

The Impact of Feminized Stigma on Male Socialization

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Abstract. In recent decades in Chinese society, it has been considered shameful for men to have so-called feminine traits. When the description of femininity is applied to men, most people think it is against traditional culture and detrimental to social development. However, these distortions and disregard for biological sex are potential stigmas many people do not realize. Therefore, this article focuses on the phenomenon of feminized stigma. The article describes the specific manifestations of feminized stigma and the effects of stigma on men's identity, ability development, and socialization. In addition, possible responses to these effects will be presented. The article correlates feminization and stigmatization and offers an interpretation of the term feminization in a specific context. It can also explain the causes of some of the "feminized" male socialization outcomes. It also provides suggestions and ideas for eliminating the stigma of feminization and its harmful effects.

Keywords: Famine; Stigma; Socialization; Stereotype.

1. Introduction

With the development of the times in Chinese society, people have gradually developed their personalities in the growth process. However, due to the long-term lifestyle and mindset, it is difficult to avoid the existence of stereotypes and prejudices about different groups of people. Traditional Chinese thought has invisible requirements for people's dress and behavior. These social norms and regulations have been passed down throughout history. However, as times change, the traditional opinion may not apply to today's society. As a result, this leads to many behaviors that deviate from the conventional stereotypes of people who are often blamed and abused. For example, men can be misinterpreted as female and disrespected for behaving differently than mainstream men, leading to a stigma of "feminization" of men. Current theoretical studies and research on the "feminization" of men and the "socialization" of men in China have primarily focused on the reasons why men become "feminized" and the process of their formation. The socialization of men has been discussed separately in terms of the factors influencing socialization.

At the same time, more research has tended to explore how to prevent or mitigate the "feminization" of men. This shows the social rejection of the "feminization" of men. Only a few researchers have focused on action strategies for "feminized" men. Very few explored the development of descriptions and semantics of the "feminization" of masculinity. "Masculinity," "feminization," and "socialization" were rarely associated. At the same time, the accusation of "feminization" of men is not considered a stigma in most cases. However, each person's individual development should be respected in today's diverse society. Therefore, this essay will discuss the issue of "the impact of feminine stigma on male socialization."

This research topic was studied through a content analysis of the previous paper and participant observation. There are many references to stigma, feminization, and socialization, each of which has a well-developed theory. The previous studies provide a more complete and detailed understanding of how stigma affects people, the causes of feminization, and how the outside world influences the socialization process. In addition, observing society and interviewing different people can reveal people's honest opinions and what is happening in the community. It is possible to keep a complex natural social phenomenon, thus presenting a complete picture of the phenomenon of "stigma" and socialization results.

By combining the information and findings from these two different research methods, a final picture is presented that reflects the impact of "stigma" on the socialization of men. First, this paper

will explore the manifestations of "feminine" stigma. How do people stigmatize, discriminate against, and exclude "feminized" men in society? This section will elaborate on the social phenomena that can be observed, thus demonstrating the pervasiveness of stigma in today's society. Second, the impact of feminized stigma on stigmatized men is discussed.

When people receive evaluations and information from the external society, their behavior and thought patterns may be altered. Therefore, this section will discuss the different socialization outcomes that may result from feminized stigma. Finally, to alleviate the harm and effects of feminized stigma on men, the third section will suggest possible solutions to the social problem of feminized stigma. This study will help people realize that the accusation and rejection of feminized men is a form of stigmatization. At the same time, it will help people understand the harm such stigma can do to men and the possible effects and harms it can bring. As a result, people may be more willing to pay attention to this social phenomenon and help stigmatized men. As a result, fewer people will suffer from mental and physical harm. At the same time, this study focuses on the impact of feminized stigma on socialization, a topic that fewer researchers have previously focused on. Thus, this study provides insight into "feminization" and theoretically clarifies that "feminization" should be considered a stigma in certain situations.

2. Manifestations of famine stigma

In contemporary psychology, Herek proposed that stigma is the negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that society collectively accords to people who possess a particular characteristic or belong to a specific group or category [1]. People tend to distinguish the differences through labels [2]. The stigma appears when the title for a group of people is related to negative characteristics. Unwarranted negative stereotypes always influence this. People labeled with undesirable traits will be separated from the majority, and minority groups may consider an "out-group" in society. At the same time, people experience emotional reactions such as disgust and rejection when confronted with stigmatized people, and people who are stigmatized may feel shame and embarrassment. In Chinese society, the stigma of famine of men refers to the fact that some people label men as feminine when they see them in makeup or with long hair. This phenomenon considered that a man has some behavior that, in people's minds it's something a woman would do is shamed. Men labeled feminine tend to be referred to as girls in their life. This insults the individual's gender due to behavior that does not conform to stereotypes and traditional concepts in society. People always feel excluded and dislike such "feminine" men. However, feminization is not an insulting word; it just insults the identity of originally male people.

