

Poster

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Poster 10

[P-10-06] Cultural models of masculinity and femininity in Canada and in Brazil: A potential first step towards better understanding gender discrepancies in mental health.

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Cultural groups share implicit models of what it means to be a man or a woman, including beliefs about what is desirable, appropriate, or normative for each gender. These models strongly influence individuals' experiences, self-perceptions, and how their emotions and behaviors are interpreted by others, including mental health professionals. When individuals do not conform to these gender norms, they may be perceived as deviant or unhealthy, reflecting how cultural expectations shape judgments of behavior. Although extensive research has documented gender differences in the prevalence, expression, and treatment of mental health conditions, few studies have examined how culturally specific models of femininity and masculinity may contribute to these differences. Furthermore, while prior research has shown that alignment with cultural norms is associated with greater psychological well-being, cultural models of gender have yet to be explored in this context.

This study aimed to address that gap by investigating cultural models of femininity and masculinity among Canadians in Montreal ($n=35$) and Brazilians in Brasília ($n=39$). Data were collected using a free-listing method: participants acted as cultural informants responding to prompts about culturally expected (1) life goals, (2) personal qualities, and (3) accomplishments for both women and men (7 prompts each). Cultural Consensus Analysis (CCA) was used to identify shared patterns of knowledge within each group.

The results revealed significant differences in models of femininity and masculinity both within each culture (masculinity vs. femininity) and between the two cultural contexts (Canada vs. Brazil). These findings offer a culturally grounded understanding of what it means to be a man or woman in each setting and provide a foundation for future research on the impact of gender norms on mental health. The study highlights the importance of culturally informed approaches in mental health care.