54	Tender (2)
.43		.49	Loves children (26)
.28		.46	Take into account other people's feelings (8)
−.25		−.46	Aggressive (28)
.58	.34	.43	Warm (20)
.48		.33	Sympathetic (5)
Eigenvalues	5.57	2.48	
Variance accounted for (%)	27.86	12.39	

Note. Factor loadings below .30 were omitted for the sake of clarity.

Table II. Factor Structure of the BSRI Among Women

Item-total correlation	Factor loadings		Items
	Factor 1 Masculinity	Factor 2 Femininity	
.70	.81		Has leadership abilities (16)
.59	.73		Dominant (22)
.62	.69		Assertive (7)
.55	.66		Willing to take risks (19)
.46	.54		Independent (4)
.50	.52		Strong personality (10)
.44	.44		Defends own beliefs (1)
.40	.42		Self-sufficient (13)
.24	.34	−.31	Willing to take a stand (25)
.32	.32		Eager to soothe hurt feelings (17)
.60		.67	Compassionate (14)
.59		.65	Affectionate (23)
.45		.60	Gentle (29)
.46		.57	Understanding (11)
.50		.53	Sympathetic (5)
.47		.51	Warm (20)
−.36		−.51	Aggressive (28)
.30		.45	Sensitive to needs of others (8)
.32		.42	Tender (2)
.31		.36	Loves children (26)
Eigenvalues	4.79	3.12	
Variance accounted for (%)	23.98	15.63	

Note. Factor loadings below .30 were omitted for the sake of clarity.

among male and female students were virtually identical and allowed comparisons of the scores.

Sex Differences in Item and Scale Scores

The masculinity and femininity scores were compared both within (pairwise t-test) and between men and women. Men scored lower on masculinity ($M = 48.10$, $SD = 7.97$) than on femininity ($M = 53.62$, $SD = 7.84$), $t(279) = -10.46$, $p < .001$. Similarly, women scored higher on femininity ($M = 56.67$, $SD = 6.62$) than on masculinity ($M = 46.97$, $SD = 7.81$), $t(255) = -16.81$, $p < .001$. Comparisons between men and women showed no statistically significant difference on the masculinity scale of the BSRI, $t(534) = -1.67$, $p = .096$, whereas there was significant difference on the femininity scale of the BSRI, $t(534) = 4.84$, $p < .001$.

Table III lists item means and SD for men and women and the corresponding t-test values. Table III shows that significant differences were found only on two items of the masculinity scale of the BSRI (items 25 and 28), whereas a statistically significant difference between men and women was found on eight femininity items (items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 20, 23, and 26). There were also significant differences between men and women on six "neutral" items of the BSRI (items 3, 9, 15, 18, 24, and 27) (Table III).

DISCUSSION

In some previous studies, the validity of the factor structure of the short-form of the BSRI has been questioned (Wilcox & Francis, 1998). In this study, the applicability of the BSRI factor structure and gender stereotypes were investigated in a Turkish sample. The results of the present study conducted among Turkish male and female students support the original BSRI masculinity–femininity structure. Moreover, target rotation together with agreement indexes showed the factor structures found among men and women to be virtually identical. Reliability analyses showed that the internal consistencies of the femininity and masculinity scales were acceptable both among men and women, although they were lower than those reported in the original studies conducted in the USA.

It is interesting that the originally feminine item "eager to soothe hurt feelings" loaded on the

Table III. Means and *SD* of the BSRI Items Among Turkish Male and Female University Students

Items	Men Mean (*SD*)	Women Mean (*SD*)	*t* *df* = 534
Masculinity items	48.10 (7.97)	46.97 (7.81)	0.48
1. Defends own beliefs	5.74 (1.23)	5.91 (1.03)	1.78
4. Independent	5.02 (1.37)	5.00 (1.27)	−0.19
7. Assertive	4.75 (1.39)	4.83 (1.33)	0.66
10. Strong personality	5.75 (1.21)	5.87 (0.99)	1.30
13. Self-sufficient	5.54 (1.08)	5.46 (1.06)	−0.78
16. Has leader abilities	4.99 (1.56)	4.87 (1.50)	−0.89
19. Willing to take risks	5.00 (1.55)	4.75 (1.53)	−1.84
22. Dominant	4.60 (1.43)	4.39 (1.50)	−1.60
25. Willing to take a stand	4.31 (1.64)	3.78 (1.70)	−3.66[c]
28. Aggressive	2.43 (1.43)	2.10 (1.37)	−2.68[c]
Femininity items	53.62 (7.84)	56.67 (6.62)	4.07[c]
2. Tender	5.23 (1.39)	5.87 (1.02)	6.03[c]
5. Sympathetic	5.03 (1.28)	5.41 (1.11)	3.66[c]
8. Sensitive to needs of others	5.49 (1.35)	5.97 (1.08)	4.44[c]
11. Understanding	5.76 (1.05)	5.96 (0.99)	2.23[a]
14. Compassionate	5.55 (1.20)	5.89 (0.99)	3.46[c]
17. Eager to soothe hurt feelings	5.15 (1.41)	5.15 (1.47)	−0.03
20. Warm	5.40 (1.30)	5.63 (1.21)	2.17[a]
23. Affectionate	5.28 (1.21)	5.69 (1.12)	4.08[c]
26. Loves children	5.38 (1.61)	5.66 (1.60)	1.98[a]
29. Gentle	5.35 (1.13)	5.46 (1.12)	1.14
"Neutral" items			
3. Conscientious	5.86 (1.23)	6.33 (0.73)	5.66[c]
6. Unpredictable	3.84 (1.67)	3.73 (1.68)	−0.75
9. Reliable	6.15 (0.97)	6.32 (0.76)	2.33[a]
12. Jealous	4.29 (1.76)	4.45 (1.77)	1.06
15. Sincere	5.84 (1.03)	6.21 (0.85)	4.51[c]
18. Secretive	5.92 (1.27)	6.15 (1.06)	2.24[a]
21. Adaptable	5.64 (1.22)	5.79 (1.14)	1.47
24. Conceited	3.33 (1.70)	2.92 (1.54)	−2.89[b]
27. Tactful	2.32 (1.30)	2.03 (1.26)	−2.59[b]
30. Conventional	4.49 (1.65)	4.34 (1.68)	−1.10

