

FEMININITY IN MEN AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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ABSTRACT: Social exclusion of feminine men is an issue often overlooked where these men face struggles and backlash for being feminine. The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between femininity in men and social exclusion within social, economic, and familial dimensions. This study employed a quantitative method among 122 Malaysian men. Measurements are made with a 29 Likert-type item self-conducted online questionnaire which includes the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) as a measurement of femininity in men. The findings demonstrate a minor correlation between femininity in men and social exclusion in the economic and social dimensions. Furthermore, a negative association is shown between femininity and exclusion in the familial or affective dimension.

Keywords: Social exclusion, effeminate men, femininity

INTRODUCTION

Extensive literature had been written about gender inequality and exclusions faced by LGBT communities [1,3], however, residual groups of gender minorities are often overlooked as they may not fit conveniently into readily classifiable groups. One of these groups, namely the group of feminine or effeminate men, confronted with equally substantial inequality and exclusion, are in many instances left out of academic discourses.

According to researchers [1], effeminate men face an array of a social dilemma involving multiple levels of discrimination directed towards them in the domain of tertiary education, these acts of ostracism include mockery, harassment, criticism, and declination of opportunities. Effeminacy is even referred to in certain discourses as a "crisis" and "peril to national security" in the manner that is held in negative connotations and misconstrued [2]. When men show vulnerability, act nicer, display empathy, express sadness, exhibit modesty and proclaim themselves as feminists, they often confront many difficulties and backlash because they do not conform to masculine gender stereotypes [3]. Instances of gender nonconformity or transgression in gender-roles are often met with prejudicial, discriminatory confrontations [4]. This study intends to fill the much-required understanding of effeminate men in their confrontation of structural inequality and social exclusion, through an assessment of effeminacy (or femininity in men) and its correlation to social exclusion in multiple dimensions of social life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual definition

The paper requires a clarification of several recurring definitions that is central to the study:

Social exclusion

As a primary concern of investigation, the concept is at times equivocal, at times used synonymously with other terms that refer to forms of social inequalities such as poverty, therefore must be made precise for operational purposes. Social exclusion, in general, denotes a "non-participation in general social, cultural, economic, and political activities in society" [5]. Researchers [6] define the concept as "a 'state' in which people or groups are assumed to be 'excluded' from social systems and relationships", that exclusion being a set of "dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships". Predominant features describing the concept

emphasize an individual's extent of ability to participate in social processes of multiple dimensions, restricted by power relationships within each dimension. SEKN model of social exclusion, developed by [6], demonstrated the exclusionary process wherein interactions between dimensions of power relations engender systems of stratifications which restrict access to resources in terms of "gender, ethnicity, class, caste, ability, and age". For the aim of this research, three dimensions of social exclusion will be given focus, which is respectively social, economic, and affective dimensions.

Effeminacy

The phrase effeminate is defined as a man possessing "characteristics regarded as typical of a woman". This definition, although not enough for operational purposes, gives an idea of components of the concept, which constitutes of features associated with the feminine gender-role. Researches [5] in their effort to define the concept in scalable terms, developed the Effeminacy Scale, emphasized heavily on behavioral aspects of effeminacy, collapsing effeminacy into an array of "behavioral fragments" pertinent for evaluation, such as speech, mouth movements, hand gestures, etc. Nevertheless, previous analysis of the concept in terms of behavior, in such ways aggregating "effeminate activities" [7], does so by reinforcing pre-established gender-roles, as well as disregarding psychodynamic dimensions of effeminacy. This study uses the term "effeminate men" to refer to male individuals who actively transgress socially prescribed gender-roles, specifically who manifest qualities considered to be feminine. The term is used interchangeably with "feminine men" as they are both treated as similar constructs. The concept is therefore closely related to femininity.

Femininity and Masculinity

Femininity and masculinity are used in this paper to refer to the construct to which an individual identifies, forms one's self-concept, and manifests in both behavioral and psychological dispositions. These manifested constructs are assumed to align with gender-role stereotypes prevalent within society. According to the researcher [8], masculinity is "associated with an instrumental orientation" and femininity "associated with expressive orientation", often entail respective corpora of socially ascribed behavior and psychological dispositions. Thus, reinforcing the previous statement, femininity, and masculinity, put simply, are