Development and Validation of the Gender Appreciation Scale

Do men and women have definitely differences? Rigid traditional thinking is that men should work outside, bear family's burden, be tough and independent. On the other hand, women should work at home, take care children, be dependent and weak. As a result of traditional and cultural implications, gender stereotype, i.e. beliefs and attitudes about traits, characteristics and activities appropriate to men or women, restricts the development of one's gender identity.

People may think that men and women have differences in personality. In the early 70s, Bem (1974), as a pioneer developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), which was a measurement of gender role orientation. The BSRI measured the extent a person would be influenced by one's gender roles and introduced the idea of androgynous. Sixty personality characteristics were divided equally into three fields: namely masculine, such as acts as a leader, competitive and willing to take a stand; feminine, such as affectionate, warm and tender; and neutral, such as reliable, helpful and moody. He indicated that high scores on both masculinity and femininity were classified as androgynous, and low scores on both masculinity and femininity were categorized as undifferentiated. Besides, people were classified as feminine if they got high scores on femininity and low scores on masculinity. Conversely, those who got high scores on masculinity and low scores on femininity were grouped into masculine.

No doubt that gender have emotional differences to a large extent both support role and awareness level. Women would display more emotional awareness than men by using emotional language to represent their own and other's emotional experience (Barrett, Lane, Sechrest and Schwartz, 2000). Hence, many people only accept women cry and express their emotion in public rather than men since men should maintain tough and strong images, but women are always protected by men. Besides, both men and women were more willing to seek support from females rather than males in emotional distressing conditions and substantial consensus concerning was the most sensitive and effective comforting strategies among both (Kunkel and Burleson, 1999). Thus, women play important role in relieving burden and supporting needy. Evidence shown that girls cared more about their work and took it more seriously and boys, on the other hand, boys worked less hard and more easily distracted from the task they do. Boys and girls thought boys were good at science naturally (Warrington, Younger and Willianms, 2000), boy's attitude fit to the masculine personality, analytical, suggested by Bem.

Stier and Lewin-Epstein (2000) studied the urban adult Jewish population in Israel.

Results showed that though females dominate some of the household activities e.g. laundry and males dominate others e.g. home repairs, husbands only share rather than bear the responsibility for shopping and caring. Besides, it was reported that woman's part time employment is much unequal since they suffer from a dual roles, including in the labour market and in the family. Study suggested that men thought women should put family as the first priority, look after sons and daughters and support husband and men, themselves, should make a living for family through occupations. Conversely, women thought that they should have balanced development, it shown the traditional impact was more tight to men than to women (Chan and Leung, 2000). In reality, women work outside and men look after family still unacceptable to most people, especially if it happens on men.

In communication pattern, dating couples employ a mainly female-demand/male-withdraw pattern especially during difficult discussions (Vogel, Wester and Heesacker, 1999). Since women tend to be more expressive and relationship focused, but men tend to be more passive and problem-solving focused. Women will present more positive expressions when watching happy films and exhibit negative expressions in response to sad and fear films than men. Therefore, men were labeled as internalizers and women were externalizers (Kring and Gordon, 1998). In terms of interaction style and influence, the chance that men disagree with men is more often than with women and women were more dramatic with women than with men. Also, women were more easily influenced than men (Carli, 1989). In dating pattern, there is a close relationship between sex roles and romantic attitude (Moore, Kennedy, Furlonger and Evers, 1999). They pinpointed that women with high scores in feminine items were more romantic than those low scores in feminine items. However, there is no significant relationship between sex and romantic attitudes.   Both women and men thought women largely fit to some of the feminine personalities, like sensitive to the needs of others, eager to soothe hurt feelings, understanding, compassionate as well as sympathetic, as proposed in the BSRI. To differentiate from gender stereotype, gender wise refers to the gender awareness about these gender differences, and nevertheless have a positive thinking towards such differences by men, generally thought that women are more supportive and aware about people's emotion.

