

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND GENDER STEREOTYPES AMONG KUPTM STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The capabilities of gender stereotypes in harming men and women's capacity in developing social roles are being discussed in a different context and perspective. In the context of a student's academic performance, gender stereotypes are founded as one of the factors that are significantly connected. However, a very limited study was found in proving the effect of stereotypes on academic performance and gender differences in the context of students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study was aimed to find the gender differences in stereotypes. This study also seeks to identify the relationship between different levels of academic performance and stereotypes. The Symbolic Interaction Theory was proposed as the main theory and supported by Social Identity Theory to explain and strengthen the relationship between each variable in this study. A quantitative method was applied in this study and data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires among 230 respondents from Kolej University Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur (KUPTM KL). The result shows that there is no significant relationship between stereotypes and gender. In addition, there's a difference between the levels of academic performance with stereotypes. Therefore, the study contributes to the field of communication through the establishment of more comprehensive variables related to the students' academic performance and stereotypes. It also provided a new perspective of Symbolic Interaction Theory.

Keywords: Academic performance, gender, stereotype, Symbolic Interaction Theory

INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes issues becoming more prevalent and pressing nowadays. It can reflect the expectations of particular social group members (Ellemers, 2017). The ability of stereotypes in influencing people perceptions of others also affect the memories towards others (Gorman, 2005). There's a lot of factors that influence the existence of stereotypes such as Steele (1997) found the reasons for competency behaviour while Chalabaev et al. (2008) found individual self-concept development and Ellemers (2017) found a reason of ambivalent of society's mindset. According to Gorman (2005), stereotypes also influence an individual perceived through i) stereotype-consistent behaviour-attributed to stable personality traits, and ii) stereotype-inconsistent behaviour-as an unreliable response to a particular time-bounded situation. Owing to that, stereotypes have become a norm to be applied since they have already become accustomed to individuals or society generally.

In the context of gender stereotypes, both men and women have different set divisions of labour back in the early eras. Brown (2002) stated that biologically, a woman has a role as a child-bearer and that alone steered them into a nurturer or caregiving role meanwhile, man thrived for the role of provider because males go hunting without any constrictions of female's menstruation, nursing or pregnancy. Plus, female's skills were often valued more towards preserving and improving the home lifestyles and to planting crops when the hunting activities wasn't fruitful (Dubeck & Dunn, 2006). Therefore, it shows that both genders tend to stereotypes themselves and that alone limiting themselves into one certain social role only.

Stelle (1997) in the study of treating gender stereotypes indicates that stereotypes also affects a competent female behaviour and value a masculine activity. For example, females who have not necessarily internalized the negative stereotypes into their self-concept (Chalabaev et al. (2008). A gender-typed individual normally used gender stereotypes to judge, to conform to these stereotypes, and to avoid ay inappropriate behaviours to their gender (Chalabaev et al., 2013). In the context of education, Beyer (1999) found that men and boys are more likely to be viewed as intellectual compared to women and girls. The existence of gender stereotypes influencing students' academic performance in a big way without them even realizing it. Goff et al. (2008) implied that racial identity and stereotyping always deter an individual's learning outcome.

STEREOTYPES

The earliest study of stereotypes was started by Karlins et al. (1969) which discuss the implication of stereotypes among people. Specifically, Karlins et al. (1969) explain stereotypes as generalization and marginalization of individual impressions from different sources and experienced with the stereotyped group. While Finchilescu (2005) highlighted emotion and stereotype involvement in influencing people through the concept of metastereotypes. In this concept, Finchilescu (2005) suggested the negative and positive stereotypes that an individual seems to believe of what others perceive hold about them. However, Owuamalam and Zagefka (2011) found that positive stereotypes have a good effect on oneself and the negative stereotypes have polar opposite effects on oneself but the majority of metastereotypes are mostly negative. In their research, the findings are a bit contradicting from prior researchers because they found that negative stereotypes on metastereotypes are weighing out the positive stereotypes and thus, the result tends to be biased.

