

# Gender Differences in Predicting Adolescent Autonomy

Ranni Rahmayanthi Z\*  
*Guidance and Counseling Department  
 Lampung University  
 Bandar Lampung, Indonesia  
 rannirahmayanthi@yahoo.com\**

Syamsu Yusuf L.N  
*Psychology and Guidance of Education  
 Indonesia Education of University  
 Bandung, Indonesia  
 syamsu@upi.edu*

Ilfiandra  
*Psychology and Guidance of Education  
 Indonesia University of Education  
 Bandung, Indonesia  
 ilfiandra@upi.edu*

Nurhudaya  
*Psychology and Guidance and Education  
 Indonesia University of Education  
 Bandung, Indonesia  
 nurhudaya@upi.edu*

**Abstract** - The purpose of this study is to look at differences in autonomy and gender perspective on the relationship between emotional dimensions, behavioral dimensions and value dimensions. Participants in this study were Senior High Schools with a total of 538, consisting of 207 men and 331 women with an average age of 16-18 years. Research was done using quantitative surveys with the type of research using cross-sectional studies. The instrument used was the scale of adolescent independence, which was developed from Steinberg's theory. Data analysis techniques using the Mann-U Whitney different test analysis. The results showed no difference in the autonomy of adolescent boys and girls in the dimensions of value autonomy and emotional autonomy, while independently showed significant difference in adolescent boys and girls.

**Keywords**- autonomy, gender, emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy, and value autonomy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Autonomy as one of the tasks of adolescent development is the condition in which someone can achieve emotional autonomy from parents and other adults [1]. Having autonomy means that the teenagers must learn and practice in making their own decisions, then act in accordance with those decisions and take the responsibility for every consequence they may encounter. By having this autonomy, the teens will help themselves in managing their lives to be more positive and make healthy choices [2].

Autonomy in adolescents does not occur at one point in time and generally can occur throughout human development [3]. It will continue to develop into adulthood where a person is required to act into a new level of autonomy. Autonomy in adolescence was often referred as freedom. In fact, freedom is an essential component of being autonomy, but being autonomy means more than behaving freely. In autonomy eastern cultures it is often equated with "defiance". The attitude of teenagers who want to be free to do something without the participation of parents makes teens considered "defiant". It is not easy for adolescents to fight for autonomy. The difficulty lies in letting go of the childish nature that has developed and enjoyed it during

childhood. Teenagers often have problems in severing their children's emotional ties logically and objectively [4]. In this efforts, they sometimes have to go against the expectations and the rules by parents.

Adolescent autonomy is divided into three types according to [3], namely emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy, cognitive autonomy. Emotional autonomy was defined as the ability of adolescents to not depend on the loving support of others. It concerns to personal feelings and not rely emotionally with parents to get emotional support from others [5]. Emotional autonomy development may have the potentials to cause the conflict with parents [6, 7] and increased acceptance of peer influence [8]. Behavioral autonomy is an autonomy dimension that refers to the ability of adolescents to make decisions freely and take the consequences based on their choices. According to [8] the aspects of autonomy behavior are: adolescents are able to make their own decisions and have power over the influence of others (adolescents have firmness in establishment), Self-reliance (adolescents act with confidence). Cognitive autonomy is a dimension of autonomy that refers to the ability to interpret a set of principles about what is right and wrong as well as valuable or not. Autonomy in each adolescent is different, because autonomy was influenced by several factors including: heredity, parenting, the education system in schools, and life systems in the community [9]; rules of action or authority and commitment to the group [10]; gender and age [5].

The current investigation addresses the role of age and gender in the modulation of adolescent behavioral autonomy. The importance of understanding the significance of gender in psychological processes was recently underscored and reviewed by Stewart and McDermott [11]. Some recent studies have been devoted to identification of gender differences in the psychology of adolescence. For instance, girl in families marked by traditional maternal gender role attitudes were granted fewer autonomy opportunities [12]; becoming autonomous was a more stressful experiences for girls than boys [13] females had higher identity and lower intimacy scores and gave more decision explanations than males [14]; female who

were dating reported the most intense conflict with parents [15]; Peer influences in the behavior of early adolescence depend on the gender of the adolescent and this modulates group identification and delinquent behavior [16]. The purpose of this study is to look at differences in autonomy and gender perspective on the relationship between emotional dimensions, value dimensions, and behavioral dimensions.

