

## **Influence of Marital Status and Sex Role Orientation on Women Power**

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Concept of women power and sex-role orientation has altered the traditional role of men and women. The present study aimed to examine the influence of marital status (married vs. unmarried) and sex role orientation on women power. The study was conducted on 100 married and 100 unmarried women in the age range of 20-40 years who were performing various jobs. Subjects were further split on the basis of sex role orientation. The results confirmed that married women as compared to unmarried have sufficiently more power and that sex-role orientation is found to be predictor of women power.

The increasing evidence indicates that women have stormed into possibly all challenging fields and have achieved great success there. They have proved their power in terms of merit and competence. The concept of power has traditionally been seen as alien to the domain of women and confined to men only. Not only do men see powerful women as threat to them but perhaps women themselves feel threatened by the thought of being powerful. The reason seems to be not only biological but also determined by sex-role stereotype. A concept of women power threw up a host of contradiction and inconsistencies as the sex role continues to be undefined and ambiguous. The conflict between power and sex role can be received through redefining femininity away from its traditional negative to positive view where femininity and power are not seen as synonymous. The present study is modest attempt in this direction.

### **Operational Definition of Women Power**

Need for power has been recognized as one of the most important characteristic of

human nature on which philosophers and human scientists have been differentiating. While power has been believed to be a hallmark of male and sign of masculinity, power among women have only recently received attention of social scientists. Recent literature has shown that among women, power motive interacts with sex-role conception or style of self-definition and other social roles (Steward & Winter, 1976). McClelland (1975) suggests that the traditional female role accentuates the power motivated women's concern with building up her resources in order to be powerful (rather than to act powerfully) a concern was focused particularly on the body and its discipline.

Women power can possibly be defined in terms of two dimension – attitude and belief – which are not mutually exclusive. It consists of the extent to which women express their likes and dislikes towards power behaviour as well as their belief towards social system, i.e., when, how, over whom, for what goals and with what constraints it should be exercised.

To be considered as a dimension of individual differences, power has to be defined in terms of such factors as aggression, dominance, assertiveness, self-consciousness, internal-control, leadership and so forth.

### **Women and Power**

Roles of women are changing day by day in the modern world. By and large women are altering their roles or life purposes from traditional areas to nontraditional areas that, in turn, reflects role strain and role conflict within the families and societies. Here, we are concerned how the women power is expressed by the women. Since most of the culture are governed by the "male chauvinism", women have less opportunities for expressing power or the need for power because of the fear of power or the threat from traditional roles.

Falbo and Peplau (1980) suggest that females are more likely to resort to using indirect influence strategies because they feel they do not have sufficient power to use direct strategies. They found that the influence strategies students used with intimate partners would be characterized along the dimensions of directedness and bilaterally. Females used unilateral and indirect strategies such as non-compliance, withdrawal and negative affect. If women does not use direct power, she may risk being labeled pushy or overbearing. Falbo, Hazen And Linimon (1982) have conducted an experiment where females were assigned both direct and indirect power options, females were evaluated less favourable and seen as less competent when using more direct approaches. Thus, in power positions women may not choose to wield power directly, but may accept that options rather than facing the aversive consequences associated with the use of more "masculine" behaviours.

The present study is aimed to examine the influence of marital status (married vs unmarried) and sex role orientation on women power.

### **Marital Status**

This variable has much to do with the women's attitude and belief in general. Entry into marriage is associated with reversal from one role to another in women. Keeping in view the nature of the variable it may be said that this is a changeable variable. Hence, it will definitely influence women power.

### **Sex-Role Orientation**

Sex is one of the socio-biological variables and it determines how people develop views about himself or herself or for the within sex and opposite sex individuals. Sex is linked with one's social-psychological development, identity, roles and values. Masculinity and femininity are the characteristics which are associated with the male and female gender respectively. The traits aggressiveness and dependency have been found to be associated with masculinity and femininity dimensions of sex-role/ sex differences were also found on these two traits.

Researches in the area of sex role have gone beyond the conception of traditional sex-role of masculinity and femininity. Bem (1974) altered conceptualization of masculinity and femininity to a new concept of androgyny. Consequently, masculinity and femininity are considered as separate independent dimension rather than opposite ends of a single bipolar continuum (Bem, 1974; Constantinople, 1973; Spence, Helmreich & Stappa, 1975). Bem (1974) asserted that an individual could be "both masculine and feminine, both instrumental and expressive depending upon the situational appropriateness of these various behaviours. Individuals high on both masculinity and femininity are termed androgynous (Bem, 1979) and such individuals would be expected to have maximum behavioural flexibility and adaptability, free of artificial sex-role related constraints on their behaviour and coping

repertoire, thus she hypothesized that androgyny is conducive to mental health.

