

**The relationship between sex roles and psychological availability**

by

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**2016**

## DECLARATION

### DECLARATION

I certify that the *minor dissertation/dissertation/thesis* submitted by me for the degree *Master's of Commerce (Industrial Psychology)* at the University of Johannesburg is my independent work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Miss Masase Eve Mageza



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## ABSTRACT

Every culture emphasises roles and behaviours that are linked to expectations about men and women respectively and that cultures are influenced by socioeconomic factors such as status and/or education. Sex roles focus on the ways of socialisation that culminate in individuals displaying more masculine, feminine, and/or androgynous roles, while psychological availability can contribute to how well people engage at work. Individuals remain in their work roles because they engage in the designated work post. These employees become cognitively observant, physically involved in individual or team tasks, and empathetically connected to others during the performance of their tasks. The objectives of this study are to identify whether the masculine and feminine sex roles that men and women display have an impact on the level of psychological availability they display at work. Furthermore, this study will aim to determine how gender (man and woman) influences the relationship between sex roles and psychological availability. For the purpose of this study, a quantitative cross-sectional approach was selected. The convenience sample of 753 employees ( $n = 753$ ) were from South African organisations in Gauteng. Participants completed The Biographical questionnaire, The Bem Sex Inventory and Psychological Availability questionnaire. The findings of this study revealed that masculine and feminine sex roles predict psychological availability. In addition, gender moderated the relationship between the feminine sex role and psychological availability. The relationship between femininity and psychological availability was stronger for women compared to men. However, gender did not impact the masculine sex role and psychological availability.

*Key Words: Masculinity, femininity, androgynous, gender, psychological availability.*

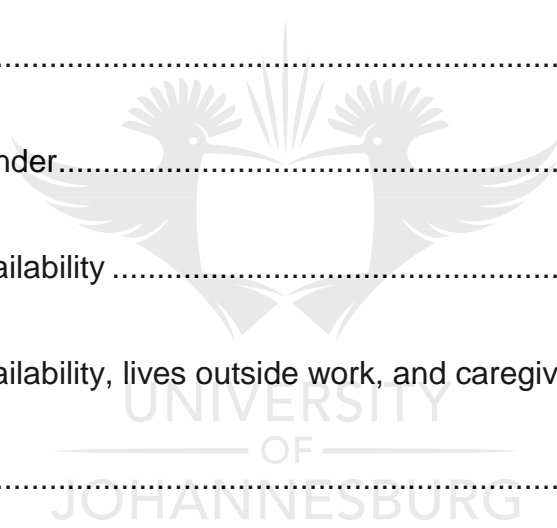
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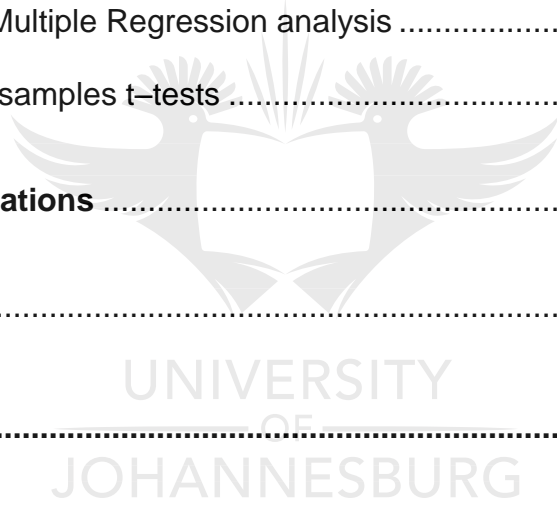


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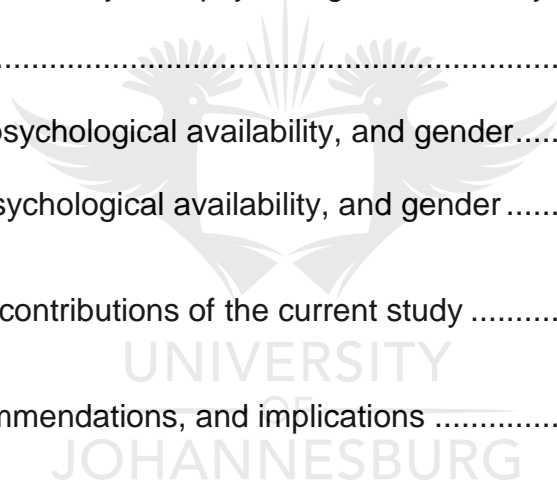


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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The study highlights the impact of sex roles on the psychological availability of employees in an organisational context. This chapter introduces the concepts of Gender Schema Theory, Sex Role Theory as well as psychological availability. The impact of sex roles on psychological availability and the moderating effects of gender (man or woman) are also explored.

### 1.2 Background

Sex roles focus on the ways of socialisation that culminate in individuals displaying more masculine, feminine, and/or androgynous roles, while psychological availability can contribute to how well people engage at work. Femininity is described as being nurturing and caring (Cheng, 1999; Erikson, 1964; Tong, 1989) whereas masculinity represents independence, forcefulness, and dominance (Bem, 1974; 1975; Hoffman & Borders, 2001). Traditionally, feminine sex roles were associated with women and masculine sex roles with men (Hoffman & Borders, 2001). Therefore, it can be suggested that sex roles are associated with being socialised either as a man or as a woman. However, masculinity or femininity may be displayed by either men or by women. This preference may be expressed even if this contradicts the societal norm. It ought to be noted that in this study the term “gender” is used to denote man or woman.

There are three factors that may influence the level of psychological availability that individuals possess in an organisation. Namely; work role insecurities, an individual's resources, and activities outside of work (Rothman & Welsh, 2013; Olivier & Rothman, 2007). With regards to social expectations and gender, the aspect of 'activities outside of work' may have dissimilar impact on the psychological availability of men and women.

The problem therefore is that due to the identification with the feminine sex role, caring and nurturing might present women with a number of activities to perform both outside (childcare, elderly care, household chores, and similar tasks) and inside the organisation, which might affect their level of psychological availability at work. When considering men and the masculine sex role, the importance placed on 'activities outside of work' may be more or less nuanced, and may therefore have less impact on their levels of psychological availability at work.

Following a thorough search for literature on psychological availability (Kahn, 1990; May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Olivier & Rothman, 2007) and sex roles (Bem, 1974; Bem & Lenney, 1976), no research could be found that directly linked these two constructs in the workplace.

### **1.3 Relevant literature**

Gender Schema Theory explains sex-typed individuals who make decisions based on gender, by choosing those personal attributes, which associate with their self-concepts and those that are disassociated from their self-concepts (Bem, 1981; Niedenthal & Beike, 1997). Masculine and feminine categories are created based on these self-concepts, which makes individuals to have a general inclination to separate

the world in such categories (Bem, 1981; 1982; Niedenthal & Beike, 1997). This finding could impact how individuals avail themselves psychologically at work.

Studies have indicated how psychological availability contributes to the ways in which people engage at work (*cf.* Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothman, 2007). In order to be psychologically available at work, individuals have to make use of physical, emotional, and psychological resources to express themselves in this context (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothman, 2007; Vinarski-Peretz, Binyamin, & Carmeli, 2011). It is the capability that individuals may have to personally engage in their work at a certain moment by making use of physical, emotional, and psychological resources provided by their organisation (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothman, 2007; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010; Vinarski-Peretz et al., 2011).

Individuals remain in their work roles owing to the engagement with these roles. These employees become cognitively observant, physically involved in individual or team tasks, and empathetically connected to others during the performance of their tasks (Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothman, 2007). Therefore, individuals base their experiences with work depending on the resources that will enable them to be fully available when performing their roles.

Elements such as individual distractions that preoccupy people in different degrees thereby providing them with few resources to engage within their work roles are associated with low psychological availability (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Rothman & Welsh, 2013; Olivier & Rothman, 2007). These interferences include caregiving roles outside of the workplace (Harris, 2010a; Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009; Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989). Women most commonly adopt caregiving

roles, as is observed on a global scale (Green & Zenisek, 1983). A similar finding is evident in the South African context (Kiaye & Singh, 2013; Kucer & Xenogiani, 2009).

