

Perception of Gender Stereotypes at Workplace in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract--*The gender stereotypes refer to category-based traits or behaviour that often correlated with either women or men due to traditional beliefs. The study aimed to explore gender stereotypes that frequent happened in one of three sectors such as business, education and health care. The sample sizes were 34 respondents which completed a questionnaire that developed in this study. The respondents were mixed of employee's and student from EFFAT University and outside EFFAT University. The demographic information of the respondents were 21% men and 79% women. There were 70% of respondents were Saudi and 28% of the respondents were non-Saudi which aged 20 years old and 54 years. Questionnaire had been distributed based on scale of stereotypic sex-role items. The questionnaire were set and distributed online to the respondents. The findings indicated most frequent traits associated with men and women were expected and others were not expected. Meanwhile, there was relationship between gender, gender stereotypes and workplace. Besides, the light of gender role theory and transformational stage toward Saudi Arabia vision 2030 had been discussed.*

Keywords--*Culture; gender role, gender stereotypes; gender; occupational stereotypes; workplace*

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes in the workplace are spreading widely. Gender stereotypes might vary depending on the specific sectors of the workplace. People might have specific stereotypes on women working in business sector. Although, the stereotypes have been examined in previous studies but there is lacking study exploring gender stereotypes in Saudi Arabia.

Gender stereotypes can be both positive and negative. Gender stereotypes in the workplace are dilemmas that most employees suffer from. The existence of gender stereotypes in the workplace mostly has a negative effect. The negative effect of gender stereotypes will make people more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour when exposed to stereotypical behaviours or situations.

The stereotype is defined as category-based traits or attributes that are often applied to a group of people as a result of accepted beliefs about the group members [1]. In addition, stereotype also defined as standardized, generalized conceptual image which is held in common by same group members [2]. Gender stereotypes are thoughts that can be adopted about the traits and behaviour of men and women. A stereotype involves person reduction to a set exaggerates especially negative, character traits and stressed that stereotyping educates, naturalizes and fixed differences [3,12].

Conventional ideas, prejudices in the minds regarding the characteristics and social roles of men and women are also categorized as gender stereotypes [4]. A stereotypes involved reduction of persons to a set of exaggerated which usually negative, character traits and stressed that stereotyping decreases, naturalizes and fixed

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difference [5]. A study in leadership and gender stereotypes of emotions and also found negative stereotypes about women's leadership and emotional expressions [6].

There are risk factors of stereotypes threat such as stress, cognitive load and stigma consciousness. Consequences of stereotypes threat included changes in goals, decreased performance, disengagement and self-handicapping [7,11].

A study had been conducted on gender difference in responded to conflict in the workplace. The study indicated that women were rated as appropriate in dealing with conflict in a constructive behaviour but men were rated more in acting in destructive way with conflict [8]. There are stereotypes existing about gender and science, and women are not perceived as equal or compatible with the category of scientists. A study found men had similar characteristics to successful scientist more than women [9]. In entrepreneurship, women experience more difficulties in obtaining the funding for their ventures which suggested that finances evaluate men entrepreneurs more favourably than women entrepreneurship [10].

The current study was filling the gap in the existing literature about Saudi Arabia. The study aimed to explore gender stereotypes that frequent happened in one of three sectors such as business, education and health care.

II. METHODOLOGY

The sample sizes were 34 respondents included both gender, women and men. The respondents were from Riyadh and Jeddah that aged more than 18 years old. The respondents were mixed of employees and student from EFFAT University and outside EFFAT University.

Questionnaire had been distributed based on scale of stereotypic sex-role items. The current tool consisted of 6 tables where the respondents were indicated frequently women and men in education, health care and business which showed 32 traits or behaviours. The sample item for traits was "aggressive" and for negatively worded traits "illogical". The scale for female traits comprised rated on 5-point scale (1=never, 2= rarely, 3= occasionally, 4= frequently, 5 = very frequently) Cronbach's alpha for both gender scale was 0.970. Factor analysis was conducted to determine many components the scale and total variance percentage was reported.