### Hypotheses

Roles of married women and unmarried girls are entirely different. They occupy different social status in the family and outside the family. It is generally observed that married women have significantly greater power than unmarried girls. We thus viewed women's marriage is the important resource variable that could enhance the power structure in family or in organizational settings. Based upon these arguments, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study.

1. On women power scale married women are more expected to exhibit power than unmarried women on both attitude and belief dimensions of WPS.
2. Power is more likely to be associated with masculine women rather than androgynous and feminine women.
3. Among married women androgynous women are more likely to exhibit power than feminine and masculine and among married women power is likely to be associated with feminine.

### Method

#### Sample

100 married and 100 unmarried women in age range of 20-40 years served as subjects for the present study. Married and unmarried women were those who were performing jobs such as university / school teachers, doctors, nurses, clerks, housewives and students. Subjects were further split on the basis of sex role orientation. Married: androgynous = 29, masculine = 21, and feminine = 21; Unmarried: androgynous = 35, masculine = 10, feminine = 20.

#### Tools

**Sex-Role Inventory** : A modified version of the Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) standardized by Srivastava (1991) was used for measuring sex-role orientation. The BSRI contains 50

items that include 25 masculine traits, and 25 feminine traits on a 7-point Likert scale, subjects judge how accurately the traits characterize them. A measure of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny was then derived for each person.

1. Subjects whose scores on masculine trait were equal to median or above median were classified as masculine.
2. Subjects whose scores on feminine trait were equal to median or above median were classified as feminine.
3. if subjects score on both the dimensions i.e. on masculine trait and feminine trait were equal to or above the median they were considered as androgynous.
4. Subjects whose were below the median on both the dimensions, were rejected..

**Women Power Scale:** Our interest in the development of women power scale (WPS) has in fact been due to certain intriguing observation that we come across. Since with time the traditional perception of women is changing and awakening is taking place towards a new set of values, the typological experiences, a sense of exhilaration and vicarious achievement has given them sufficient inner strength and volition to wield their power. The fact is that now-a-days women experience a disequilibrium between her distinctive needs and intellectual expressions. The gradual transformation from traditional role model to modern masculine characteristics has poised her on the threshold of a promising career which could lead them into power elite but at the same time brings a feeling of alienation and loneliness, thus, a conscious, cognitive and rational understanding on the part of women have raised certain question: How far to conform? How to overcome the sense of loss in rebellion? And how to resolve identity crisis? These are the questions that have to be answered by exploring the extent to which a change has taken place in feeling, attitude and

belief system among women toward power. Thus, the scale is worked out to assess the dimensions of power as particularly geared for womenfolk, tapping a constellation of traits that transcends traditional sex-role boundaries.

Originally, 96 items were selected from different scales such as Mach V, Locus of Control, authoritarianism, assertiveness, self-consciousness and aggression as the predictor of power. The items were not retained as such rather than they were modified for the face-value, measures of attitudes and beliefs dimensions of power.

A factor analysis was run on data of 200 married and unmarried women for the attitude and belief dimension of the WPS. The Eigen values and percentages of total variance accounted for by the 12 unrotated factors as well as 6 rotated factors for the 'attitude' dimension is given in table 1. Similarly the Eigen values and percentages of total variances accounted for by the 12 unrotated factors as well as 4 rotated factors for the 'belief' dimensions is given in table 2. Loading of the 39 selected items on the six factors of the attitude dimension of WPS ranged from -0.30530 to 0.61976 with a mean of 0.41. Loading of 21 selected items on the four factors if the 'belief' dimension of WPS ranged from -0.37953 to 0.72868 with a mean of 0.68.