The caring roles, which women play outside the organisational context, comprise those activities outside work that could potentially have an impact on the level of psychological availability at work. These impacts are noted as being owed to individuals being unable to separate themselves from those activities. Caregiving roles include activities such as caring for children, educating them, cooking, cleaning and maintaining the home, eldercare, companionship, and purchasing the resources that are needed by the family on a daily basis (DeVault, 1991; Erickson, 2005; Green & Zenisek, 1983). These roles often result in women having less time and energy to cognitively, emotionally, and physically invest in their work (Kanjere, 2008; Geldenhuys, 2011).

It may be put forward that those individuals who have a tendency to be more feminine in their behaviour, may lead these employees to being less psychologically available at work owing to being influenced by performing outside activities. Hoffman and Borders (2001) provide a study, which suggests that women are more prone to being feminine. This preference leads to women adopting more caregiving roles outside of work, which predisposes them to decreased psychological availability at work. In contrast, this finding is not the same for men, as in general they may perform less caregiving roles and other household duties outside the organisation.

The researcher will be able to see whether South African women are more feminine and South African men are more masculine as compared to the Hoffman and Borders (2001) study, by conducting an analysis on how gender (man and woman) will influence sex roles on psychological availability. Therefore, the intention is to

determine whether any one of the sex roles, or just purely the gender of an individual, is related to psychological availability.

#### **1.4 Research question**

The following research question was formulated: “What is the impact of sex roles on psychological availability of men and women in the workplace?”

#### **1.5 Objective of the study**

The objectives of this study are to identify whether the masculine and feminine sex roles that men and women display have an impact on the level of psychological availability they possess at work. Furthermore, this study will aim to determine how gender (man and woman) affects the relationship between sex roles and psychological availability. The following hypotheses were phrased from the literature:

1. Masculinity predicts psychological availability.
2. Gender moderates the relationship between masculinity and psychological availability.
3. Femininity predicts psychological availability.
4. Gender moderates the relationship between femininity and psychological availability.
5. Men and women respectively, experience masculinity, femininity and psychological availability differently.

#### **1.6 Research design**

This study will apply a cross-sectional research design through convenience sampling in order to gather large amounts of data. The measuring instruments that will



be used include the following: the Biographical Questionnaire to assess sample-specific demographic information concerning the age, race, sex, marital status, number of people under direct care, and ethnicity; the Sex Role Questionnaire by using the 30 item Bem Sex Role Inventory to assess the differences between masculine and feminine sex roles (Bem, 1974); and the Psychological Availability Questionnaire to assess the self-confidence individuals partake regarding “their ability to be physically, cognitively, and emotionally available for work during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). The data to be gathered from the demographic section, the Bem Sex Role Inventory questionnaire, and the Psychological Availability questionnaire, will be captured into a spreadsheet, and will be prepared for analysis in the SPSS statistics programme or for Microsoft Excel.

Statistical analyses will be carried out using the SPSS 22 program (SPSS Inc., 2014). Multiple regression analysis will also assist in understanding the contribution that the independent variables (masculinity and femininity) will have on the dependent variable (psychological availability). In addition, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients will be calculated to gauge the reliability of the constructs used in this study. There are ethical considerations that the researcher needs to consider. The main ethical considerations to this study include informed consent, confidentiality, and the right of the participant to withdraw from the study.

### **1.7 Layout of dissertation**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter Two presents a literature review outlining the constructs involved in the study. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of Gender Schema Theory, sex roles and gender, as well as psychological availability. An argument is formulated regarding psychological availability, sex roles,

and the caregiving role that is performed by individuals. The aim of this discussion is to determine whether such roles have an impact on the level of psychological availability in the workplace.

Chapter Three provides the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter provides details of the sample, procedure, statistical analysis, as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the results of the statistical analyses that were described in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five provides a detailed discussion of the results obtained from the data collected. Furthermore, findings will present comparisons between the results and the theoretical underpinnings of this study. In addition, the conclusions, recommendations, and limitations are also provided.

## **1.8 Summary**

Chapter One has provided a brief overview of sex roles and psychological availability, the objectives of the study as well as the structure of the dissertation. The problem statement was also discussed in this chapter. In addition, a brief summary of other chapters has been provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview literature on sex roles and psychological availability. This chapter will include a discussion on Gender Schema Theory followed by a broad discussion on sex roles. Thereafter, sex roles and gender will be examined, followed by psychological availability. Lastly, psychological availability, sex roles, and caregiver roles will be discussed identifying the different caregiving roles that are performed by individuals as well as to determine whether such roles have an impact on the level of psychological availability in the workplace.

#### 2.2 Gender Schema Theory

Bem (1981) stated that the basic organising principle of every human culture is the distinction between man and woman. Furthermore, she argues that all communities allocate adult roles on the basis of sex (man and woman). Although sex and gender have been used interchangeably in research (Bem, 1974), differences exist between these constructs (sex and gender). If gender role identity is culturally and socially constructed, then the sex of an individual is determined biologically (Woodhill & Samuels, 2003). Gender is defined as a construct linked to socialised patterns of behaving, whereas sex is defined as the biological differences that exist between men and women (Chung, 2009; Leinback, Hort, & Fagot, 1997; Weiten, 1997; Holt & Ellis, 1998; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003).

To this end, Bem argues “the process by which a society thus transmutes male and female into masculine and feminine is known as the process of sex-typing” (1981, p. 354). In such a process, a child is learning content-specific information while processing data in terms of a developing gender schema (Bem, 1981; Chung, 2009; Leinback et al., 1997). This finding accounts for the processing of information by sex-typed individuals (i.e. individuals who conform to gender stereotypes) by processing information in gender-linked terms while suggesting that non-sex-typed persons do not adhere to this process (Bem, 1981; Hoffman & Borders, 2001; Lavallee & Pelletier, 1992; Leinback et al., 1997).

Sex-typing is suggested by Gender Schema Theory to be a resultant from a willingness to convert and organise data of cultural descriptions of being male and female that is centered on society’s definitions of gender (Bem, 1981 & 1982; Gentry & Haley, 1984; Lavallee & Pelletier, 1992; Schmitt, Leclerc, & Dube-Rioux, 1988). Gender Schema Theory explains that sex-typed individuals who use gender as a criterion for determining the characteristics that are personal to such individuals, are to be associated or dissociated with their self-concepts, have a tendency to have an inclination to partition the world into masculine and feminine groupings (Bem, 1981 & 1982; Chung, 2009; Leinback et al., 1997).

This theory is essential for this study as it provides some clarification in terms of why individuals hold certain sex role characteristics. Furthermore, it also explains the processes undertaken by societies to create stereotypes about men and women. Although the above definition of how men and women are defined is acknowledged, the study defines gender as being a man and woman due to the fact that it was not possible to verify whether the participants identified with being biologically man or woman.

This finding leads to the next section in which sex roles will be discussed.

### **2.3 Sex roles**

Masculinity (assertive and dominant) and femininity (tender and warm) have long been conceptualised as bipolar ends of particular range both in psychology and in world at large; as a result, an individual ought to be either masculine or feminine, however, not both (Bem, 1975; Eysenck, 2004; Leinback et al., 1997). Conventionally, expectations of society dictate that women, conduct themselves in a feminine way, while men are expected to conduct themselves in a masculine manner (Hoffman & Borders, 2001).

Every culture emphasises roles and behaviours that are linked to expectations about men and women, respectively. Such cultures may be influenced by socioeconomic status and/or education. Both men and women could display features of both masculinity and femininity. In an organisational setting, masculinity has been associated with getting the job done, a cognitive focus, an instrumental orientation; while femininity has been related with a concern for the welfare of others, an affective focus, an expressive orientation (Bem, 1974;1975).

Research suggests that individuals might be androgynous; that is, they may have both elements of assertiveness and yielding, both masculine and feminine, and be both instrumental and expressive, subject to the context in which they operate (Anderson, 1986; Bem, 1974;1975; Hogan, 1977; Marsh & Myers, 1986; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003; Ward, 2000). For example, an environment in which a woman is required to perform a leadership role, which might entail a woman to demonstrate androgynous traits because of the stereotypes that exist such as woman being traditionally viewed as being unassertive. Additionally, Pearson and Cooks (1995)

stated that in most cases, individuals are masculine or feminine. However, some individuals are masculine as well as feminine.

The next section provides a discussion of sex roles and gender.