**II. METHODS**

The research approach uses a quantitative approach to the type of research using cross-sectional survey type, where this research only knows autonomy from a gender perspective. Participants in this study were high school students determined by the incidental sampling technique so that the number of participants was 538 consisting of 207 men and 331 women. The average age of participants in this study is 16-18 years, where students enter the stage of adolescent development.

The instrument used in this study was a scale of autonomy developed from [8]. There are three dimensions measured, namely the dimensions of emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy, value autonomy with the number of items as many as 28 items. Validity in this study is the content validity where the assessment is carried out by experts to provide professional judgment. Then the instrument was tested and the correlation was calculated to see whether the items of the instrument correlated with the total items by using Spearman-Brown correlation analysis. While Cronbach Alfa calculates reliability with the help of SPSS 22, a score for the reliability of the instrument independence is 0.731 which indicates that the instrument has good reliability.

The procedure undertaken in this study was that researchers spread instruments in several public and private schools in Lampung. The scale of autonomy in some schools is considered to have heterogeneous. The scale of autonomy was shared with students in several classes with the help of class teachers. In filling the student scale accompanied by the classroom teacher and in some schools accompanied by the teacher guidance and counseling so that the data that is taken is in accordance with what is expected. The independence scale consists of the identity that must be filled in containing information about name, gender, and also the department.

The data in this study was analyzed by using Man U Withhney different test with the help of SPSS 22. The scale filled out by students, the results of the data was processed by, comparing the mean of two groups, namely female and male gender groups by comparing the mean per dimension. The Man U Whitney difference test was used to see the significance of the differences between the two populations, using random samples drawn from the same population.

**III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

*Preliminary Analysis*

The participants for the sample in this study were 538 high school students obtained from nine private and public schools in Lampung. The total sample consisted

of 207 (37.7%) male students and 331 (61.5%) female students. The sample was dominated by 415 students from the Natural Sciences department and 123 students from the Social Sciences department. The table below shows the distribution of sample data in the study.

Table 1. Description of Research Samples

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	207	37.7	38.5	38.5
	Female	331	60.3	61.5	100.0
	Total	538	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	11	2.0		
	Total	549	100.0		

*Emotional Autonomy*

In the dimension of emotional autonomy there are nine items from 3 indicators. These indicators are parents as people, non-dependency, and individuated. The results of the different tests analyze the different dimensions of emotional independence between men and women are as follows:

Table 2. Description of the emotional autonomy dimension data

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Emotional autonomy	Male	207	271.73	56249.00
	Female	331	268.10	88742.00
	Total	538		

From the above data, the mean rank in male gender students is 271.73 while the mean female rank is 268.10. Different results for the dimensions of emotional autonomy can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Different Mann-Whitney U test results in emotional autonomy dimensions

	Emotional autonomy dimension
Mann-Whitney U	33796.000
Wilcoxon W	88742.000
Z	-.265
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.791

In the analysis data above, the results of the different mann-Whitney U test were 33796 with a significance probability value of 0.791. Because the probability is 0.791 > 0.05, there is no difference between the emotional autonomy of adolescent male gender groups and female gender groups.

*Behavioral Autonomy*

There are three indicators and nine items in the behavioral autonomy dimension. These indicators are: the ability to make decisions, have the power to influence others and self-reliance. Different results for the dimensions of behavioral autonomy can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4 Description of the behavioral autonomy dimension data

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Behavioral autonomy dimension	Male	207	299.88	62074.50
	Female	331	250.50	82916.50
	Total	538		

The number of mean ranks in male students is 299.88, while the mean number of ranks in female students is 250.50. Different results for the dimensions of behavioral independence can be seen in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Different Mann-Whitney U test results in behavioral independence dimensions

	Behavioral autonomy dimension
Mann-Whitney U	27970.500
Wilcoxon W	82916.500
Z	-3.601
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Grouping Variable: gender

The results of the analysis of mann-Whitney U test data are 27970,500 with a significance value of 0,000. Because the probability is 0.000 <0.05, then there is a significant difference between the autonomy of adolescent behavior of the male gender group and the female gender group.