The questionnaire were set and distributed online to the respondents. The respondents had option if did not want to complete the questionnaire. The demographic information of the respondents was 21% men and 79% women. There were 70% of respondents were Saudi and 28% of the respondents were non-Saudi which aged 20 years old and 54 years old. In this study, 29% of the respondents were graduated from study, 65% of the respondents completed bachelor, 6% of the respondents were completed high school. Meanwhile, 56% of the respondents were employed and 38% of the respondents were unemployed. The data was analysed used SPSS program for social science. Table 1 represented feminine and masculine traits.

Table 1: Feminine and masculine traits

Traditionally feminine traits	Traditionally masculine traits	Neutral traits
Hide emotions	Aggressive	Worldly
Subjective	Dominant	Conceited about appearance
Easily influenced	Skilled in business	Religious
Passive	Direct	Enjoys art and literature
Illogical	Separate feeling from ideas	
Competitive	Think they are superior	
Home oriented	Using harsh language	
Excitable	Adventurous	
Sneaky	Self-confident	
Feeling easily hurt	Act as a leader	
Uncomfortable about being	Decision making	
Talkative	Rough	
Gentle		
Aware of feelings of others		
Loud		
Express tender feeling		

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Any trait that was chosen over 75% of the time was stereotype for men and women. In this study, the rule was applied and modified to include traits that were chosen more than 50% of the time. In Table 2, three traits that were highly selected for men and women in education. Self-confidence appeared as stereotype for both gender. However, some stereotypes only appeared for women or men. In addition, consistent with literature gentle was feminine trait but hiding emotions was inconsistent finding with expectation for women. The consistent with the literature men as decision makers appeared as stereotype for men not women.

Table 2: Stereotypes in education sector

Female			Male		
Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)	Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)
Hide emotions	79%	3.2(0.91)	Decision making	73%	4.00 (0.950)
Self-confidence	70%	4.3 (0.99)	Dominant	67%	3.84 (1.300)
Gentle	68%	3.85 (0.79)	Self-confidence	67%	3.94 (0.91)

* Scale range = 1-5, where 1= never, 2= rarely 3= occasionally, 4 = frequently, 5= very frequently

In Table 3, common is self-confidence. Inconsistent with the literature, women as decision makers appeared as stereotype for women and not for men. Moreover, consistent with the literature men appeared as direct and hide emotions.

Table 3: Stereotypes in health sector

Female			Male		
Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)	Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)
Decision maker	73%	3.824 (1.23)	Direct	79%	4.118 (0.73)
Self-confidence	73%	3.912 (1.15)	Dominant	67%	4.147 (0.82)
Gentle	68%	3.882 (0.00)	Self-confidence	67%	4.29 (1.17)

* Scale range = 1-5, where 1= never, 2= rarely 3= occasionally, 4 = frequently, 5= very frequently

In Table 4, common as expected trait for both gender was being skilled in business and dominant. Inconsistent with the literature, self-confidence appeared as a stereotype for women and not for men. Moreover, consistent with literature men appeared as dominant. The men in the business sector were stereotyped as talkative but not women. This findings had reflected the Saudi culture were recently business was a male dominant sector. However, nowadays women were more visible in organizations, small business and malls.

In this study, only one trait was negatively worded item “illogical” thus reverse coding was done. The literature on gender stereotypes characterized being logical as a masculine trait. However, the picture in this study was different where women appeared stereotypically more logical than men in two sectors which were health and business. The women in health were observed by 45% of the respondents whereas men in health were observed as logical by 27% of the respondents.

Table 4: Stereotypes in business sector

Female			Male		
Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)	Trait	Percentage	Mean (SD)
Self-confidence	77%	4.24 (1.04)	Direct	79%	4.2 (1.14)
Skilled in business	70%	4.6 (0.96)	Dominant	67%	4.24 (0.92)
Dominant	70%	3.97 (1.11)	Talkative	74%	4.2 (1.2)

* Scale range = 1-5, where 1= never, 2= rarely 3= occasionally, 4 = frequently, 5= very frequently

Table 5 represented relationship among gender stereotypes in education, respondents' gender and workplace.