## **2.4 Sex roles and gender**

Gender roles are expectations that societies have of what is considered as being acceptable behaviour for each sex, i.e. the expectations of acceptable gender behaviour such as being masculine or feminine as these are attributed to men and women (Carver, Vafaei, Guerra, Freire, & Phillips, 2013; Holt & Ellis, 1998; Weiten, 1997; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003). To this end, Sherif (1982, p. 376) stated that “gender is a schema for social categorisation of individuals”. Furthermore, gender relates to societal expectations about appropriate personality characteristics for each sex (Holt & Ellis, 1998). As previously stated, sex refers to the biologically determined categories of man and woman (Borna & White, 2003).

In the society we live in, men and women will act according to the socialisation that has influenced them and that has been internalised by them. This finding influences individuals to avoid exhibiting sex behaviours that are deemed inappropriate in the community from which they originate. However, individuals that possess a masculine self-concept might constrain behaviours that are labelled as feminine, individuals that have a feminine self-concept might constrain behaviours that are labelled as masculine, while an androgynous self-concept provides the individual with the freedom to engage in both masculine and feminine behaviours (Bem, 1974; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003).

When considering Sex Role Theory, femininity is associated with needs for affiliation and nurturance while masculinity is associated with being assertive and having an instrumental orientation (Bem, 1974;1975; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003). The dissimilarity between sex and gender is significant for the reason that it enables researchers to conceptually separate the social aspects of gender from the biology of sex (Crawford, 2006). Furthermore, it is important to distinguish sex from gender in order to realise that the displayed dissimilarities between men and women might be societally enforced rather than biologically determined or inheritable (Muehlehard & Peterson, 2011).

According to Bem and Lenney (1976), people favouring the androgynous trait are considered the ideal sex role types for contemporary society, as they are able to incorporate both masculinity and femininity into their gender personality. Additionally, Woodhill and Samuels (2003) stated that androgyny is a stable identity that combines the qualities of both genders. Furthermore, Bem and Lenney (1976) argue that such individuals would have the psychological freedom to engage in any behaviour they deem appropriate at a particular moment because such individuals will have no need to limit themselves based on those traditional societal definitions of what is 'sex appropriate'.

Sex-typed individuals fail in being androgynous because they do not have sufficient skills to act out both masculine and feminine roles simultaneously. Alternatively, it may be argued that this substitute simply does not occur to these individuals. Perhaps such individuals would engage in these behaviours if they were provided the opportunities encouraging such behaviours (Bem, 1974). Bem and Lenney (1976) stated that individuals with sex-typed features find it motivationally problematic to engage in androgynous behaviour and as a result, they will avoid this

sex type. Individuals avoiding androgynous behaviours might do so as a result of wanting to adhere to the stereotypes of being masculine or feminine. Sex type plays an essential role in these stereotypes. Some non-adaptive behaviour in men and women have manifested owing to these traditional stereotypes. These behaviours include typical notions of women not being capable of being assertive and resourceful, and men not being capable of compassion or vulnerability (Woodhill & Samuels, 2003).

Although numerous studies illustrate the positive outcomes resulting from androgyny (Cheng, 1999; Green & Kendrick, 1994; Rose & Montemayor, 1994; Sawrie, Watson, & Biderman, 1991; Wubbenhorst, 1994), there exist numerous studies that point to some negative outcomes. These negative consequences of androgyny include demonstrating high levels of submissiveness and appearing temperamental (female element) along with high levels of selfishness and aggression (male element) (Marsh & Myers, 1986; Ricciardelli & Williams, 1995; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003). Additionally, androgynous individuals can possess a balance of negative (submissiveness) and/or positive (compassion) feminine and negative (selfishness) and/or positive (ambition) masculine traits, which in combination can create an undesirable androgynous gender identity (Marsh & Myers, 1986; Woodhill & Samuels, 2003).

This study found the construct of the androgynous sex role to be problematic owing to validity and reliability issues. A validation study conducted by Vafaei, Alvarado, Tomas, Muro, Martinez and Zunzunegui (2014) discovered that the androgyny sex role is viewed as most controversial. Furthermore, other studies suggest that androgyny may be a less valuable concept than previously thought (Ballard-Reisch & Elton 1992; Hoffman & Borders, 2011). Consequently, the construct



of the androgyny sex role has been excluded from this study. The following section provides literature available on psychological availability.

## **2.5 Psychological availability**

A study conducted by Kahn (1990) explored how individuals' experiences of themselves and their job tasks influenced moments of personal engagement and disengagement. It was evident that when performing work roles or tasks, individuals are concerned with whether they feel available to perform (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) stated that psychological availability assists in shaping how individuals perform their work roles. In order to be psychologically available at work, individuals have to make use of physical, emotional, and psychological resources to express themselves (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Vinarski-Peretz, Binyamin, & Carmeli, 2011).

In addition, psychological availability refers to the capability that individuals believe they have to personally engage in their work at a certain moment by making use of physical, emotional, and psychological resources provided (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothman, 2007; Vinarski-Peretz et al., 2011). Thus there exists a general link between personal engagement and psychological availability (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Rothman & Baumann, 2014; Rothman & Welsh, 2013).

Individuals keep themselves within a role at work when performing tasks because they engage in the role (Kahn, 1990). These employees become cognitively observant, physically involved in individual or team tasks, and empathetically connected to others during the performance of their tasks (Kahn, 1990; Olivier & Rothman, 2007). Individuals base their engagements to work according to whether

they have resources that will enable them to be fully available when performing their roles while at work.

All individuals have the resources such as physical, emotional, and cognitive, to carry out their tasks at work (Olivier & Rothman, 2007). However, some jobs are more physically, emotionally, and cognitively stimulating than others. Hollenbeck, Ilgen, and Crampton (1992) explain that sitting at a desk might require more physical resources than other tasks as this places strain on the back. Where individuals lack some of these resources, they might become disengaged in their roles at work (Olivier & Rothman, 2007). Some jobs might have need of much more emotional labour (i.e. working with difficult clients) than others (Sutton, 1991), other jobs might require the cognitive aspect of the job such as being a statistician.

The more meaning individuals find in their roles in an organisation, the more they will feel safe to complete the job and will therefore be more psychologically available in their work. Thus these individuals will be engaged in the performance of the task (Rothman & Welsh, 2013; Vinarski-Peretz et al., 2011). Kahn (1990) suggested three distractions that might influence psychological availability, including resources, insecurity, and outside lives (commitments outside of the organisation). The study focuses on outside lives and specifically care giving roles as it links with outside activities that men and women perform outside the organisation. In the next section, different roles of outside life will be provided.

## **2.6 Psychological availability, lives outside work, and caregiver roles**

Individuals have lives outside the organisation such as family (work-family boundaries), community memberships and so on. Such activities can preoccupy them and take their focus away from pouring their energies into their role performance at

work. Furthermore, empirical research argues that outside work activities have the potential to make individuals less psychologically available by drawing their energies away from performing their work roles (Hall & Richter, 1989; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Danner-Vlaardingerbroek, Kluwer, Van Steenberg, & Van Der Lippe, 2013; Rothman & Baumann, 2014). Traditionally, males have been seen as the breadwinners who go to work each day, pursue careers and bring monetary resources into the home, which in turn, has limited number of household duties for men (Green & Zenisek, 1983). In contrast, the female traditionally managed the household (or household related tasks) while providing the support services and emotional support for her spouse and children (Green & Zenisek, 1983; Harris, 2010a; Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon, 2009).

It can be said that women are not able to balance work and family demands (Green & Zenisek, 1983) because a women's care work is never done. Women who are mothers and caregivers spend more time on their family and other care situations after working hours (Harris, 2010a; Hoobler et al., 2009; Scarr et al., 1989). A study conducted under the OECD social, employment, and migration papers by Miranda (2011) concluded that mothers still spend more than twice as much time in childcare than do fathers globally. The longer working hours of women are due to their family duties to the household and children, which is not equally shared by men (Scarr et al., 1989). Furthermore, some of the roles that women provide are support services, managing the household, and performing all the domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning (Erickson, 2005; Coltrane, 2000; Green & Zenisek, 1983; Kanjere, 2008).

The emotions that accompany the burden of balancing care roles with career may be carried over to the workplace (Desai, Chugh, & Brief, 2014). This additional responsibility could possibly impact on women's levels of psychological availability at

work. Women's occupational paths are time and again interrupted for the reason of caring for children (Gouws & Kotze, 2007), which is not equally observed in the careers of men. Research suggests that many women are employed full-time while being required to perform the greater part of repetitive housework and childcare (Coltrane, 2000; Erickson, 2005; Shelton & John, 1996). This obligation is traditionally associated with being female and has been viewed as an expected expression of women's love for their families (cf. Hoobler et al., 2009; Hofmann & Borders, 2001; Kucer & Xenogiani, 2009).