[a]$p < .05$.
[b]$p < .01$.
[c]$p < .001$.

masculine factor both in the men's and women's data sets. The masculine item "aggressive" had a strong negative loading in the femininity factor in both data sets but was not related to masculinity. These findings might indicate that, among Turkish university students, an ideal man is expected to stay calm in troublesome situations without showing his aggressive urges. According to a study conducted in Turkey by Fişek (1994), women are allowed to express their negative feelings more easily than men, whereas men are expected to "be strong" and provide emotional support when needed. Türk-Smith, Tevrüz, Artan, Smith, and Christopher (2000) summarized several studies about Turkish students' definition of an "ideal person" or a "good person."

They found that the most important characteristics related to being a "good person" in Turkey were "self-sacrificing" and "non-egoistic." Although Türk-Smith et al. (2000) did not investigate the characteristics of an "ideal person" separately for men and women, it seems that Turkish men are expected to be self-sacrificing and able to control their feelings in a difficult situation. "Aggressiveness" is still undesirable for both sexes (Gürbüz, 1985), and open displays of anger, either toward the parents or other authority figures, such as teachers, are not tolerated (Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992; Sever, 1985; Sunar, 2002; Sunar & Fişek, in press). On the other hand, some characteristics, which were earlier reported desirable for both sexes (i.e., affectionate, sympathetic, and

sensitive to needs of others) were feminine characteristics in the present study.

One of the most striking findings of the present study is that some instrumental characteristics (i.e., "independent," "assertive," "strong personality," "has leadership abilities," "willing to take risks," "dominant," "self-sufficient," "defends own beliefs") are now desirable for both sexes. This result might reflect the socialization process and change in values. In the past, a woman's social status derived from her husband, number of children, and old age. Nowadays, success outside home seems to be an important source of social status (Ortaylı, 2002). Sunar (2002) found that although there are important areas of continuity between traditional and modern families, there are important differences as well. All three generations showed in her study a trend of increasing encouragement of emotional expression and independence for their children. As urban families endorse more "psychological" values (e.g., a loving relationship between parents and children) and the instrumental value of the children as labor force or as a carrier of family's name to new generations decrease, the importance of individual success and achievement increases (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996; Sunar, 2002; Sunar & Fişek, in press). It seems that these new emphases will help to preserve the nature of Turkish culture as a "culture of relatedness" even as the society Westernizes in other ways.

Both men and women scored higher on femininity than on masculinity. Comparisons between men and women showed, however, that women scored higher on femininity than men, whereas no differences between the sexes were found on masculinity scores. In previous studies conducted among Turkish university students about 10 years ago, men scored higher on the BSRI masculinity scale than women (Dökmen, 1991). Hence, it seems that Turkish female students have adopted a more masculine gender role within the last 10 years. This change in feminine and masculine traits seems to be consistent with Twenge's (1997) meta-analysis results, which indicated that women's self-ratings on masculinity have been increasing and gender differences on masculinity have been decreasing over time. Cultural change in Turkey seems to be the most possible explanation for the change in a woman's gender roles. Changes in legal rights for women (e.g., women's marital rights and rights in divorce), expanded educational opportunities and the rapidly increasing number of female students at universities, urbanization, and new values might have influenced the traditional structure of the gender roles. In addition to these social changes, the masculinity of Turkish culture may require successful and work-oriented women to show masculine traits (e.g., assertiveness) in addition to traditional feminine traits. Hence, modern Turkish women are expected to endorse both masculine and feminine characteristics, i.e., androgyny. Modern Turkish women are expected to be more flexible, more adaptable, and more free to be themselves in response to various environmental situations.

In addition, six of the neutral items that Bem selected for the short-form of the BSRI showed significant differences between men and women. This finding is in line with earlier results that gender-neutral BSRI items actually are not neutral in every culture (Eller & Dodder, 1989; Lara-Cantu & Suzan-Reed, 1988). As the primary focus of the present study was masculinity and femininity, the question about the "neutral" items of the BSRI remains open. More research is needed to clarify the role of these filler items on BSRI.

The present study has some methodological limitations that should be taken into account. The sample of the study included only students at the Middle East Technical University (METU), which limits the generalizability of the results. METU is one of the most respected universities in Turkey, and only approximately 1% of all applicants are accepted to our undergraduate programs. Also, the language of instruction in METU is English, and it is possible that Western values are more dominant in METU than in other universities in Turkey. Hence, it is very likely that the general public has a more traditional view of gender roles than do our university students. In the future, more research and different samples are needed before the BSRI can be applied with less-educated and rural populations in Turkey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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