

FEMALE MOTIVE TO AVOID SUCCESS

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The present research was an attempt to replicate in Pakistan Horner's (1969) findings about fear of success, which she considered as the basis of sex differences in achievement motivation. One hundred male and female post-graduate students wrote stories to randomly assigned cues concerning success of a male or female medical student. Content analysis showed that the majority of stories contained "fear of success" imagery but there was no significant difference among males and females regarding this imagery in their stories.

Horner (1969) tried to discover the basis of sex differences in achievement motivation. She observes that consciously or unconsciously a girl equates intellectual achievement with loss of femininity. A bright woman is thus caught in a double bind. In testing and other achievement oriented situations, she worries not only about failure, but also about success. If she fails, she is not living up to her own standards of performance; if she succeeds she is not living up to societal expectations about the female role. Men do not experience this kind of ambivalence, because they are not only permitted but actively encouraged to do well. For women, then, the desire to achieve is often contaminated by what Horner calls "the motive to avoid success". Horner (1969) defines it as the fear that success in competitive achievement situations will lead to negative consequences, such as unpopularity and loss of femininity. This tendency, like the achievement motive, is a stable disposition within the person, acquired early in life along with other sex-role standards. When fear of success conflicts with a desire to be successful, the result is an inhibition of achievement motivation.

Situation analysis of Pakistani women reveals not only their low literacy rate as compared to men, but the number of highly educated professional women is also very less. It is generally assumed that low participation rate of women in prestigious jobs is due to discrimination and social norms which do not provide equal

opportunities of education and employment to our female population.

Homer's study on fear of success in women posed a question to the investigator to be answered empirically in our socio-cultural context. It was felt that perhaps fear of success was a powerful motive that exerts a significantly negative influence on women's striving for higher education.

The experimenter aims to discover what a subject's expectations are regarding the consequences of an action he or she proposes to take. According to the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Atkinson & Feather, 1966), anxiety is aroused when one expects the consequences to be negative. Thus, anxiety acts as an inhibiting force and produces what psychologists call an "avoidance motive". This motive does not tell us what someone will do, but it indicates at least what he or she will not do. This approach provides the basis for Homer's concept called as the "motive to avoid success".

It was hypothesised that as compared to men, women would include more sentences expressing negative attitude about success or negative consequences of success in stories about Yasmeen than about Ejaz.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 50 male and 50 female post-graduate students of various departments of Peshawar University. Their average age was between 20-25 years.

Procedure

The subjects were tested in a group of five. They were provided a booklet which contained a description of an event. The event was about the merit position of a student in the examination. For half of the subjects (male or female) a male name and for the other half a female name was used. The event was as follows:

"After the declaration of first professional M.B.B.S. examination, Yasmeen/Ejaz finds herself/himself at the top of his medical class".

The subjects were given 10 minutes to write a story describing: what led up to the event; what is happening at the moment; what the persons involved are feeling and thinking; and then to give the outcome.

The stories of the subjects were content analysed by two judges who did not know about the sex of the respondents.

RESULTS

The stories were content analysed by two judges for sentences expressing negative attitudes towards success or negative consequences of success. The percentage of sentences expressing negative attitude toward or negative consequences of Yasmeen and Ejaz successful achievement were calculated. The inter-rater reliability was computed with the help of McClelland (1975) formula, as under:

$$\text{Percent Agreement} = \frac{2 \times \text{Number of Agreements}}{\text{No. of Images of Judge I} + \text{No. of Images of Judge II}} \times 100$$

An eighty percent (80%) agreement between the judges to describe a sentence as negative was taken as the selection criterion.

The frequencies and percentages of "negative" and "not negative" sentences were computed for female and male respondents separately for the stories of Ejaz and Yasmeen. Two 2 x 2 chi-square analyses were performed for the number of negative sentences and the sex of the respondents separately for the stories of Ejaz and Yasmeen using negative sentences in the Stories about Ejaz and Yasmeen.