Other studies were done to indicate the impact that work activities could potentially affect the psychological availability of parents at home. Parents' functioning is impaired by work experiences, which can generate baggage (Danner-Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2013; Rothbard, Philips, & Dumas, 2005). These experiences have an impact on the levels of psychological availability of the parents at home. The absence of mental resources makes it more problematic to pay attention diligently on the child during interactions between the parent and child (Danner-Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2013; Rothbard et al., 2005). For example, unfavourable work outcomes or an argument with a colleague at work could have a negative impact on duties after work. Duties or responsibilities at work may have an end result in physical and/or mental fatigue resulting in parents being less psychologically available when performing their childcare roles (Carlson & Frone, 2003; Danner-Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2013; Rothbard et al., 2005).

On the contrary, roles where men display care include involvement with their children by going on excursions with their children, taking the children to school or working overtime to be able to pay school fees or other financial needs (Barker & Pawlak, 2011). From this list, it can be said that some of these activities are a

combination of time inside and outside the organisation. The point is that men's contribution in performing a caring role/work has not been consistent when compared with women's augmented work outside the organisation (Budlender, 2008). It can be said that the care work that men perform might have an impact on their levels of psychological availability at work but the impact might be less as compared to that of women.

The activities of childcare and family responsibilities have been closely related with women's normal or feminine affinities and with assumptions centered on socialised culture about love and cherished family relations (DeVault, 1991; Erickson, 2005; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Women often cut down time and effort in caring work for the reason that the illusion of effortlessness is part of completing the job well (DeVault, 1991; Erickson, 2005; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Therefore, women are expected to be less psychologically available at work based on the family responsibilities and the caring roles that they play outside their work.

Against this background, evidence has shown that women are more involved in the care roles than men. In addition, the literature suggests that women have distractions that they take with them to work, which result in them not being available psychologically. The inverse also takes place in this dynamic where women take experiences and challenges from work to their homes, thereby making them less available to perform their care roles at home.

Individuals who are more nurturing are more inclined to have a greater number of care responsibilities both inside and outside of the formal organisation. May et al., (2004) report that psychological availability is negatively related to participation in activities outside the organisation. Therefore, those individuals (men or women) who

enact the feminine sex role may be less psychologically available at work. Conversely, those who enact a masculine sex role may be more psychologically available as their care activities outside the organisation are more limited than those with a more feminine sex role.

The rationale therefore for viewing gender as a moderator between masculinity and femininity respectively on psychological availability is governed by the framework of Hoffman and Borders (2011). In essence, there is a difference between the sex roles that is portrayed by gender (man and women). A study conducted by Laba and Geldenhuys (2016), pointed out that psychological availability is important to engage at work and further that gender plays a role on psychological availability and work engagement. It is therefore essential to understand the role of gender in the levels of sex roles and psychological availability at work.

The following hypotheses were phrased from the literature:

1. Masculinity predicts psychological availability.
2. Gender moderates the relationship between masculinity and psychological availability.
3. Femininity predicts psychological availability.
4. Gender moderates the relationship between femininity and psychological availability.
5. Men and women respectively, experience masculinity, femininity and psychological availability respectively differently.

## 2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, a review of the two main constructs of the study, sex roles, and psychological availability, was presented. Once the introduction was provided, Gender Schema Theory was discussed. This discussion led to a broader overview of sex roles, which then contributed to the more specific discussion of sex roles and gender. The importance of this discussion was to contextualise the differences that exist between sex roles and gender as well as to identify where these differences emanate from.

Furthermore, psychological availability was discussed. This discussion led to examining the different distractions that might influence psychological availability. The distractions that were mentioned include resources, insecurity as well as outside lives. The last aspects that were discussed include psychological availability, sex roles, and caregiver roles. It is essential to understand the different roles that individuals play outside of work that might have an impact on the level of psychological availability.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and the methodology employed in this study. The research methodology provides a description of the participants, the sampling procedure, the measuring instruments, and the procedure utilised to capture data. Finally, the statistical processes, which were performed to analyse the data, as well as ethical considerations were discussed.

#### 3.2 Research design

A quantitative research approach was used for the purpose of this research. This method involves making use of numerical indicators in order to provide significant meaning to the essence of a particular phenomenon (Neuman, 2003; Matveev, 2002). Additionally, Gravetter and Forzano (2009) state that this method allows for data to be reliably collected for analysis as well as for statistical interpretation. By making use of quantitative research, the subjectivity that is imposed on the study may be reduced (Matveev, 2002). Using quantitative research allows for data to be generalised to the population being researched (Marshall, 1996).

A cross-sectional research design was used for this study. Cross-sectional designs make use of surveys (Neuman, 2003) and data is collected from either the entire population or a subset, which are selected to assist in answering research questions of interest, at only one point in time (Rindfleisch, Malter, Ganesan, & Moorman, 2007). According to Kumar (2010), a cross-sectional study design is the most frequently used research design in the social sciences, and it is best suited for



studies that aim to determine the prevalence of a situation, phenomenon, problem, or issue, by obtaining a cross-section of the population.

A survey approach is appropriate because it produces results that are inherently statistical in nature (Neuman, 2003). In this instance, surveys were used to gather information required to answer the research questions. A cross-sectional design is useful in obtaining a snapshot of the situation or phenomenon at that moment. A quantitative research design involves defining a variable or variables in advance, and then quantifying observations of these variables (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013).

### **3.3 Research method**

#### **3.3.1 Sampling procedure and participants**

The study has both elements of explanatory and descriptive style. Explanatory because the study asks why things are the way they are and further identifies the reason for an occurrence (Neuman, 2003). Descriptive because it provides a detailed picture of the literature available and can possibly locate information that contradicts previous findings (Rindfleisch et al., 2007).

The research was conducted on a sample of individuals ( $N = 753$ ) within and around the surrounding Gauteng area in South African organisations. The questionnaires were hardcopy and various organisations across all industries from both the private and public sector were approached. Data collection took place between a period of three months. Convenience sampling was used in order to gather large amounts of information effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, convenience sampling allows for accessibility to the participants being used in a cost and time

efficient way (Marshall, 1996). Black Africans were proportionally represented in the study's data collection because this group is more representative of the South African population.

The selection criterion for participants was that they had to have a minimum of one year's work experience. The reason for this selection criterion was to ensure that the participants were aware of what the world of work entails, and that they had an opportunity to assess whether their sex roles had an impact on their level of psychological availability at work. There were no limits placed on type of work or level of work, any participant working for at least a year was invited to complete the questionnaire.

For the purpose of this research, surveys were compiled and handed out to participants and returned via personal collection. The surveys had a letter informing the participants about the nature of the study. Furthermore, the letter contained contact details of the researchers in case participants experienced any challenges when filling the questionnaire. The letter also assured the participants about the anonymity and confidentiality of the research, and by completing the survey, they gave automatic consent for the data to be used for research purposes. Participants were informed that the use of the data was for research purposes and were made aware that there was no financial benefit from completing the survey.

