

PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF GENDER DIFFERENTIATION IN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This article explores individual differences and gender-specific characteristics in emotional experiences and expressions. It highlights how emotional intensity, stability, and reactivity vary between individuals, emphasizing the influence of both biological factors—such as nervous system functioning—and environmental factors, including upbringing and social expectations.

Keyword: Emotional experiences, gender differences, emotional expressiveness, emotional reactivity, emotional intelligence, nervous system, social norms, emotional regulation.

Introduction

Before discussing gender differences in emotional experiences, we considered it appropriate to briefly explain the individual characteristics of emotions. All types of emotional experiences and states are specific to each individual. First of all, emotions do not occur in the same way for different people in terms of their speed, intensity, and emotional stability. There are people whose emotions are expressed slowly, with moderate intensity, and are stable. Such individuals are called calm people. Then there are people whose emotions arise quickly, are very intense, and are not stable but rather volatile. These individuals are active, excitable, and quick-tempered. Sometimes, a person may only experience clearly expressed emotions as a result of significant or extraordinary events, while in contrast, some people may have strong emotional reactions even to insignificant things. For example, upon seeing an animal left in the cold on the street, some people may feel deep compassion and experience strong emotions, while others may pass by indifferently.

From an emotional perspective, people also differ in that they do not respond equally to different types of emotions with varying content. In life, there are people

who pay more attention to organic emotions. For such individuals, emotions related to eating, their health, taking time to rest, and similar aspects occupy the most important place in their lives. They consider satisfying their needs and enjoying comfort to be the true pleasure of life.

On the other hand, there are individuals for whom intellectual (mental) emotions take the leading role in life. They find life's joy in conducting research, discovering new things, and engaging in science and knowledge, and by doing so, they fulfill their emotional needs. There are also people in our society for whom social and aesthetic emotions, the desire for self-preservation, and feelings of self-esteem come first. All of these individual characteristics in the emotional sphere are primarily related to the state and functioning of the nervous system, but to a large extent, they also depend on the surrounding environment and the level of upbringing a person has received. In the manifestation of emotional states and in the ability to understand them—that is, in emotional intelligence—there are specific individual differences and characteristics observed in both women and men.

Below, we will try to explain these in detail. According to numerous psychological studies, women are generally considered to express their emotions more than men, show more affection and love, cry more often, and more frequently feel hurt or offended. The gender differences between men and women are more apparent in the expression of emotions than in the actual emotions they experience. Women tend to be more expressive, meaning they display more changes through facial expressions, smile more often, use more gestures, and so on. Such differences are generally explained by gender-specific norms, expectations, and stereotypes. Traditionally, the role of women involves openly expressing emotions, including those that reflect vulnerability (such as fear, sadness, etc.). Men, on the other hand, typically dislike showing their weaknesses, vulnerabilities, or dependence on others. For men, openly expressing emotions can often be uncomfortable and may cause them to feel ashamed. However, certain "prohibitions" or restrictions on expressing specific emotions and feelings also exist for women.

Literature analysis. As R. Salvaggio emphasized, "For women, expressing emotional feelings and immersing themselves in 'love' is highly valued, whereas openly displaying emotions and expressing aggression is prohibited." K. Horney (1993) wrote that as a result of the distribution of social roles, a certain perception

of women has developed — one in which women are viewed as infantile beings who live only through emotions. K. Batyushkov expressed a similar idea: “To love or to hate! – women (allegedly) constantly need emotional nourishment for both.” Indeed, many studies have explored clear differences in the emotional domain between men and women. As noted by L.V. Kulikov (1997), women’s emotional sphere is significantly more differentiated and complex than that of men. According to L. Brody and J. Hall, from early childhood, parents tend to pay more attention to developing girls’ ability to express their emotions compared to boys. They discuss emotions—especially negative ones—less frequently with girls, but they use a wider range of emotional vocabulary in conversations with them, display more emotional expressions, smile more at them, and engage in more emotional interactions with them. As a result, girls and women tend to develop greater emotional expressiveness in both verbal and non-verbal aspects. In the literature, there are numerous references to women being more emotionally responsive and emotionally unstable. E.P. Ilyin and V.G. Pinigina (2001) studied this issue and, in their research on how school and university students evaluate the manifestation of emotions throughout their lives, found that women demonstrate greater emotional excitability than men at all age stages. However, they exhibit lower intensity and lower emotional stability compared to men. (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1. Assessment of Various Emotional Characteristics (in scores)

