

GENDER DIFFERENCES OF EXPRESSING HUMAN AGGRESSIVENESS

Sevara Ravshan qizi Ungalova

*2nd year student of Master's degree, National university of
Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek*

ABSTRACT

Males and females communicate with others in different manners; thus, the way they communicate interpersonally during disputes also differs. Even though there is extensive research comparing male and female communication, no study distinguishes one communication style more effective than the other. The research highlights that males and females communicate differently, but at this point they are seen as equitable communication styles. The literature on male and female manners of interaction support the claim that men and women communicate in different ways.

Keywords: communication, social role, emotional connections, relationship, conversation, feelings.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Мужчины и женщины общаются с другими людьми по-разному; таким образом, способ их общения в межличностных спорах также различается. Несмотря на обширные исследования, сравнивающие мужское и женское общение, ни одно из них не выделяет один стиль общения как более эффективный, чем другой. Исследования подчеркивают, что мужчины и женщины общаются по-разному, но на данном этапе оба стиля общения считаются равноправными. Литература о манерах взаимодействия мужчин и женщин поддерживает утверждение, что мужчины и женщины общаются по-разному.

Ключевые слова: общение, социальная роль, эмоциональные связи, отношения, разговор, чувства.

INTRODUCTION

In the book, *Men are From Mars and Women are From Venus*, John Gray wrote: Men mistakenly expect women to think, communicate, and react the way men do; women mistakenly expect men to feel, communicate, and respond the way women do. We have forgotten that men and women are supposed to be different. As a result our relationships are filled with unnecessary friction and conflict. The saying “men are from Mars and women are from Venus” correctly denotes that males and females are different. Men and women are from the same planet, but often communication between the sexes, called cross-sex communication, displays otherwise.

Communication is a process of sharing information between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. The manner in which people

communicate often depends on their sex which is either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species that are distinguished as either male or female highly reflecting the basis of reproductive organs and structures. For the purposes of this discussion, the primary difference between the male and female sexes will be considered physiological (e.g., reproductive organs, hormonal differences, etc.). Whether rooted in physiology (nature) or environment (nurture), it is also acknowledged that both sexes behave in distinct ways that are the basis of common stereotypes and observations. These sex differences in communication often are revealed during conflict, or can even serve as a catalyst for conflict.

Communication is an element of everyday life and often conflict is difficult or impossible to avoid. Conflict is often created when people share different beliefs about a specific issue. Many factors shape personal beliefs—such as a person’s sex can play an influential role in their opinions and, consequently, their course of action. Wood explains that men and women grow in different gender speech communities and, thus, develop different communication styles. Wood stated, “a speech community exists when people share understandings about goals of communication, strategies for enacting those goals, and ways of interpreting communication”. Males grow up learning that the following elements are essential to masculinity: do not be female, be successful, be aggressive, be sexual, be self-reliant, embody and transcend traditional views of masculinity. Inversely, females learn that appearance is important, showing sensitivity and care is a must, negative treatment by others is to be expected, superwoman abilities are anticipated, and there is no single meaning of feminine. Wood believes that “through communication with others, we come to understand how society defines masculinity and femininity”.

According to Wood’s research, gender roles are the source of differential communication between males and females. In her article entitled “Feminist Standpoint Theory and Muted Group Theory”, Wood introduced the theory of Feminist Standpoint. This theory claims that because women are repressed in society, their behaviors differ from those of men. According to this theory, “patriarchy naturalizes conventional male and female divisions, making it seem natural, right, unremarkable that women are subordinate to men”.

Wood discussed the verbal communication roots of males and females and focused on the idea that “language is a primary means by which we express our gendered identities”. Our communication styles are a product of the speech communities we were socialized into as children.

According to Wood, boys’ games are competitive, have clear goals, involve physically rough play, and are organized by rules and roles that specify who does what and how to play, while girls’ games lack the use of rules and guidelines and rather focus on communicating more intimately). Boys’ games involve participation in large groups with less one-on-one communication, while girls participate in small

groups focusing on talking one- on one. Wood also discussed the characteristics of feminine speech as well as those of masculine speech. The most important aspects of female communication revolve around the establishment and maintenance of relationships with others. Other feminine communication styles include establishing equality, supporting others, promoting participation, responsiveness, being personal and disclosing information, and tentativeness. While females are concentrated on learning about their communication partners, masculine speech is geared more toward accomplishing concrete goals, exertion of control, perseverance of independence, entertaining, and enhancing status. Men use communication to develop a higher status among peers by accomplishing instrumental objectives, communicating on command, being direct and assertive, abstractness, and no emotional response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Thune, Manderscheid, and Silbergeld sex-roles are a cause of differences existing between male and female behaviors. They argue that a second model, called status-role, is also assumed to be the cause of differences in male and female communication. This status-role explanation “attributes the observed variation to the differential hierarchical status of males and females”. The researchers also mentioned the idea that in mixed sex interactions, females “assume a socioemotional or expressive role, and males, a task or instrumental role”. After studying two different groups of mixed sex interactions (one with teachers and the other with couples), the findings imply that “male-female differentials in expressive and instrumental behavior were consistent with the status-role rather than the sex-role explanation”.

In “Sex Differences in Social Behavior,” J. Archer compares the ways in which sex differences in social attributes are explained by the social role theory versus the Darwinian perspective. Archer’s article also mentions the idea of male and female behaviors being formed by society: “...the psychological explanations were often regarded as implying that the two sexes possessed natural abilities fitting them for traditional roles, whereas the content for socialization was viewed as arising from sociohistorical forces”. Archer continues to discuss the idea that “sex differences in social behavior are viewed as having arisen historically from the societal position of women and men...” . Archer explains that since women are regarded as inferior a difference in communication depending on sex, referred to as Social Role Theory, often occurs.