The demographic information consisted of the following: gender, age, race, language, marital status, qualification, whether people were self-employed or work for an organisation, current position, and number of children. This information was obtained using the questionnaire and is given in detail in Table 1 below:

Table 1

## Demographic information of the sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	328	43.6
	Women	423	56.2
	Missing	2	.3
Age	18 – 30	348	46.2
	31 – 40	213	28.3
	41 – 50	113	15
	51 – 60	60	8
	61 – 68	8	1.1
	Missing	11	1.5
Ethnicity	Black	403	53.5
	Coloured	55	7.3
	White	228	30.3
	Asian	5	.7
	Indian	48	6.4
	Other	10	1.3
	Missing	4	.5
Marital status	Single/widow/widower	234	31.1
	In a relationship	166	22
	Married/living partner	307	40.8
	Divorced	31	4.1
	Separated	10	1.3

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Missing	5	.7
Home language	Afrikaans	147	19.5
	English	201	26.7
	Xitsonga	32	4.2
	IsiNdebele	15	2
	Tshivenda	34	4.5
	IsiZulu	112	14.9
	Sesotho	27	3.6
	Setswana	49	6.5
	IsiXhosa	29	3.9
	SiSwati	7	0.9
	Sepedi	74	9.8
	Other	21	2.8
		Missing	5
Qualification	Matric	203	27
	Bachelors/Btech/Diploma	309	41
	Honours degree/Postgraduate	153	20.3
	Masters Degree	47	6.2
	Doctorate Degree	12	1.6
	Other	1	0.1
	Missing	28	3.7
Working terms	Fulltime	657	87.3
	Less than 40hrs/week	54	7.2
	Missing	42	5.6

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
I work for	Work for employer	533	70.8
	Am self-employed	62	8.2
	Missing	158	21
Current position	Trainee/Intern	96	12.7
	Junior Manager	125	16.6
	Middle Manager	121	16.1
	Senior Manager	59	7.8
	Executive	31	4.1
	Other	301	34.51
Number of children	0	350	46.5
	1	139	18.5
	2	147	19.5
	3	55	7.3
	4	20	2.7
	5 or more children	26	3.5
	Missing	11	1.5

From Table 1, A total of 753 employees participated in the research of which 328 (43.6%) were men and 423 (56.2%) were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 68 years ( $M = 33.49$ ,  $SD = 11.19$ ). The majority of the participants were from the Black ethnic group ( $n = 403$ , 53.5%) while the remainder were from the White ( $n = 228$ , 30.3%), Coloured ( $n = 55$ , 7.3%), Indian/Asian ( $n = 53$ , 7.1%), and other ( $n = 10$ , 1.3%) ethnic groups, respectively. The most spoken home language amongst the participants was English ( $n = 201$ , 26.7%) while the remainder of the participants

spoke a traditional African language ( $n = 405$ , 53.78%), and Afrikaans ( $n = 147$ , 19.5%). The majority ( $n = 350$ , 46.5%) had no children under their care, while the remainder had 1 to 5 or more children under their care.

### **3.4 Measurement instrument**

#### **3.4.1 Biographical questionnaire**

The biographical questionnaire that was designed for this study was used to assess sample-specific demographic information concerning to the age, race, gender, marital status, number of people under direct care, and ethnicity.

#### **3.4.2 The Bem Sex Role Inventory**

The sex roles were assessed by using the shortened version of the 30 item Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). The Bem Sex Role Inventory was developed by Bem (1974) with the aim of challenging the assumption of bipolarity. Bem (1974) theorised that masculinity and femininity are conceptually different constructs. According to Bem (1974), an individual who considers him or herself as a particular sex-type, is an individual who identifies their self-concept from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. The Bem Sex Role Inventory was also designed to measure androgynous personality attributes. The assumption by Bem was that individuals could take on both masculine and feminine characteristics if required to fulfil a role (Hoffman & Borders, 2001). This study did not probe androgyny as previous studies indicated problems with its use.

The original version of the BSRI contained 60 items, which used a rating measure of a seven-point Likert-type scale. The 60 items comprised as follows: 20

measured masculinity, 20 measured femininity, and 20 measured androgynous personality styles. The shortened version of the scale was developed by Ozkan and Lajunen (2005) and has been employed for this study.

The shortened version of the Bem Sex Role Inventory comprises 30 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert-type rating scale where 1 (“*Almost never true*”) and 7 (“*Almost always true*”). Of the 30 items, 10 items measured masculinity, 10 measured femininity, and 10 measured androgynous personality styles, respectively. The *Masculine* subscale consists of descriptions such as “Aggressive”, “Independent”, and “Dominant”. The *Feminine* subscale consists of descriptions such as “Understanding”, “Sympathetic”, and “Compassionate”. The *Androgynous* subscale, which was not utilised for this study, consists of descriptions such as “Conventional”, “Conceited”, and “Moody”. Cronbach’s alpha for the shortened version of the masculinity subscale was 0.80 (Ozkan & Lajunen, 2005) which is acceptable, and Cronbach’s alpha for the femininity subscale was 0.73, (Ozkan & Lajunen, 2005) which was below the original scales of reliability, while remaining acceptable. The internal consistency that was reported from the current study is  $\alpha = .81$  for the *Masculine* subscale, and  $\alpha = .91$  for the *Feminine* subscale.

### **3.4.3 Psychological Availability Questionnaire**

Using the items discussed by Kahn (1990) psychological availability was assessed. The scale measures the self-confidence individuals have concerning their ability to be cognitively, physically, and emotionally available for work. The scale is comprised five items and each item is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from 1 (“*Strongly disagree*”) to 5 (“*Strongly agree*”) with 3 being a neutral score.

According to May et al., (2004) the Cronbach's alpha for Kahn's scale was 0.85, which is acceptable. The present study reported an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .86$ . Examples of questions found on this scale include, "I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work" and "I am confident in my ability to deal with problems that come up at work".

### **3.5 Capturing and editing the data**

The data gathered from the demographic section, the Bem Sex Role Inventory questionnaire, and the Psychological Availability questionnaire, were captured into a spreadsheet, prepared for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 22.00) statistics programme, or for Microsoft Excel.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS 22 program (SPSS Inc., 2014). In the first step of statistical analysis, data were screened for out of range responses, typing mistakes, incomplete questionnaires, and statistical outliers. Prior to the analysis, validity of the scales were determined. The psychological availability scale proved to be valid in this study. With regards to the Bem Sex Roles Inventory, both dimensions namely masculinity and femininity proved to be valid, except for the androgyny role. Only 4 items loaded significantly on the factor with very low factor loadings, but those also shared double loading with the masculinity and femininity factors. For that reason, the androgyny role was excluded from further analysis.

In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to gauge the reliability of the constructs used in this study. Furthermore, in order to determine the internal consistency of each measuring instrument, the Cronbach alpha was



calculated. A Cronbach alpha value of  $\alpha = .70$  is satisfactory (Nunnally, 1978). This study thus meet this cut off and both constructs were deemed sufficient for further analyses.

### **3.6.1 Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive statistics were obtained for all items of the scales and data were analysed in terms of mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the respective responses by men and women to the Bem Sex Role Inventory questionnaire, and the Psychological Availability questionnaire. According to Kline (2010), skewness and kurtosis reflect the extent to which data are normally distributed with regard to the mean.

Healey (2012) posits that descriptive statistics are relevant in the following situations. Firstly, when a researcher wants to summarise or describe the distribution of a single variable, or when the researcher wants to describe or summarise the distribution of two or more variables. Summarising or describing one variable's distribution is referred to as univariate analysis, while summarising or describing the distribution of two or more variables is referred to as bivariate analysis.

Skewness refers to the symmetry of the data, while kurtosis refers to how peaked or flat the data distribution is (Pallant, 2005). Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) provided a guideline of  $< | 2 |$  for skewness, and a guideline of  $< | 4 |$  for kurtosis, even though there are no strict guidelines in terms of skewness and kurtosis cut-off points.

### 3.6.2 Pearson correlation coefficients

The Pearson's product moment correlation was also used to assess for correlation between sex roles and psychological availability. Pallant (2011) maintains that correlation analysis is the most elemental manner to assess for the association between two variables. Kline (2010) states that a  $p$ -value, or level of significance reflects the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when there is an actual effect within the population. This finding implies the existence of the phenomenon being investigated. Kline (2010) maintains that in order for a study to be valid, practical significance is required as well. Practical significance allows one to see whether there is a large enough difference between means to be of practical value. Kline (2010) also maintains that the effect size must be evaluated between two variables. The effect size is an assessment of the strength of the relationship between the variables studied (Kilne, 2010; Pallant, 2011).

In terms of effect sizes, Cohen (1992), provides the following guidelines:  $r = .1$  is indicative of a small effect,  $r = .3$  is indicative of a medium effect and  $r = .5$  is indicative of a large effect. This will indicate the practical significance of the correlations between the variables in this study.

### 3.6.3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis

SPSS 22.00 (2014) was used for performing hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine whether the different sex roles predict psychological availability for men and women. Pallant (2011) states that the analysis of multiple regression is an addition of the standard regression, but it uses a linear function of two or additional predictor variables, in order to explain the variation in one dependent variable. Multiple

regression analysis also assisted in understanding the contribution that the independent variables (masculinity and femininity) had on the dependent variable (psychological availability).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to determine the amount of variance explained in the psychological availability by the variables of masculinity, femininity and gender. Thereafter, data were evaluated to ensure that the assumptions are for multiple regression analysis with regard to normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity are met. Multicollinearity values are ideally expected to be within recommended limits of  $r = .90$  and above (Pallant, 2011). The independent variables were all centered before the interaction terms were calculated (Pallant, 2011), whereby the masculinity and femininity respectively were multiplied by gender. A relaxed criteria of  $p < .10$  was used in order to determine statistical significance of the moderating effect (Aiken & West, 1991).