Some of the studies on stereotypes associated it with power. According to Lammers et al. (2008), people who have less power usually found themselves engage in metastereotyping rather than those in a more dominant group of people who have power. Their finding is that this behaviour could easily show up at any college or university where students can be seen divided into subordinate groups or students who have less authority in which does not involve in any college extracurricular activities and dominant group or students who are most likely to partake in college extracurricular activities. In a wider context of stereotyping, metastereotyping can bear different consequences and one of them revolved around college students (Wakefield et al., 2012). The act of stereotyping and metastereotyping can be evoked even as simplest as rejecting help from someone who has higher authority or power than others because it reminds them of their inferiority (Lammers et al., 2008).

In the context of characteristics, Christopher and Schlenker (2000) examined stereotypes of target individuals who were classified as affluent or not so affluent by mentioned that those who have affluent character were judged as having more positive attributes. The act of stereotypes have been instilling in oneself through advertising and it influences the younger generation from as early as 10 years old to older people (Bush & Furnham, 2013). In line with that, Johnson and Young (2002) affirm that advertisement not only sells a product that is related to children but also sells them ideas about stereotypes in general. Owing to that, Mitra (2008) confirmed that in children advertisements, a set of stereotypes arise in both females and males where it could be seen that girls are only associated with dolls while boys were only associated with cars. This finding confirms that by the time those kids enrol on college, their stereotypes could intensify even more than what they have possessed (Davis, 2009).

GENDER-STEREOTYPES

The effects of gender on human behaviour and activity can be seen on several levels. The original concept of gender was around in culture and historically changeable (Hirdman, 2001). The feminine and masculine in gender concepts were primarily determined by a social construct and not primarily by biology (Connell, 2002). Harding (1986) listed three different contexts on gender construction which are structural, symbolic and individual levels in society. In explaining the relationship between gender and an absence of inherent inequality or hierarchy as a relational concept, Connell (2002) seen it as an important ability or evaluating skill.

Based on experiential studies, gender stereotypes affect the way people attend to, interpret, and remember information about themselves and others which helped in communications about men and women (Ellemers, 2017). It is constructed through culture and being share at the society level in describing how different gender being interpreted (Fiske, 1998). Gender stereotyping, therefore, refers to beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity (Brannon, 2016). However, it is embedded within social structures and is transmitted along with generation through socialization (Basow, 1992). As found by social scientists, they believe that the environment shapes the gender differences of children (Mosetse, 2006). Basow (1992) mentioned that the process of socialization begins at birth as childhood being the most intensive period of socialization. However, the process of socialisation keeps growing and continued throughout individual lives, learning more specific versions of gender role requirements and responsibilities as the social positions changed (Mosetse, 2006). In the school context, the concept of gender stereotypes also can be transmitted when boys and girls are treated differently (Martin & Sexton, 2002). Although education policies normally dictate equal treatment for both gender, it helps the schools to act as an amplifier for society's stereotypes (Mosetse, 2006). Teachers usually provide a sex impression through classifying people on a relevant basis when children in the school are assigned 'appropriate' gender roles, such as girls sweeping the classroom while boys do 'masculine' chores such as moving furniture (Martin et al., 2002).

GENDER STEREOTYPES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Normally, an individual with experience of helplessness and distress due to certain stereotypes will face a stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995) explain stereotype threat as refers to the concern that is experienced when one feels at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group. Stereotype threat occurs in a situation where there is an expectation that one may be judged based on social group membership and there is a negative stereotype about one's social identity group (Steele et al., 2002). Threatening experiences usually will lead to performance decrements in terms of academic performance. The study by Kellow and Jones (2008) explored on stereotype threat that influences Black college freshman performance and the results shown a predictor of later success. Good et al. (2008) shows that stereotype threat can occur among the highest performers in realistic environments. In their finding, they found that women enrolled in college advanced math classes showed decrements in performance on a calculus test when the test was described as diagnostic of ability.

