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Sex role identity, rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards gender equity amongst young South African male students

Shushan, Hinor

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Abstract

This research explored the relationship between sex-role identity, rape myth acceptance and attitudes towards gender equity in a population of young South African men. A questionnaire consisting of a demographic section, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Short Form Scale, and the Gender Equitable Men Scale was administered online to 253 male students studying engineering at a Johannesburg based university. Correlation analyses were used to infer the relationships between the three variables, while a multiple regression assessed whether particular combinations of sex-role identity and attitudes towards gender equity could predict higher rape myth acceptance as well as whether particular combinations of sex-role identity and rape myth acceptance might predict more positive attitudes towards gender equity. The results showed that neither masculinity nor androgyny had any statistically significant relationship with rape myth acceptance or attitudes towards gender equity, and that there was no significant difference with regard to scale sores between those students identifying as anrogynous and those identifying as masculine. There was, however, a strong inverse relationship between rape myth acceptance and attitudes endorsing gender equity in the direction anticipated. Results showed that this relationship was also predictive in nature, illustrating that attitudes towards women in terms of their role and responsibilities was predictive of greater likelihood of acceptance of rape myths. It was evident that the young men sampled were less likely to accept rape myths and more likely to present emancipated attitudes towards intimate relationships and gendered power relations than has been found in previous related studies. In addition, it was found that differences in relation to some of the demographic charateristics of the sample, such whether they resided in an all male residence or not, were linked to significantly different scores on the rape myth and gender equity measures. These results need to be interpreted with caution given that actual differences in scores were minimal (given the limited range of scores) and that these findings were secondary to the main aims of the study.

(Keywords: sex-role identity, gender identity; masculinity, femininity, androgyny, rape myth acceptance, gender equity, sexual violence)