#### **3.6.4 Independent-samples t-tests**

Independent-samples t-tests were applied to compare the mean scores' differences of sex roles with that of psychological availability factors based on the demographic factors. The Levene's test for equality of variances was carried out to test whether the variance of scores based on the demographic factors were assumed (Pallant, 2005). Furthermore, as an addition to the t-test result in inferential statistics, Cohen's d test was also investigated (Cohen, 1988). Cohen's d represents the differences between the two groups being compared based on the standard deviation score (Pallant, 2011). Cohen (1988) provides the following guiding principles for effect sizes: small,  $d = .2$ , medium,  $d = .5$ , and large,  $d = .8$ .

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Appropriate information about the research proposal was provided to the Ethics Committee at the University of Johannesburg. The research was conducted in accordance with the approved research guidelines (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Participation in the study was voluntary and no personally identifiable information was requested. Informed consent was acquired from all participants prior to the commencement of the study (Payne & Payne, 2004). Participants were informed about the purpose of the research.

Each participant was informed about their right to decline or withdraw at any stage during the research process. The possible consequences of withdrawing or declining was communicated to participants. It was communicated to participants that no inducements for participation would be offered as this may have coerced participation in the study (American Psychological Association, APA, 2002).

The potential limits to confidentiality were communicated to participants. Participants were informed about who to contact regarding questions about the research project. All participants were provided with the opportunity to gain information regarding the nature, results, and main findings of the study. Reasonable steps were taken to minimise the possible harm that may be caused by the sensitive nature of this study (American Psychological Association, APA, 2002). Participants were informed that the results of the study were confidential and that their names were not to be included. The data obtained from the study were not released to any other individuals other than the individuals involved in this study (researcher, lecturer, examiners, and so on) (Kumako & Asumeng, 2013).

### 3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research method including the data collection processes utilised in this study. The measuring instruments and the statistical analysis methods that were employed were discussed in detail. Furthermore, the ethical considerations were discussed herein.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the statistical analyses that were performed on the data. The results that are included herein are descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. Furthermore, the results for multiple regression and t-test will be discussed in this chapter. As discussed in Chapter 3, the androgyny scale was found to be problematic. Owing to poor reliability and validity, this variable was removed from further analysis.

#### 4.2. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics namely, mean scores, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and Cronbach Alpha I are reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for BSRI and Psychological Availability*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>A</b>
Masculinity	48.87	9.01	0.26	-0.22	.81
Femininity	56.66	9.85	-0.38	-0.64	.91
Psychological Availability	29.45	4.36	0.04	-0.71	.86

*Note:*

Values are rounded to two decimal places

$\alpha$  = Cronbach's internal consistency

Three variables were measured: Masculinity, Femininity and Psychological Availability (refer to Table 2). The mean score for Masculinity was 48.87 (SD = 9.01, skewness = -0.24, kurtosis = 0.26). This means that on an average of 4.88, it is true that the sample on the scale form of 1 to 7 portrayed masculine traits. The mean score for Femininity was 56.66 (SD = 9.85, skewness = -0.64, kurtosis = -0.38). This means that on an average of 5.66, it is true that the sample on the scale form of 1 to 7 portrayed feminine traits. The mean score for Psychological Availability was 29.45 (SD = 4.36, skewness = -0.71, kurtosis = -0.04). An average mean score of 5.89 was calculated (total mean score divided by the number of items) to determine how psychologically available the sample were. The calculated result indicate that the sample were often available at work. Skewness and kurtosis were aligned with the recommended cut-off points. With that said, data were normally distributed.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was used to assess the internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for Masculinity was  $\alpha = .81$ , while Cronbach's alpha for Femininity was  $\alpha = .91$ , and the Cronbach's alpha for Psychological Availability was  $\alpha = .86$ . Research suggests that coefficient values in excess of  $\alpha = .70$  are satisfactory (Pallant, 2005; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The reliability coefficient does not imply multicollinearity.

### **4.3 Pearson's correlation**

The relationship between masculinity, femininity, and psychological availability was determined with Pearson correlation analysis and is reported in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Pearson correlation analysis results

	Psychological Availability	Feminine	Masculine
Psychological Availability	1	-	-
Feminine	.35 <sup>**++</sup>	1	-
Masculine	.38 <sup>**++</sup>	.23 <sup>**+++</sup>	1

*Note.*

<sup>\*\*</sup> = Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level (2 – tailed). <sup>\*</sup> = Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level (2 – tailed).

<sup>+++</sup> Practical significances at  $r = 0.10$  to  $0.29$  (small effect)

<sup>++</sup> Practical significances at  $r = 0.30$  to  $0.49$  (medium effect)

The results in Table 3 show that Psychological Availability ( $r = .38$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ; medium effect) was practically and significantly correlated with Masculinity. Psychological Availability and Femininity shared a significant positive relationship ( $r = .35$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ; medium effect) while Masculinity ( $r = .23$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ; small effect) shared a significant positive correlation with Femininity.

#### 4.4 Multiple regression

Multiple regression models were conducted to explore the combined effect of Masculinity and Gender on the Psychological Availability construct as well as



Femininity and Gender on the Psychological Availability construct. The results for the regression analyses are summarised in Table 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 In each model the assumption of normally distributed residuals was violated and therefore the results must be interpreted with caution.

For Table 4.4.1 step 1 had Masculinity as the independent variable, step 2 had Masculinity and Gender as the independent variables, and step 3 had Masculinity, Gender and the moderation interaction (Masculinity x Gender) as independent variables.

Table 4.4.1

**Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the effect of Gender and Masculine Sex Role on Psychological Availability**

	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
<i>Step 1</i>				
Constant	20.55	.84		
Masculine	.18	1.66	.38***	.14
<i>Step 2</i>				
Constant	20.27	1.05		
Masculine	.18	.02	.38	
Gender	.14	.31	.02	.14
<i>Step 3</i>				
Constant	22.50	2.99	.29	
Masculine	.14	.06	.29	

Gender	.13	.31	.01	
Masculine X	.28	.04	.097	14
Gender				

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .10$ .

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression of the effect of Gender and Masculine sex role revealed the following results:

For step 1, the  $R^2$  value was .14, implying that Masculinity accounts for 14% of Psychological Availability [ $F_{(700)} = 115.405, p = .000$ ]. As a whole, the model was statistically significant. This result implies that Masculinity significantly predicted Psychological Availability.

For step 2, the  $R^2$  value did not change [ $F_{(700)} = 57.737, p = .654$ ]. The model was statistically non-significant. Gender was a non-significant predictor ( $p = 0.654$ ) of Psychological Availability.

For step 3, the  $R^2$  value did not change [ $F_{(700)} = 38.685, p = .424$ ]. As a whole, the model was statistically non-significant: Masculinity ( $p = 0.000$ ), Gender ( $p = 0.654$ ), Masculinity x Gender ( $p = 0.424$ ). This implies that there is no interaction effect between Masculinity and Gender in predicting Psychological Availability.

For Table 4.4.2 below, step 1 had Femininity as the independent variable, step 2 had Femininity and Gender as the independent variables, and step 3 had Femininity, Gender, and the moderation interaction (Femininity x Gender) as independent variables.