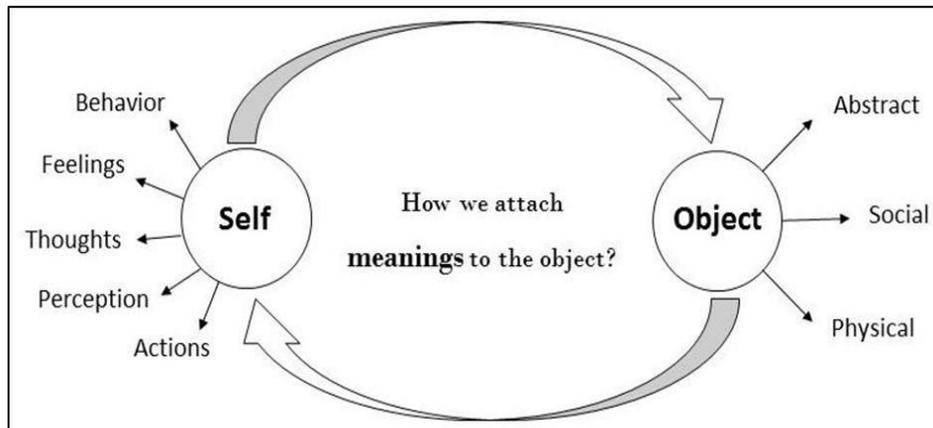
Some researchers have proposed that it is an assimilation of numerous mechanisms that causes stereotype threat to impact academic performance (Schmader et al., 2008). Schmader et al. (2008) stated that a combination of physiological, affective and cognitive processes lead to more negative consequences than stereotype threat has on academic performance. Other than that, Andreoletti and Lachman (2004) found that more highly educated individuals are less liable to stereotype threat effects because they tend to think and it's hard for them to believe certain things without proven right and probable cause.

THE SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY (SIT)

The Symbolic Interaction Theory was developed by Mead (1934) and then was extended by Blumer (1969). The theory implied that implications are delivered by society using a language of shared descriptions and by understanding the world they live in, individuals see ideas and occasions dependent on the representative implications given to them by society. As a piece of representative interactionism, social belief systems have utilized generalizations as successful methods in making decisions about the social and symbolic conditions in which individuals live. By default, according to Hebert (2020), stereotypes are developed by

society as a result of symbolic interactionism. In daily life, a generalization not just delineates a picture that reflects the regular qualities of a social gathering yet, in addition, makes a reference point (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). In a word, the symbolic interaction theory serves a significant capacity in the arrangement of partialities people have about sexual orientations and occupations; the self- congruity hypothesis serves to make and support wanted personalities through contrasting word related sex generalizations and themselves. The following figure explained the process involved in the Symbolic Interaction Theory as proposed by Mead (1934). In this context of the study, SIT serves its purpose in identifying the grounds that could be affected by stereotypes and later on to be tested as a hypothesis to measure whether it is significant.

Figure 1: The Symbolic Interaction Theory by Mead (1934).



METHODS

Quantitative research by using a questionnaire in the data collection process was used in this study. A set of questionnaires was distributed among 230 respondents using stratified sampling. A total of 21 questions were included to evaluate the basis of stereotypes in general and to assess the correlation of college student’s academic performance, gender and stereotype. The instruments to measure the variables was adopted originally from Winsten (1986). From the 25 original items, 11 items were adopted in this study. Another 10 items to measure the variable was pulled out from Khalid and Mishari (2018). The following table shows the item used to measure the variables in this study.

Table 1: Items in measuring gender stereotypes and academic performance

| Items |
|--|
| B1. Stereotypes exist because there is truth to them |
| B2. Stereotypes exist from the lack of awareness |
| B3. I realize the act of stereotyping since pre-school |
| B4. I realize the act of stereotyping since middle school |
| B5. I realize the act of stereotyping since high school |
| B6. I have stereotyped other people in the past |
| B7. I haven’t stereotype other people in the past |
| B8. I have been stereotyped by other people in the past |
| B9. I haven’t been stereotyped by other people in the past |
| B10. My family members did stereotype me in any ways |
| B11. My family members didn’t stereotype me in any ways |
| B12. Gender Stereotype is applicable in college |
| B13. Stereotyping people did help me boost my college performance |
| B14. Stereotyping people didn’t help me boost my college performance |
| B15. Stereotyping my course did affect my college performance |
| B16. Stereotyping my course didn’t affect my college performance |
| B17. I have been underestimated by others because of my gender |
| B18. I haven’t been underestimated by others because of my gender |
| B19. Women are far better being a nurse rather than engage in manual labour |
| B20. Men are far better in the IT department rather than in the cosmetologists' department |