**Table 1: Attitude Dimnesion of WPS**

Loading range of 39 items on 6 factors. - 0.30530 to 0.61976 Eigen Values for 6 rotated Factors 3.93486, 2.60942, 2.26458, 2.07614, 2.02672, 1,84558 cumulative Percentage of Eigen values 0.06352, 0.10561, 0.14214, 0.17562, 0.20831, 0.23808
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**Factor-1 Assertiveness**

Variables	Factor Loadings
16	0.34082
27	-0.30922
28	-0.49725
20	0.38244
43	0.45476
44	0.48598
51	0.41026
53	0.35520

**Factor-2 Internal Control**

Variables	Factor Loadings
13	0.37008
25	0.47159
26	0.53632
32	0.61976
35	0.357230
36	0.54040
39	0.36253
41	0.32042
57	0.41093
62	0.31883

**Factor-3 Dominance**

Variables	Factor Loadings
8	-0.47982
14	-0.32776
18	-0.52202
47	-0.40344
48	0.30214

**Factor-4 Aggression**

Variables	Factor Loading
5	-0.36337
6	-0.34782
11	-0.45011
12	-0.30538
33	-0.32712
38	-0.32712
46	-0.38052

**Factor-5 Self-consciousness**

Variable	Factor Loadings
1	-0.59263
2	-0.51154
3	-0.53991
19	-0.38447
21	-0.33689

<b>Factor-6 Leadership</b>	
Variable	Factor Loadings
15	-0.32030
22	0.59909
49	0.43101
59	-0.44519

**Table 2: Belief Dimensions of WPS**  
 Loading range of 4 rotated factors  
 0.31849 to 0.72868  
 Eigen values for 4 Rotated Factors  
 -3.03806, -2.20581, 2.04594,  
 1.75133, -3.03806, -2.20581  
 Cumulative percentage of Eigen Values  
 0.08935, 0.15432, 0.21441, 0.26592

<b>Factor-1 Right to Equality/Freedom</b>	
Variables	Factor Loadings
4	0.43745
14	0.59512
28	0.36937
29	0.63136
30	0.60120
<b>Factor-2 Social Power and Altruism</b>	
Variables	Factor Loadings
5	-0.51240
11	-0.53722
13	-0.37953
22	-0.4663
24	0.3634-
<b>Factor-3 Social Acceptance</b>	
Variables	factor Loadings
1	0.72869
2	0.52972
3	0.62716
21	0.44075
<b>Factor-4 Ascendance</b>	
Variables	factor Loadings
10	0.31849
16	0.41292
19	0.50908
25	0.43508
26	0.54756
31	0.52891
32	0.52322

Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the full WPS was found to be 0.86 and on the attitude and belief dimensions of WPS the coefficient alpha were found to be 0.89 and 0.82 respectively.

**Procedure**

Women Power Scale (WPS) was administered to the subjects individually and instructions were given to them that they have to respond to each item by carefully reading each item. They were told that items reflect attitude or feelings toward women power in part one of the tool, and in part they were told that statements describes different beliefs and opinions one has about women power, and they have to respond to each item by writing the category number of the scale against each statement that represent them most.

While administering the sex-role inventory, subjects were told that different individuals have different characteristics in different degree, you are required to rate 50 personality characteristics in the following manner. If a characteristic is always true for them then mark ( " ) at always true and so on, and that there is right or wrong responses and response describe personality.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 3: Showing the mean values of Married and Unmarried subjects of Women Power Scale (WPS) on 'Attitude' and 'Belief' dimensions of WPS.**

Subjects	WPS	Attitude (WPS)	Belief (WPS)
Married	618.01	354.24	195.35
Unmarried	536.68	338.91	97.78

**Table 4: Mean values Androgynous, Masculine and Feminine subjects of Women Power Scale (WPS) on 'Attitude' and 'Belief' dimensions of WPS.**

Subjects	WPS	Attitude (WPS)	Belief (WPS)
Androgynous	439.19	240.94	129.84
Masculine	362.27	230.8	131.46
Feminine	353.23	221.4	131.83

Findings of the present study suggest that married women as compared to unmarried women have sufficiently more power. The observed F for the main effect of Factor A (marital stats) and Factor B (sex-role orientation) far exceeds the critical value of 6.81 and 4.75 respectively at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . This can be attributed to the fact that in Indian society married women possess more concrete resources such as money, status and prestige. Married women are comfortable in expressing power as they have a defined position in their families, and it has been found that power is a function of the role and position which an individual occupies (Fatma & Kureshi, 1984).

Sinha (1982) identified two dimensions of power: (a) amount of power and (b) certainty of one's capacity to influence others. It has been generally observed that married women fulfill both the conditions of power, their range of power being considerably larger than the unmarried girls in different fields, such as marriage and family, economic and social areas. As they have less social constraints, are more sure of their capacity to influence others. Married women use influence strategies with their in-laws, spouse colleagues and children.