Participants	Susceptibility	Intensity	Duration	Emotional Instability
Men (n = 141)	2,4	4,3	2,0	3,0
Women (n = 53)	3,8	5,7	2,8	3,6

In the studies conducted by P.A. Kovalev (1996), it was confirmed that women are more emotionally reactive: irritability (emotional responsiveness in conflict situations) was found to be higher in women compared to men. (See Figure 1)

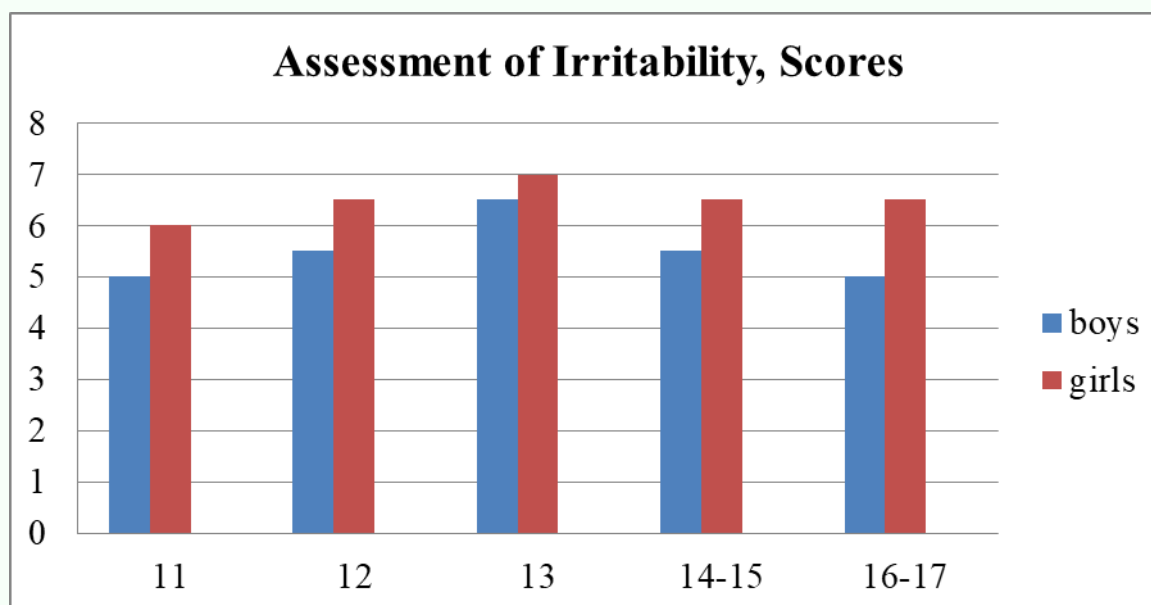


Figure 1. Assessment of Irritability in Men and Women

Conclusions

After analyzing several theories and data regarding the intensity and duration of emotional reactions, we have arrived at the following conclusions. The intensity of emotional reactions is usually assessed based on the level of autonomic arousal in a person under certain emotional-provoking conditions (for example, before and after an exam in studies). Such emotional characteristics are often referred to as reactivity—the ability to respond to external stimuli. Different authors interpret these indicators in various ways. First, different situations have different emotional significance for men and women. Second, if an emotional-provoking situation is perceived emotionally by the subject, the reaction may be expressed through behavior. According to the results obtained, it was found that women are stronger than men in correctly interpreting emotional states. Both our theoretical and practical analyses have proven that there are gender differences in the course and outward expression of emotional states.

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