Table 5: Relationship among gender stereotypes in education, respondents' gender and workplace

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender									
Sector	-0.16								
F_E_Hide emotions	0.30	0.13							
F_E_Self confident	0.24	0.09	0.44*						
F_E_Gentle	0.14	-0.07	0.39	0.30					
M_E_Making_decisions	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.40	0.50**				
M_E_Self_confident	-0.03	0.01	0.28	0.36	0.31	0.73**			
M_E_Dominant	-0.26	-0.10	-0.28	0.10	-0.16	0.11	0.15		
M_E_Illogical	0.00	0.01	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.26	0.02	0.04	
F_E_Illogical	-0.49	0.11	0.69**	0.11	-0.11	0.12		-0.22	0.17

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

M_E= Male in education

F_E= female in education

Table 6 represented relationship among gender stereotypes in health, respondents' gender, and workplace.

Table 6: Relationship among gender stereotypes in health, respondents' gender and workplace

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender									
Sector	-0.29								
F_H_Worldly	0.16	0.02							
F_H_Making_Decision	0.27	0.04	0.59**						
F_H_Self_Confident	0.02	- 0.12	0.64**	0.74**					
M_H_Direct	0.13	- 0.02	-0.05	0.22	0.39				
M_H_Self_confident	-0.17	0.02	0.31	0.44*	0.61**	0.63**			
M_E_Hide_Emotions	-0.20	- 0.30	-0.18	0.10	-0.49*	0.23	0.48*	0.37	
M_H_Illogical	0.20	0.17	0.04	-0.11	-0.27	-0.30	-0.43*	-0.02	
F_E_Illogical	-0.4	0.26	0.04	0.12	-0.19	-0.10	-0.32	0.16	0.61**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

M_H = Male in health

F_H= female in health

Table 7 represented relationship among gender stereotypes in business, respondents' gender, and workplace.

Table 7: Relationship among gender stereotypes in business, respondents' gender and workplace

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender									
Sector	-0.29								
F_B_Dominant	0.31	0.02							
F_B_Skilled_in_business	0.04	0.26	0.52**						
F_B_Self_confident	0.12	0.20	0.54**	0.64**					
M_B_Dominant	-0.10	0.23	0.53**	0.66**	0.44*				
M_H_Skilled_in_business	-0.38	0.10	0.45**	0.81*	0.51**	0.64**			
M_B_Talkative	0.11	0.17	0.32	0.20	0.31	0.22	0.22	0.28	
F_B_Illogical	-0.17	-0.01	0.02	-0.40*	-0.27	-0.34	-0.32	0.49*	
M_B_Illogical	0.13	-0.02	0.37	-0.26	0.03	-0.14	-0.12	0.51**	0.81**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

M_B = Male in business

F_B= female in health

Discussion

The findings showed that traditional feminine and masculine traits appeared in three work sectors. However, some traits appeared as feminine or masculine that was not consistent with the literature. Stereotypes for women were different with stereotypes for male. These differences were sometimes expected based on the literature on gender stereotypes men were perceived as decision makers. In addition, some traits for men and women were not expected or stereotypical for men or women such as men were perceived as talkative. Inconsistent with the literature, self-confidence appeared as a stereotypes for women and not for men. Moreover, consistent with the literature men appeared as dominant. The men in the business sector were stereotyped as talkative in this study but not women. This finding might reflect Saudi culture were until recently business was a men dominant sector. However nowadays women were more visible in organizations, small business and malls.

In this study, only one trait was negatively worded item 'illogical' thus reverse coding was done (1 as 5 and 2 as 4). One unexpected finding in this study was trait "illogical". The literature on gender stereotypes characterized was logical as a masculine trait. However, women appeared stereotypically more logical than men in two sectors which were health and business.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained, it was found that female portrayed 'self-confidence' trait while male represented the 'dominant' trait in all the three sectors. This study provides a positive picture on what the Saudi society thinks as the most common traits of women. Initially negative stereotypes appeared regarding women's ability so it is important to survey people's perception about both genders in different careers in a culture that is known to be traditional and gender segregation is the norm to make women more comfortable working. Thus, future research on other traits are needed to determine more precisely the gender stereotypes in the three careers examined in this study and other occupations that are not covered such as scientists and lawyers.

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