As far as unmarried girls are concerned we saw that they have restricted boundaries to move around, they are dependent on their parents, even if they are earning, they have to follow the values of the society and family

norms. Indian society inculcates among them certain degrees of self-doubt (Nandy, 1976). Her status is determined according to perceptions and evaluations of the society (Mukherji, 1975). This feeling of scarcity and the process of social comparison has given rise to a strong need for power among unmarried girls (Sinha, 1982). They are now better realizing their power potential as indicated by the fact that they are struggling to get power through female education, greater participation in social and political activities. This reassures them of their latent capacity to influence others which has for ages been suppressed.

Results indicate that sex-role orientation is more predictive of women-power. Androgynous women express women power more than feminine women and masculine women (cf. Table 4). Androgynous women in power position may choose to wield power directly and may accept the options rather than facing the aversive consequences associated with 'feminine' and 'masculine' behaviour. Androgynous women are less dependent and conforming (Bem, 1975). The findings of the present study may also be explained in terms of androgyny theory (Bem, 1974) that androgynous person are flexible, have better coping skills and, effectively adapt across situations (Heilbrun, 1986).

Results indicate insignificant interaction effect of marital status and sex role orientation variables on the WPS. The marital status and sex-role orientation factors are independent of each other and do not exist as coherent factors for women power.

On the 'attitude' dimension of women power scale (WPS), the main effect of Factor A ( $F=4.78$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ), and the interaction of Factors A and B ( $F=3.24$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ) are significant. This finding indicates that the marital status, sex-role orientation and the interaction of both the variables produce significant differences on the attitude dimension of WPS. These results are in conformity with the tendency expressed by

unmarried and married subjects on WPS total. The reason for married women subjects being high on the attitude dimension of WPS may be that their range of authority or power is considerably larger than that of unmarried subjects, for example, married subjects get an opportunity to express power in the area of marriage and family living, and directly or indirectly in decision making. In the normative Indian society roles of married and unmarried women are clearly demarcated. Thus performing different roles, and occupying different social status. Married women have significantly greater power than unmarried girls.

As per results presented in Table 4 the mean scores of androgynous, feminine and masculine females on WPS, and on 'attitude' and 'belief' dimensions of WPS" the androgynous subjects have the highest attitude towards women power (M=240.94), followed in decreasing order by masculine subjects (M=230.8) and feminine subjects (M=221.4). ANOVA indicate significant interaction of sex-role on the 'attitude' dimension of WPS. Compared to the overall results, the profile of sex-role orientation for the attitude dimension of WPS is the same; i.e., scores of the masculine subjects lie between the androgynous and feminine subjects scores. The reason for high scores of androgynous subjects may be that they are more assertive, internally controlled, dominant, aggressive, self-conscious and leader in decision making situations and inter-personal functioning as compared to the masculine and feminine subjects. These women are aware of their talent and personal interests. Thus, they are more confident to have a life style of their own, and seem to have outlived their earlier life styles based solely on being female.

With respect to the interaction of marital status and sex-role orientation, significant interaction exists on the 'attitude' dimension of WPS suggesting that for attitude towards women power, these two factors go together.

The observed F for the main effect of Factor A and Factor B, and the interactions of factor A and B on 'belief' dimension does not exceed the critical values and so it is insignificant. This finding suggests that the variables of marital status and sex-role orientation do not at all play a vital role in producing significant differences on 'belief' dimension of WPS.

Main effects as well as the interaction of marital status and sex-role orientation on the belief dimension of WPS are insignificant. This suggests that androgynous, masculine, and feminine women either married or unmarried do not differ on the 'belief' dimension of WPS. As noted earlier, the four factors for belief dimension are 'Right to equality / Freedom', 'Social Power and altruism', 'Social acceptance' and 'Ascendance. It may be interesting to note that women in general feel these factors to be important in determining women power. This seems to be contrary to the observation that women in our society have a stereotyped image of being submissive, meek, dependent, fragile and helpless. Moreover, the ingredient of power is probably in-built in the belief system of Indian women. The only thing required is that they are given opportunities to express themselves in accordance with their genuine feelings and value orientation. It also confirms to the image of women in a changing scenario. The so called weaker sex is exploring untrodden avenues of work and pushing for greater self-fulfillment. The liberating effect of economic independence and social change is revolutionizing their lives enormously.

Thus, while concluding, we can say that the insignificant belief dimension and significant attitude dimension of WPS reveals a clear picture of changing women. They are redefining femininity and are set to change their attitude and correcting perceptions to the role characteristics and role behaviour in diverse situations.

The Indian women, now seen to have tasted blood of power and there is no go-back as conditions are becoming much favourable to her for various reasons.

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