Table 1

The frequency and percentage of female and male subjects using negative sentences in the stories about Ejaz and Yasmeen

Number of Negative Sentences	S T O R Y							
	Ejaz				Yasmeen			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
No negative sentence	13	44.00	9	37.50	12	48.00	16	61.54
Minimum one negative sentence	14	56.00	15	62.50	13	52.00	10	38.46
Total	27	100	24	100	25	100	26	100

$\chi^2=.2142$; $df=1$, $p > .05$ $\chi^2=.943$; $df=1$, $p > .05$

The results in Table 1 show that most of the stories for either Ejaz or Yasmeen contained at least one negative sentence except the stories written by males about Yasmeen. The fear of success imagery was present in about 50% of the stories. The males wrote more negative sentences about Ejaz as compared to females, whereas, females wrote higher percentage of negative sentences for Yasmeen as compared to males. Both the chi-square analyses performed separately for the stories of Ejaz and Yasmeen show no significant differences.

The total number of negative sentences written by the subjects for stories about Ejaz and Yasmeen was counted and they were divided into low and high groups. The low group wrote at least one negative sentence about Ejaz and Yasmeen whereas high group wrote more than one sentence. Two 2 x 2 chi-square analyses were performed for the low/high groups and the sex of the respondents separately for the stories of Ejaz and Yasmeen.

Table 2

The frequency and percentage of female and male subjects who were low and high in the use of negative sentences for Ejaz and Yasmeen

Type of Group	S T O R Y							
	Ejaz				Yasmeen			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	10	71.43	10	66.66	8	61.54	7	70
High	4	28.57	5	33.33	5	38.46	3	30
Total	14	100	15	100	13	100	10	100

$\chi^2=.077$; $df=1$, $p > .05$ $\chi^2=.178$; $df=1$, $p > .05$

Table 2 shows that majority of the male and female respondents wrote stories with lower percentage of negative sentences. As compared to male respondents lesser number of females wrote negative sentences about Ejaz, but more females wrote negative sentences about Yasmeen than did the males. Both the chi-square analyses are not significant.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study do not support hypothesis based upon Horner's (1969) conclusion that there is a motive to avoid success which woman display in fear of success imagery when asked to write stories about a successful women. The results of the chi-square analyses show no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to negative imagery.

The failure to confirm the original findings may indicate indirectly the changing expectations about the women's role in our society. As education is spreading, though with a slow pace, among the females in our country, they are becoming more aware about their potentials and capabilities. There is also a growing tendency among the females to join a job after completing their education. This has given them an opportunity to work side by side with their male counterparts and to evaluate their performance and capabilities. The traditional expectations about the female role in

our society are also in a process of change and a woman adopting a specific career is less stigmatised now as compared to earlier. There are also less barriers in the marriages of working women, rather under growing economic difficulties the working of women is regarded as economically advantageous. All these social events have led to some change in their motive about success. The motive of success may not have that negative connotations for the women of today. These findings are to be interpreted rather cautiously as the main aim of the study was to replicate Horner's finding in our culture and not the motive of success directly.

A comprehensive review of evidence on sex differences (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) also revealed very few differences between the sexes in most achievement relevant characteristics. For example, women were equal to men in (a) overall intellectual and academic ability (b) in almost all the measures of achievement motivation, and (c) in overall self-esteem. However, Maccoby and Jacklin did describe a potentially important sex difference in the achievement-related characteristics, i. e., self confidence. The authors concluded that self-confidence defined in terms of both performance, expectancies and self-evaluations of abilities and completed performances is lower among women than among men. However, the motive to avoid success may still remain a plausible concept to explain the mystery of women's behaviour when they do not achieve their potentials. This may be because of their internalisation of inferior roles assigned to them in a patriarchal society. They may incorporate this devaluation in them and become convinced that their main role is to assist men in achieving goals and ideals instead of becoming an achiever themselves.

The experience shows that in every process of development women play a constructive and facilitative role. When women along with other segments of society have equal opportunities to develop themselves and to participate in social development efforts they can assume equal responsibility and contribute significantly toward any social change in the society. A nation can not progress unless its women are given due recognition, respect and responsibilities. It seems that now the women of Pakistan have started overcoming their handicaps that confronted them and now they try to play their proper role in the life of the nation.

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