Since gender attitudes can reflect whether the level of gender stereotype or gender wise are dominated in society, common gender attitudes towards different areas will be examined. This explores in-depth knowledge about gender attitudes in a number of life domains such as media, family, work and courtship relationship.

Surely, gender stereotype will continue to exist if we over-emphasize gender roles by using restrictive horizons to any sex resulted from traditional and cultural development. Due to many conventions as posed by gender stereotypes, which restrict gender role development and further increase gender inequality in society.

To accomplish gender wise in stead of gender stereotype, Pitta (Pioneer Development Resources, Inc.), proposed that people could achieve gender wise by several principles. These include respecting each other's difference, change only yourself rather than change the other, ask better than wait for what you want and need in the relationship, learn partner's strengths, express (for man) yourself by imitating your wife's or girlfriend's style of communication and learn (for women) to deal with issues in practical and functional ways as their husband or boyfriend dealing with problems.

It is likely that being gender stereotyped or gender wise constitutes two different pictures in courtship relationship, since the former builds up an unequal and unhealthy communication pattern and further pave the way to dating problems. In order to achieve healthy and harmony relationships, different genders should have mutual respect, shared responsibility, mutual honesty and accountability for behavior, mutual trust and support, shared safety and comfort, economic partnership, responsible parenting (when children are involved) and shared commitment to and for the relationship (University of Nebraska-Lincoln).

As within a courtship relationship, dating violence, which include all forms of verbal, physical, and/or sexual abuse of one partner by the other in a dating relationship, has become more and more common. Reported by Price, Byers and Sears (University of New Brunswick), more girls than boys encountered dating violence in terms of psychological, physical and sexual abuse though the majority of girls and boys did not accept dating violence. People may think that gender equality will constitute a negative relationship with physical abuse. However, Austin and Kim (2000) found that there was a positive relationship between gender equality and rape as men wanted to use it to keep women as a subordinate group. The situation involves much more complex interactions between psychological, sociological and environmental contexts.

The present study examines the relationship between gender identity, gender awareness in affecting a high developmental attribute of gender appreciation. In an effort to establish a valid assessment tool and a theoretically proven conceptual framework of gender appreciation, dating power control and dating aggression are also explored as possible outcomes of gender-role related behaviours.

As the new scale of gender appreciation is concerned, items were constructed to measure the degree of gender co-operation, flexibility and appreciation. Four aspects are created qualitatively, containing Harmony, Discord, Inequality and Flexibility and each of them have four statements. A four-point Likert scale was used, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4). In the Harmony domain, the statements shown that how gender communicate harmoniously and positively e.g. "in order to achieve harmony and peace communication, gender should pay attention to their differences". In terms of Discord, the statements described that misunderstanding among gender will block smooth communication e.g. "it is not as smooth as working with the same sex compared working with the opposite sex through learning processes". In the Inequality domain, the statements illustrated that sexual inequality exists in society and family due to different gender roles e.g. "on account of different roles, it is difficult for men and women to reach equal status in family". In terms of Flexibility, the statement examined that gender grasp flexible communication skills and lifestyles in society e.g. "we need to put away gender disparity bias before replying gender roles problems in society". Likert 4-point scale was be used by ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4).

Nine Hundred and ten questionnaires were collected from a random sample of form three or above students from eight secondary schools and all of them are valid. The sample is represented by a higher proportion (79%) of form 3 to form 5 students as compared to upper form (F. 6 and F. 7) students and a slightly higher number of female students (56%). Over half (64%) students aged 14 to 16 and the rest are mostly 17 to 20 of age. As religious preference is concerned, 52% respondents have no specific preference, 37% are either protestants or catholic and the remaining have Buddhist and ancestor-worshipers or others.