*Autonomy Value*

On the value dimension, there are three indicators with ten items. These indicators are: having the ability to think abstractly in looking at problems, adolescents have general principles of living alone, adolescents have personal values without being influenced by parents. Different results for the dimensions of self-reliance can be seen in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Description of the value autonomy dimension data

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Value autonomy dimension	Male	207	270.36	55965.00
	Female	331	268.96	89026.00
	Total	538		

The mean rank for male students was 270.36, while the mean rank number for female students was 268.96. Results The results of the test analyze the differences in the dimensions of the autonomy of values between men and women can be seen in Table 7 below:

Table 7. The results of the Mann-Whitney U difference test the value independence dimensions

	Value autonomy dimension
Mann-Whitney U	34080.000
Wilcoxon W	89026.000
Z	-.102
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.919

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

The results of the analysis of mean Whitney U test data are 34080,000 with a significance value of 0.919. Because probability 0.919 > 0.05, there is no difference between the autonomy of adolescent behavior of the male gender group and female gender group.

*Discussion*

The results showed that there were no differences in the two dimensions of autonomy, namely the dimensions of emotional autonomy and value autonomy in adolescent boys and girls. While in the dimension of behavioral autonomy, there is a significant difference between the independence of the behavior of male and female students.

Sex differences become one of the factors in research conducted by [5] researching about gender differences and changes related to age during adolescence (from puberty to age 17), which relates to autonomy, and psychological dimensions among them: the desire for autonomy, achieve autonomy, and reject the rules of parents. Research subjects were 934 students ranging in age from 12-17 years, consisting of 52% men and 48% women (with an average age of 13.1 years).

The results of this study indicate that the main differences between men and women were found at the age of 16 years and above, it was reported that the frequency of men achieving independence increased, whereas in women there was little progress. The results of this study are in line with this study, where there are differences in the independence of adolescent behavior between the two groups (male and female).

The first of these dimensions is behavioral as it refers to a young person's ability to act independently [17]. Behavioral autonomy refers to the ability to make decisions independently and to follow through on these decisions with actions [5]. Adolescent can develop autonomy through relationships with parents and peers. In general, during preadolescence and adolescence, they begin to have more opportunities to take responsibility for their own behavior. Adolescent spend a lot of time outside the home with adult friends so far from adult supervision. When adolescents are more inclined towards their peers and away from adults, then they have an obligation to manage and develop themselves that are healthy, independent, in behavior [18].

The ability to make decisions that are free from outside influences such as both parents and peers, and to be responsible for following through on these decisions in the form of actions [19]. Behavioral autonomy refers to the extent to which adolescents show responsibility for their actions, and regulate their own behavior and attitudes. Absolute self-reliance requires adolescents to make their own decisions, rather than following others, such as parents or friends [20]. When teens have the style of thinking like adults, they will realize that there are many ways to look at a situation. When teens reach this point, they can seek advice from others and weigh the choices given to them.

In terms of being autonomy, adolescent do not mean to be completely separated from others. In the case of decision making for example, adolescents may ask for consideration from adults and peers, but the final decision of decision

making is in the hands of adolescents without any intervention in that regard.

The dimension is emotional as it refers to the perception of independence through self-confidence and individuality, plus the establishment of emotional bonds that are more symmetrical than those seen in their relationship during childhood. The last of these aspects, emotional autonomy, which involves individuation and relinquishing dependence on parents [8].

In this dimension related to the transition, personal feelings, and how to connect someone with the people around him. During early adolescence teenagers are expected to be free from being supported by parents, to get support from peers [21]. Emotional autonomy is the ability to have feelings free from other feelings. The closer one adolescent attains logical autonomy, the more they learn there are many ways to see an outcome. When problems arise, emotionally autonomy adolescents are better able to find their own solutions that rely solely on external compatibility [21].

Another area of autonomy, namely cognitive autonomy, received less attention in research. Cognitive autonomy addresses the ability of individuals to have autonomy attitudes and beliefs and to think for themselves. Developing cognitive autonomy truly requires the ability to consider someone, voice opinions, make their own decisions, judge for themselves, and use comparative validation. Cognitive autonomy is important in adolescence because it allows adolescents to have the opportunity to gain knowledge that can help them manage their own lives and make healthy choices. When adolescents develop cognitive autonomy, adolescents will be able to negotiate and compromise in overcoming conflicts, debate their own opinions, and understand perspectives that are different from their own [22].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, the conclusions in this study are: (1) there is no difference in emotional autonomy between the male and female gender groups; (2) there is no difference in value autonomy between male gender groups and female gender groups; (3) there are differences in emotional autonomy between male gender groups and female gender groups. Research recommendations to further researchers are to be able to look deeper into each indicator per dimension, to analyze differences in autonomy from other multicultural aspects.

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