B21. Gender inequality, in general, is still an issue at large

RESULT

The reliability of instruments was done using Cronbach's alpha values that can measure the internal consistency of the instruments used. The following table showed a value of $\alpha = .80$.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha for Pre Test Analysis

| Variable | Items | α |
|---------------|-------|----------|
| 1. Stereotype | 21 | .80 |

Table 2 shown the results of there is no significant difference in stereotype based on respondents' gender ($t = .58, p < .05$). This indicates that there is no difference in the context of stereotypes between male and female respondents. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Table 2: T-test analysis of stereotype based on gender

| Variable | Gender | n | Mean | Standard Deviation | t | Sig. |
|------------|--------|-----|--------|--------------------|--------|------|
| Stereotype | Male | 107 | 2.3632 | .569 | -3.041 | .588 |
| | Female | 123 | 2.5730 | .477 | | |

For Hypothesis 2, there is a difference between stereotypes based on academic performance, it is discussed on hypothesis-based differences between stereotype and academic performance. The result shown there is a difference between stereotypes and academic performance. Table 3 shown that there is significant difference in stereotype based on respondents' academic performance ($F = .000, p > .05$). Therefore, the stereotype does affect academic performance.

Table 3: One Way ANOVA based on academic performance

| Variable | Academic Performance | Sum Squares | DF | Mean | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------------|-------------|-----|-------|--------|------|
| Stereotype | Within Group | 11.856 | 210 | .056 | 49.198 | .00* |
| | In group | 52.774 | 19 | 2.778 | | |
| | Total | 64.630 | 372 | | | |

CONCLUSION

The finding of the study indicates that there is a difference in stereotypes based on gender. The result showed that both genders, male and female have the same level of stereotype and does not show that only one gender is stereotyping more than the other. As found by Razumnikova (2005), the male gender is more likely to dominate and held stereotypes about what professions are such as social labor, politics, engineering and economics, compared to a field that is dominated by female genders like cooking and teaching. Meanwhile, in this study, the finding contradicts as it clearly shows that stereotype does not affect gender at all. On the objectives of the differences between the level of academic performance and stereotype, the result showed that there is a significant difference between the level of academic performance and stereotype. This is linked to the new finding that college students in Malaysia acknowledge that there is a stereotype in their academic performance.

Good et al. (2008) shows that stereotype threat can occur among the highest performers in college. In their finding, they found that women enrolled in college advanced math classes showed decrements in performance on a calculus test when the test was described as diagnostic of ability. This can be back up by the researcher finding that there is a difference in the context of stereotype-based on academic performance among college students in Malaysia. In terms of students' academic performance in Malaysia, it shows that the stereotype does affect academic performance.

Based on the findings and the set of conclusions of this research, here are several recommendations to be considered for future research. The future researcher could widen the number of respondents that are needed for the study as it can assure the researcher that their findings can be more solid and reliable. It is also advisable for future researchers to target this study not only in one specific college but to another university as well as this study mainly focuses on the students of Kolej University Poly-Tech MARA Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, the future researcher could also enhance the prospect of the topic regarding stereotypes by using the qualitative method to get more in-depth information on why stereotypes affecting their life or academic performance. Last but not

least, the future researcher could also try to find other variables that could be potentially related or is affected by stereotypes so that the topic of stereotype could be branch out to another form of research.

In conclusion, this study shows that different variables affecting stereotypes differently. For example, gender itself as a variable does not affect stereotype as it was proven not significant and the variable of college students academic performance does affect stereotype as it was later proven in findings that it is significant for the study. This indicate that the higher the level of stereotype, the higher the academic performance affected in individual.

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