Overall, 24% of respondents were classified under the undifferentiated group, 17% belonged to the masculinity group, 22% belonged to the femininity group, and 38% was classified as the androgynous group. Distribution of gender grouping was very different for the male and female respondents. A comparative level of undifferentiated groups (25% and 22%) was found in the two gender groups. As expected, a higher proportions of masculinity (19%) to femininity (14%) was found in the male gender group, as compared to a higher proportion of femininity (28%) to masculinity (14%) in the female gender group. The proportion of androgynous was higher in the male gender group (42%) than in the female counterparts (35%).

Results from factor analysis and test of internal consistency demonstrate the sufficient

construct validity and fair psychometric property of the gender appreciation scale. A four-factor model (Harmony, Discord, Inequality, and Flexibility) was built with fair reliabilities (internal consistencies) both regarding to individual factors and the scale as a whole. The internal and external validity of this scale has been demonstrated as a major component of the gender appreciation scale. The four aspects of gender appreciation indicate the general communication patterns and lifestyles in relating to the opposite genders in a number of life domains. External validity of the gender appreciation scale can be established from the relevance of gender appreciation to awareness of gender stereotypes and courtship behavioural outcomes.

The Harmony and the Discord domains represented the majority (over two-third) of the global construct, apart from the Inequality and the Flexibility domains. The overall relationship of gender appreciation and gender awareness can be demonstrated in which the Discord and the Inequality domains have reverse relationship, but not the positive domains. This indicated that the negative domains of the global construct of gender appreciation are very much related to the stereotypic gender roles as illustrated in a number of life domains such as family, at work, and the society. However, gender appreciation involve more than breaking through these gender stereotypic views and also related to the acceptance of characteristic intrinsic to one's gender role, the appreciation of qualities of different genders and willingness to collaborate with others.

To examine meaning of each of the domains of the global construct of the gender appreciation scale, items content are related to specific aspects of a number of life domains. The Harmony sub-scale contends the successful collaboration and appreciation of the strength and characteristics of different genders in communication pattern, learning process, family and the society. The Flexibility sub-scale contends the openness and willingness to breaking through stereotypes, overcoming the differences, and being flexible in communication, learning process, family and the society. On the other hand, the Discord sub-scale contends the difficulties as a result of differences, in communication and cooperation of different genders in the school learning process. Lastly, the Inequality sub-scale contends the unequal power of the different genders as a result of differences and stereotypic gender roles in the family and the society. Thus, the Harmony and the Flexibility domains are attributes that facilitate the collaboration and appreciation of different genders, while the Discord and Inequality domains are attributes that hinder the development of gender appreciation.

As a first step to understand the multitude of gender traits, it is important to recognize that assessment of gender traits in differentiating the gender identity of students, rather

than using the male and female difference or the simple dichotomous masculine and feminine classification. Results showed that male and female students have a very different proportion of gender identity according to the multi-dimensional four-groups classification of masculinity and femininity. One interesting result indicated the male gender group has a less clear differentiation in terms of the predominance of masculinity to femininity trait, and a significant higher proportion of androgynous group. Consistent with earlier research (Katsurada and Sugihara, 1999), this may reflect the change of social role played by male and female gender. Male students are expecting to play more feminine role and vice versa as the gender role in the society evolves towards gender equality.

Results of the comparisons of the gender appreciation in relation to the four categories of gender identity showed that the androgynous group exhibited the highest scores in the Harmony and Flexibility domains and lowest scores in the Discord and the Inequality domains. On the other hand, the reverse trends of scores were found in the undifferentiated group, where both masculinity and femininity traits are low. The gender appreciation scores of the masculinity and the femininity groups are somewhat at intermediate levels among the undifferentiated group and the androgynous group. As results form the gender acceptance is concerned, it is similar to the pattern observed regarding to the positive domains of gender appreciation.