Firstly, there is a distinction between the "normal" male and "female" males in people's minds. Since most men are short-haired, brave, or stalwart in people's impression [3], people tend to form a mental representation derived from their experience as a schema. Then, people are likely to use a generalized and relatively fixed way of thinking about a group of people; it is a stereotype for males [4]. The existence of this stereotype is also because of social needs. Because in ancient times, people needed males to be brave to solve the existential crisis of human beings when humans faced nature. Then most males always allow social norms, giving people a typical character image. Then, the long-term requirements for men have created a stereotype of men and made people have behavioral examples of men in today's society. One of the most precise and explicit behavioral requirements is the code of conduct at school. In Chinese schools, codes of conduct often have different dress or appearance requirements for men and women. These codes are based on the mental appearance and dress code of the majority in society and traditional Chinese thinking. Thus, the requirements for men are the prohibition of long hair or the prohibition of wearing skirts. These restrictions lead those who differ from the code of conduct may be seen as abnormal. They are set apart from the majority because they do not align with people's stereotypes and requirements of males. In this case, the male whose behavior or hobbies are against the norms may be perceived as feminine and unappreciated by others.

These prohibited behaviors reflect the rejection of behaviors such as long hair for men in the mindset of the people. Because of this identity distinction, these men are stigmatized as feminine.

Unlike strict and explicit behavioral requirements, there are invisible and vague ones in daily life. Because everyone in society has different experiences, thinking patterns, and values, they have different standards of femininity for men. These invisible standards are more detailed and stricter than codes of conduct. Generally, men and older people are more likely to follow social norms to form more comprehensive requirements for men's behaviors, and they are more likely to reject and resent feminized men. Therefore, a male will easily be ridiculed or verbally abused when considered "female." For example, when a boy is perceived as a "girl" on campus, he is bullied by peer boys. His behavior is imitated and spread by others as a laughingstock. Also, peers are more likely to reject him when making friends and isolate him in their daily lives [5]. Another typical example in Chinese society is some male idols considered feminine. When the Korean model Exo became famous, one of the Chinese, Lu Han, was considered feminine because of his delicate, beautiful looks and gentle personality. The criteria for judging his femininity were unclear, and he was called sissy simply because he gave a feeling that could be felt in women. Then people insulted and ridiculed his identity on the internet for several years. Thus, this negative labeling and aversion of people is the stigma of 'feminization' of men.

It can be seen that people distinguish the differences between different men and give them different masculine identities through explicit and ambiguous codes of conduct, which separate men who do not fit the stereotype of most men. At the same time, the stigmatization of this 'feminine' identity makes this word a negative and shameful label. It not only stigmatizes their original gender but also devalues their existing characteristics. In summary, the identity distinction and the insult of feminized men are social exclusion. They shape the feminized stigma attached to young men together.

3. The impact of feminized stigma on the socialization of Adolescents

Socialization is a process of cultural transmission; people are naturally taught to be social beings by the influence of their cultural background in society [6]. In socialization, people learn the way of lifestyle that is appropriate to the community in which they live. At the same time, people can identify themselves clearly and develop their personalities through this process. The socialization process is ongoing during the process of growth—a person's experiences from infancy to old age all impact the outcome of socialization. Youth time is a crucial period in human development. People's values and behavior pattern savior are not entirely fixed at this age. Therefore, the outcome of their socialization, and the way they live in society, are easy to influence by external comments. Male socialization refers to the process of integrating them into society. The effects of the stigma of famine males during the process of socialization include but are not limited to personality preferences, self-identity, and habits.

3.1 Personality Preferences

Some men may have a personal preference for wearing dresses or playing with dolls. However, due to the existence of feminine stigma, their hobbies are quickly accused of being stigmatizing. They may also receive some accusations from society, classmates, and parents. In such cases, they are likely to force themselves to stop enjoying these things or to forbid themselves to continue playing something girls like to avoid being ostracized by others. They make themselves change or hide their hobbies. It means that they lose some of their hobbies and pleasures. At the same time, they tend to develop and cultivate some hobbies for themselves that are perceived as 'masculine' or 'neutral' to meet social expectations, such as sports, model building, racing, etc.

3.2 Self-identity

Some men may feel confused about their gender and have a blurred perception of their gender after being stigmatized as feminine. Stigmatization may make "famine" males think of stress and anxiety. It quickly leads to a person becoming inferior, sensitive, and suspicious. People may rationalize their

behavior by adjusting their self-identity to regulate or alleviate their anxiety. Specifically, they may not consider femininity a stigmatizing term or believe biological gender can be discussed separately from social gender [7]. The harm resulting from discrimination can vary in magnitude depending on the individual's perception [8]. As a result, they may live in society as female rather than their biological gender. In this case, they can insist on their hobbies and face accusations about their gender from others bravely. They gain self-confidence through the identity which others impose on them.

3.3 Habits

Stigmatized people are quickly ridiculed and rejected by others; long-term rejection and humiliation tend to make people silent and unwilling to interact with others. In this case, they tend to stay home for long periods to protect themselves. This is a defense mechanism and a self-protection mechanism that exists to help humans avoid harm. However, not interacting with peers can easily lead to a disconnection from society and people. This is not beneficial for maintaining a positive and healthy life in society. This is a relatively unsuccessful result of socialization. However, because people are more focused on what their in-group thinks of them, some people are likely to make friends with others who can share their confusion and have similar characteristics when they feel excluded from the majority group [9]. It can achieve the effect of encouraging each other. Some research about resilience shows that positive social contact can be a good way of alleviating the psychological pressure of being stigmatized [10]. In Chinese society, people are more likely to respect a capable person who can contribute to society. As a result, some people may focus more on improving their skills. Then people are willing to devote more time to work and study to gain respect from others. At the same time, personal empowerment and development can also alleviate the harm caused by stigma to a certain extent [11]. It can give people a sense of satisfaction and reasonable expectations for the future.