Table 4.4.2

**Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the Effect of Gender and Feminine Sex Role on Psychological Availability**

	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	$\beta$	$R^2$
<i>Step 1</i>				
Constant	20.74	.89		
Feminine	.15	.02	.35***	.12
<i>Step 2</i>				
Constant	19.85	.93		
Feminine	.16	.02	.37***	
Gender	.97	.31	-.11***	.14
<i>Step 3</i>				
Constant	17.42	1.31		
Feminine	.20	.02	.46***	
Gender	5.68	1.82	-.65***	
Feminine X Gender	-.08	-.03	-.54***	.14

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression of the effect of Gender and Feminine sex roles revealed the following results:

For step 1, the  $R^2$  value was .12, implying that Femininity accounts for 12% of the variance in Psychological Availability [ $F_{(714)} = 97.739$ ,  $p = .000$ ]. The model was

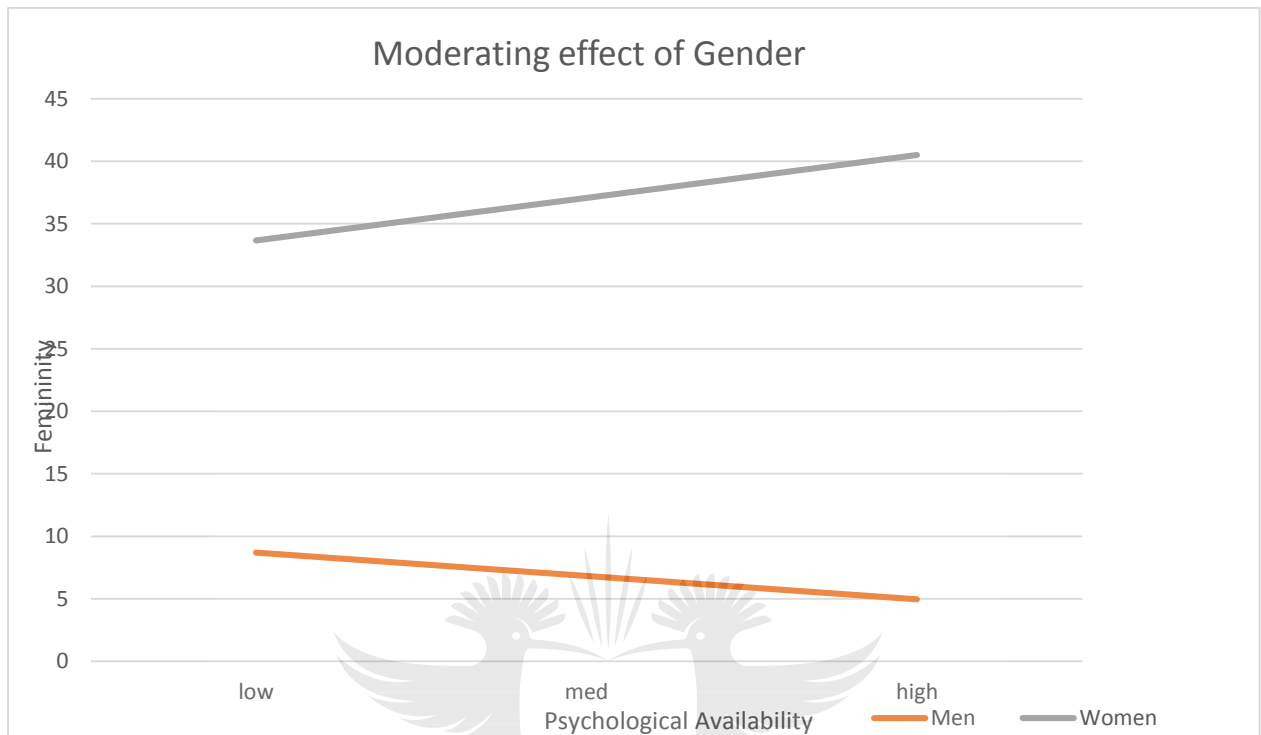
statistically significant. This result implies that that Femininity significantly predicted Psychological Availability.

For step 2, the  $R^2$  value increased to .132, implying that Femininity and Gender accounts for 13% of Psychological Availability [ $F_{(7,14)} = 54.332, p = .002$ ]. As a whole, the model was statistically significant. Gender was also significant predictor ( $p = 0.002$ ) of Psychological Availability.

For step 3, the  $R^2$  value increased to .136, implying that Femininity and Gender accounts for 14% of Psychological Availability [ $F_{(7,14)} = 37.278, p = .090$ ]. As a whole, the model was statistically significant: Femininity ( $p = 0.000$ ), Gender ( $p = 0.002$ ), Femininity x Gender ( $p = 0.090$ ). This implies that there is an interaction effect between Femininity and Gender in predicting Psychological Availability.



## Effect of Gender on the relationship between feminine sex roles and psychological availability



**Figure 1:** Interaction effect of Gender on the relationship between Feminine sex role and Psychological Availability

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction effect of Gender on the relationship between Feminine sex role and Psychological Availability. Figure 1 illustrates that women experience a higher level of psychological availability compared to men. A feminine approach to work increased the level of psychological availability for women and this relationship is stronger for women than men. As a result, with a higher level of femininity, women experience higher levels of psychological availability when compared to men at work.

#### 4.5 Independent-samples t-test results

Table 5 demonstrates the presentation of t-test results with equal variances assumed using SPSS. These tests were used to compare the mean score differences of the sex roles and psychological factors based on the demographic factors.

Table 5

#### Results of t-tests and Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Availability, Masculinity, and Femininity

Outcome	Male		Female		<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>						<i>SD</i>
Psychological Availability	29.69	4.36	324	29.27	4.36	415	.19	1.32	737	0.10 <sup>+++</sup>
Masculinity	50.59	8.45	316	47.50	9.22	394	.00 <sup>***</sup>	4.59	708	0.35 <sup>++</sup>
Femininity	54.78	10.31	319	58.14	9.22	407	.00 <sup>***</sup>	-4.62	724	0.34 <sup>++</sup>

Note:

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.01$

Effect sizes:

<sup>+++</sup> Practical significances at  $r > 0.10$  (small effect)

<sup>++</sup> Practical significances at  $r > 0.30$  (medium effect)

<sup>+</sup> Practical significances at  $r > 0.50$  (large effect)

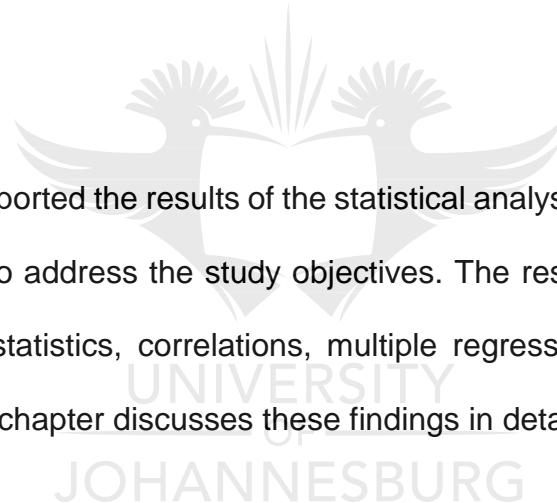
An independent samples *t*-test revealed that there were no significant differences between men (mean = 29.69) and women (mean = 29.27) on the Psychological Availability scale [ $t_{(,001)} = 1.32, p = .19$ ].

An independent sample *t*-test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between men (mean = 50.59) and women (mean = 47.50) on the Masculinity [ $t_{(3.198)} = 4.59, p = .00$ ] with a medium effect size.

An independent sample *t*-test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between men (mean = 54.78) and women (mean = 58.14) on the Femininity scale [ $t_{(4.645)} = -4.621, p = .00$ ] with a medium effect size.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter reported the results of the statistical analyses that were performed on the data in order to address the study objectives. The results that were reported included descriptive statistics, correlations, multiple regression results, and *t*-tests results. The following chapter discusses these findings in detail.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a discussion on the research findings, highlights the contribution of the study, and concludes with limitations, recommendations, and implications for future research. The chapter begins with providing the objectives of the study then discusses the analyses.

#### **5.2 Overview of the objectives of the study**

The objective of this study was to investigate the predictive relationship between masculinity and femininity on psychological availability. The study also aimed to determine whether a difference exists in how men and women experience the relationship between the respective sex roles and psychological availability. Finally, the study aimed to determine whether men and women identify differently with the sex roles of masculinity and femininity in the South African context.

The following hypotheses were phrased from the literature:

1. Masculinity predicts psychological availability.
2. Gender moderates the relationship between masculinity and psychological availability.
3. Femininity predicts psychological availability.
4. Gender moderates the relationship between femininity and psychological availability.
5. Men and women respectively, experience masculinity, femininity and psychological availability respectively differently.



The interpretation of the results section first elaborates on the identification with masculinity and femininity in the workplace, followed by psychological availability in the organisation which will assist with the understanding of the moderation effect. The section continues with a discussion of masculinity in relation to psychological availability and gender. The section concludes with a discussion of femininity, psychological availability, and gender.