Taken together, individuals with high androgynous trait are generally open to new experience in relating to people of the opposite gender, without being restricted by traditional gender stereotypes. They adapt to the different communication pattern, able to cooperate with different genders and generally appreciate the strengths and treasure the corporate success as a result of the cross-gender collaborations in a number of life domains such as school, family and the society. In other words, androgynous individuals find less difficulty in communication and collaborate with the people of different genders, less prone to gender stereotypes and report less unequal power or inequality of genders in family and the society. As an individual, one is more acceptable of the gender traits being possessed and able to express one's character and strength naturally. Gender traits are generally viewed as gift and ways to foster development rather than a limit.

In examining the external validity, attempts were made in trying to establish relationships between gender appreciation with other external measures such as gender awareness and elements of courtship behaviour. Negative relations existed between the overall level of gender awareness and negative domains of gender appreciation (Discord and Inequality). Results reflected the awareness of gender stereotype in a number of life

domains such as family role, work, society and the general gender roles. This is consistent with suggestion that the Discord and the Inequality domains are more related to the stereotypic elements of gender role. On the other hand, the Harmony and Flexibility domains of gender appreciation were largely related to the gender awareness in the family setting. These findings showed that adolescents may have first hand exposures of gender appreciation attitudes and related skills in the family context, while negative elements (Discord and Inequality) that hinder successful and harmonious gender relationships may be reinforced by the stereotypic views and encounters which widely existed in the majority of life contexts.

The predictive validity of gender awareness and gender appreciation was not well established in the present study. Previous suggestions and study hypothesized that higher gender awareness and gender appreciation are predictive of subsequent gender-role related outcome behaviours such as dating power control and aggression. However, results showed that these hypothetical relationships were generally weak. A very small portion of the dating control and aggressive behaviour was explained by the overall gender awareness and insignificant relations were found for the various gender appreciation factors.

These findings were somewhat unexpected because negative domains of courtship relationship such as power imbalance and aggression are partly due to gender stereotypes of roles and poor communications between dating partners. Stereotypic views as reflected by the weakness of gender awareness and negative Discord and Inequality attitudes are likely to be reported by individuals with negative dating relationship.

This inadequacy of the hypothetical gender appreciation model in explaining the outcome behaviour may be related to the fact that some of the negative attitudes and negative behaviours of gender stereotype, dating control and aggression were under reported in the present study. This is a result of the social desirability such that individuals are less likely to report thoughts or behaviours that are less acceptable or approved by others. However, the social desirability issue was not examined and it was not sure how much influence this had posed in the present study.

The pioneer nature of the project in exploring future possibility of gender education which lay theoretical consideration of the conceptual models and applications of previous gender theories. It is important that gender appreciation may tap on both negative factors that possibly hinder, or positive factors that foster the successful

development of gender traits and the wholistic leadership. To discuss about the limitations of the study, a few short-comings of the conceptual frame and research design need to be addressed. The multi-dimensional nature of gender appreciation needs a lot of further studies to establish the convergent and predictive validity. The scarcity of research on positive elements of gender development, and behavioural outcome of gender appreciation have limited the possibility of rigorous external criterion for validation. Furthermore, the short period of time of scale development means predictive criterion using prospective study almost impossible. As sampling is concerned, the school-based sampling mainly covers middle and upper secondary forms students. This may be unable to represent the general youth of younger age from the population or marginal youth that are drop-outs from formal schools.

Future research may extend the theoretical model by testing gender appreciation in different test groups or using different external measures to map various components of the test profile. Other measures such as adolescent sexual behaviours, sex harassment or bullying, sex discrimination, which based on negative outcomes of gender –related behaviours may be used for possible testing. On the other hand, positive elements such as communication patterns, collaboration relationship and leadership styles may extend the gender appreciation model in building positive traits in relating the global concept of gender appreciation.

The advancement of gender educational model and assessment of gender appreciation is crucial both to the continuous development of research relating to gender theory and effort in nurturing youth's gender development and appreciation competency through gender and psychosexual education. In order to deliver effective gender education, the availability of proper assessment scale allows the evaluation of initiatives and outcome effectiveness of gender leadership programmes.