Wood, Thune, Manderscheid, Silbergeld, and Archer all suggest that childhood interaction, sex and status roles, and society in general dictate the way a male will communicate in comparison to a female. As children, males and females interact by different means, and it serves a different purpose. Thune et al. affirms male communication to be geared toward instrumental ends, while females communicate for emotional connections with others. These elements derive from Archer’s proposal

that society and the positions males and females hold dictate the behaviors of males and females.

The roles which males and females enact in their lives are reflected in the ways they carry themselves, including their method of interaction. Wood discusses the characteristics of feminine speech as well as those of masculine speech. The main element existing in the communication ideals of most women is that of establishing and maintaining relationships with others. This seems to be the most popular way to define the feminine use of interaction. Wood labels talk as “the essence of relationships” and the use of language as a means to “foster connections, support, closeness, and understanding”. Wood claims that women value the idea of establishing equality while communicating with others by “achieving symmetry” through phrases such as “I’ve felt just like that”. Females, according to Wood, are also believers of demonstrating support by expressing emotions that show understanding of another’s feelings. Women are also known for the use of intensive adverbs to stress their feelings, such as “that’s really exciting”. According to Wood, females also “sustain conversation by inviting others to speak and by prompting them to elaborate their ideas” in a speech style known as “maintenance work”. Wood says that females express attentiveness by being responsive in the conversation. Women are personal in their interactions and use concrete styles of communication that “cultivate a personal tone, and they facilitate feelings of closeness by connecting communicators’ lives”. Conversations continue on and on with women because they use what Wood describes as “tentativeness” to “leave the door open for others to respond and express their opinions”.

Females are always worrying about how the other person will feel during their interaction, while males typically care only about their social status. According to Wood, “masculine speech communities tend to regard talk as a way to accomplish concrete goals, exert control, preserve independence, entertain, and enhance status”. The word “instrumentality” is used in Wood’s explanation of masculine speech as a means to “accomplish instrumental objectives”, in other words, make their intelligence known. Men have been found to interrupt each other in conversations more frequently and thus are noted for conversation command and speaking for longer lengths of time. Though they may talk for a longer amount of time, Wood says that “masculine speech tends to be direct and assertive”. Compared to feminine speech, masculine speech also tends to be more abstract, as well as less emotionally responsive, than feminine interactions. While Wood points out the differences that exist between feminine and masculine speech patterns, Holmstrom interprets the communication values of men and women based on whom they are interacting with, whether it be someone of the same or the opposite sex. Holmstrom’s research found that “women’s greater value for affectively oriented skills in both same-sex and cross-sex friendships is explained, in part, by their greater femininity”.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research which is based on synthetic and analytic analysis. There are some methods of investigation used in this article, such as linguistic description sociolinguistic, analysis classification theory. The research method used is library research. Data collection was complied using documentation method. The data analysis technique used is content analysis. In order to maintain the accuracy of the assessment and prevent misinformation in data analysis the library-relevant literature data is further scrutinized.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Sullivan stated that there are significant differences between the sexes in areas such as self-disclosure, anger, and nonverbal communication. According to Sullivan, “self-disclosure refers to those messages through which the person sends information about himself or herself”. Sullivan explained that males argue and communicate anger, more than females. While females are reluctant to express aggression and anger males view this as acceptable behavior and thus males engage in more aggressive interactions than women (Fehrs, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson, & Benedict, 1999; Kinney, Smith, & Donzella, 2001; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998). In Sullivan’s study of athletes, he found that “females exchanged more nonverbal messages overall, but they also displayed quite different nonverbal behaviors than males”. It was also found that male athletes were more likely to communicate anger and be confrontational. Fehrs et al. researched the manners both males and females displayed during times of anger. Their research states that women and men display anger similarly under some conditions, while other times they do not. Their research stated, “Specifically, women’s and men’s scripts for anger in heterosexual relationships were similar in situations in which the angered person chose to express anger in a positive or prosocial way”. Therefore, their research defends the idea that men and women may act differently, but depending on the situation at hand they may act in the same manner.

Research by James Averill expresses that in terms of biological differences, males of most primate species are more aggressive than the females of that species. This is conclusive in humans cross-culturally. Averill went on to say that, “men are also more prone to anger than are women”. In terms of female actions when dealing with anger Averill’s research states that females are capable of experiencing anger, but due to the history of inequities within our society they repress their feelings. According to Averill, “women’s anger, therefore, tends to be experienced and expressed in indirect and often self-defeating ways, including lethargy, depression, and so on”.

CONCLUSION

Research suggests that women differ in leadership roles from men, but nothing can attest to whether one gender is a more effective leader than the other. In the study by Sullivan, verbal and nonverbal behaviors of males and females during conflicts were observed. The author stated that, “it appears that males argue and communicate anger more than females”. According to Sullivan, the males were engaging in more aggressive interactions than the females. Sullivan’s research also states that “females exchanged more nonverbal messages than male athletes, particularly after negative game events”. In *Gendered Lives*, Wood explained that cultural codes of gender are established at an early age in life. Sullivan’s research displayed that female athletes and male athletes expressed their feelings differently during negative events. These differences in display of emotion are due to the way they were socialized by our culture. In conflict the male-female interaction differences cause a complex problem in interaction.

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