### **5.3 Interpretations of the results**

#### **5.3.1 Masculinity, femininity, and psychological availability in the workplace**

The results of this study indicate that men and women in the workplace portray both masculinity and femininity roles. This aligns with the studies conducted by Bem (1974;1975); Bem and Lenney (1976) that were based on non-workplace samples. The results further revealed that men and women identify differently with both gender roles. Women were found to be more feminine and men were found to be more masculine. Therefore, hypothesis five was supported. Previous research suggested that traditionally, it has always been assumed that because a person is a man, he is expected to behave in a masculine way, and a woman is expected to behave in a feminine way (Hoffman & Borders, 2001). It should be noted that Peng (2006) stated that there are societal changes regarding what is deemed masculine and feminine as well as changes in societal impressions about whom can display these characteristics. The findings of this study reconfirmed that men and women's perception of gender roles have remained traditional.

The results of this study further revealed that masculinity and femininity were statistically related. Furthermore, relationships are suggested to exist between

“masculine” and “feminine” traits individuals portray and various other traits, roles, or behaviours (Bem, 1974;1975). The sample showed high levels of psychological availability at work. This finding aligns with previous research that employees become cognitively observant, physically involved in work tasks, and empathetically connected to others during the execution of their tasks (*cf.* Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothman, 2007; Łaba & Geldenhuys, 2016). With regards to gender differences, the results showed that there were no significant differences in the levels of psychological availability between men and women. A probable explanation may perhaps be that men and women are choosing work tasks that support their sex roles and is aligned with what society expects of them (Noor, 2004), resulting in these individuals being psychologically available at work.

### **5.3.2 Masculinity, psychological availability, and gender**

Masculinity and psychological availability were positively related. In addition, the findings suggest that masculinity predicts psychological availability at work thereby supporting hypothesis one. This aligns with my theorising in Chapters One and Two where masculinity is attributed to men. Masculinity does not reflect care and nurturing traits, which are often linked to outside work activities. In addition, other research suggested that outside activities have the potential to make individuals less psychologically available by drawing the energies away from performing their work roles (*cf.* Hall & Richter, 1989; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Danner-Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2013; Rothman & Baumann, 2014; Łaba & Geldenhuys, 2016). The results of this study indicate that when controlling for masculinity, gender had no effect on psychological availability, nor did gender affect the relationship between masculinity

and psychological availability. Consequently, hypothesis two was not supported in this study.

Thus a masculine approach would increase psychological availability at work. However, gender does not influence psychological availability when we control for masculinity, nor is there a difference in the relationship between masculinity and psychological availability based on gender (being a man or woman). In this regard, a study done by Danner-Vlaardingboerk et al., (2013) found that psychological availability is a fundamental psychological process, which is similar for both men and women, and that the spillover of work-day activities into marital behaviour was not affected. Based on this argument, when a man or woman applies a masculine approach to work, psychological availability will not be experienced differently.

### **5.3.3 Femininity, psychological availability, and gender**

Femininity and psychological availability were positively related. Femininity further predicted psychological availability at work. When controlling for femininity, gender significantly predicted psychological availability. Furthermore, the relationship between femininity and psychological availability is affected by gender (being a man or woman). Hypotheses three and four were therefore supported. The relationship between femininity and psychological availability is different for men compared to women. Therefore, hypotheses three and four were also supported.

These results suggest that displaying the feminine sex role at work for both men and women impacts individual levels of psychological availability at work. The findings indicated that men portray less femininity compared to women. The relationship between femininity and psychological availability is stronger for women. Femininity leads to higher psychological availability at work for women, while femininity leads to

a decrease in psychological availability for men at work. Previous research stated that women are expected to be psychologically less available at work due to the amount of care roles that they play (*cf.* Coltrane, 2000; Erickson, 2005; Gouws & Kotze, 2007; Hoobler et al., 2009; Shelton & John, 1996), which is a contradiction when compared to the findings of this study.

At the outset of this study, the argument was made that women are found to be performing more activities outside of work such as caregiving, managing the house, and providing emotional support to members of the family, than men, which could potentially result in them being less psychologically available at work (Harris, 2010a; Hoobler et al., 2009; Scarr et al., 1989). The results of this study contradict the belief that women have greater difficulty being psychologically available at work due to external activities that might potentially impact on them compared to men. Counterintuitively in this study, the findings suggest that women who display the feminine sex role at work are more psychologically available compared to men at work.

The next section draws together points discussed under section 5.3.

#### **5.4 Conclusions and contributions of the current study**

Society seems to hold the view that masculinity is an advantage over femininity when it comes to being psychologically available at work. People should not assume that being born a man or woman should mean individuals should enact gender roles. Thus, it would be inaccurate to assume that being a man requires masculinity, while being a woman requires femininity. Based on the preceding information, this misconception is clarified by the Sex Role Theory (Bem, 1974; 1975). Psychological availability also plays a significant role in the performance of role tasks in organisations.

The findings of this study showed that both masculine and feminine sex roles predicted psychological availability. Gender moderates the relationship between the feminine sex role and psychological availability. Gender did not impact the relationship between the masculine sex role and psychological availability, meaning that being a man or women has not effect on the relationship between having a masculine trait and psychological availability at work.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding psychological availability (Kahn, 1990), which has primarily focused on research on engagement (Olivier & Rothman, 2007; Rothman & Welsh, 2013; Łaba & Geldenhuys, 2016). Sex roles in relation to psychological availability and the relationship between sex roles and gender on psychological availability furthers our understanding of the dynamics of the genders in the workplace. Contrary to literature, which purports that women should display more masculine traits in the workplace, this study shows that women should capitalise on their femininity, thereby increasing their psychological availability, which is a condition for engagement in the workplace (Kahn, 1990).

## **5.5 Limitations, recommendations, and implications**

### **5.5.1 Limitations**

This study is not without limitations. The first limitation was the collection of data. The data of this study was collected in one geographical area and did not include participants working in organisations of other provinces of South Africa. It is suggested that additional studies be carried out in different provinces in order to enhance generalisation of the results. Such results can be compared with the results obtained in the current study.

Another limitation in the study is that of the research design. A cross-sectional sampling method was used, which could prove difficult when making causal inferences regarding the relationships of the variables. It is recommended that other research methods be employed in future research such as longitudinal designs or panel studies (e.g. diary) (Dormann & Griffin, 2015).

In addition, this study made use of self-report questionnaires, which increases the possibility of contamination of the reported relationship. For example, respondents may not have been honest due to the sensitive nature of the questionnaire items. A further limitation is that the assumptions of MR were violated. As a consequence, the results need to be interpreted with caution. Lastly, the androgyny construct provided problems similar to previous studies (Vafaei et al., 2014) and did not work out from the sample used, and was therefore excluded from the study. Researchers should conduct more research about this phenomenon and attempt to discover how it influences the employees in the workplace.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for future research**

There is limited empirical research regarding sex roles and their impact on psychological availability at work. In addition, minimal research exists relative to the moderating effects of gender on the relationship between sex roles and psychological availability. Thus, more research is required to develop a theory about psychological availability and sex roles in organisations. Furthermore, one should evaluate the extent to which the influence of sex roles impacts the levels of psychological availability on organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee engagement, and productivity.

In addition, it is recommended that research be conducted to test whether a job type held by a man or woman with either a masculine or feminine sex role would impact the levels of psychological availability at work. Also of relevance would be a study where women working in occupations within male-dominated environments, are compared to men and women in occupations within female-dominated environments.

### **5.5.3 Implications**

The findings of this study have significant implications for organisations and managers. Various authors (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007) have discussed ways in which managers can foster psychological availability in order to have productive, engaged, and committed employees. Based on the findings of this study, managers are encouraged to support psychological availability by ensuring that there are adequate provisions for employees to devote in the development of their own skills and resources (physical, cognitive, and emotional). This support will improve the perceptions of psychological availability (Olivier & Rothman, 2007), irrespective of the sex role that an individual may hold.

Commonly held stereotypes about low levels of psychological availability of women employees who related to the feminine role should can also be debunked by the findings of this study. From the results it seems that women benefit from an identification with being feminine when considering psychological availability.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

This study has contributed to an understanding of gender dynamics relating to psychological availability, which is a condition for engagement within the South African

workplace. Furthermore, this study introduces important avenues for further research on gender dynamics and psychological availability in South Africa.





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