4. How to Dismantle the Malicious Feminization Stigma and its Negative Effects

4.1 School and parent

Schools and parents should reduce restrictions on teen behavior and dress codes. For example, there should no longer be too many restrictions on men cutting their hair short or wearing pants on campus. School uniforms could be standardized for both boys and girls. Also, parents can reduce interference with gender perceptions as teens grow up. For example, there should not be too much of a division between what males and females should do. Parents can guide their children's actions and behaviors but should not restrict or blame individual development too much. Parents are expected to give their children the right to choose their dress and speech to the extent allowed by law. Since there are standards for male behavior in society, the dress code and behavior requirements for males on campus can be seen as potential identity compartmentalization. Identity compartmentalization makes it difficult for the stigmatized group to gain a sense of identity in society, thus making it difficult to integrate into society. If an individual wants to fit in, they must give up their personal preferences and personality development. Removing these restrictions is therefore liberating for personality development. This allows adolescents to become more confident in the socialization process and reduce the feelings of inferiority and isolation that result from having their preferences restricted. It also does not make their perception of self-physical and social genders blurred or conflicting. In this case, they may be more willing to integrate into society and achieve a more successful socialization outcome.

4.2 Social support

Society needs to be able to provide counseling to groups that need it. Some companies and schools in society may give free counseling for employees or students. There are also some organizations in

the community that offer to counsel. In times of difficulty, professional counseling can help young people relieve stress and learn ways to cope with stigmatization. Social support helps to alleviate the trauma that stigmatized youths receive. This allows them to adjust their mindset and carry out their socialization process with a positive attitude. However, the mental health industry in China is relatively underdeveloped due to the lack of emphasis on mental health in Chinese society. This leads to a situation where adolescents may not have access to timely and practical help when needed. In this case, there is a need for stigmatized adolescents to receive encouragement and recognition from friends in their environment. Peer praise and encouragement can also alleviate the anxiety and low self-esteem that adolescents experience when experiencing stigma. Some studies have shown that personal and social connectedness also contributes to the healthy psychological development of individuals. A successful socialization outcome can also help people reduce the adverse effects of stigmatization. Therefore, social support for adolescents can also effectively mitigate the negative impact of stigma, thus helping adolescents achieve successful socialization outcomes while reducing trauma.

4.3 Education

Better education for youth and people in society can also reduce stigma. Feminine stigma against men is mainly due to long-standing stereotypes. Therefore, promoting new-age avant-garde ideas can help break traditional stereotypes. When thought patterns are changed, people will not think that males or females should or should not do something. Adolescent males will not be ostracized in this case because their behavior is not in line with popular beliefs. Individuality and diverse personal development will be socially tolerated. Stigmatization can be reduced. In addition, casual insults and abuse of others are, to some extent, a sign of low quality. Therefore, improving the quality of education can also reduce the harm to "feminized" men. When people are less discriminatory and abusive, they are more likely to feel tolerated by society. In this case, they will be more willing to integrate into society. Therefore, the improvement of quality education can have a positive effect on the socialization of young people. Ideological and quality education can work together to reduce stigmatization and interpersonal harm. This helps youth to achieve successful socialization more easily.

5. Conclusion

In summary, feminized stigma is presented through labeling so-called ordinary men and feminized men and the subsequent degradation of feminized men. In the first instance, the appearance of the feminine label and the use of it to accuse men are disrespectful and distort one's original biological sex. Second, the insult to feminized men further reflects the adverse effects of the label. This ultimately leads to stigmatizing femininity from a relatively objective term to a stigmatizing title for men. In the process of socializing men, the presence of stigma makes them more aware of the potential prejudices and stereotypes in society. Since socialization is a process of integrating into society and learning from its culture, perceptions of society can influence men's behavior. Some men who have been stigmatized may be able to adjust themselves and their perceptions to a relatively successful socialization process. Others may feel socially rejected and have a sense of fear or rejection of society, in which case they are more likely to fail in socialization. In this regard, it is essential to eliminate gender stereotypes in China as much as possible or to teach people to respect others through education. This may reduce some phenomena of stigmatization. It can solve the sources of subsequent adverse effects triggered by stigma. In addition, when the stigmatized person has already received psychological trauma, social welfare and counseling can be provided to minimize the damage from an individual perspective. This study is based on theoretical analysis and observation, and the leading research group focuses on Chinese people. Different countries may have various stigmatizing labels or socializing influences due to cultural differences. Therefore, the findings of this study may be difficult to generalize to other countries and cultures. Also, since the improvement strategies are

mainly based on theoretical analysis, their practicality and feasibility in real situations need to be considered.

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