

The Understanding and Thinking of Gender Stereotype

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Keywords: Stereotype, Gender Stereotype, Negative Impact

Abstract: Stereotypes are very common in our life. People tend to think that men are generally tall and strong, and are good at doing most physical work, while women are petite and weak, and are more capable of doing tiny and of less important work, which is an example of gender stereotype. It is believed that people in Northeast China are generally bold and straightforward, and people in Southeast China tend to be gentle and graceful, which is a regional stereotype. This paper mainly expounds the definition of gender stereotype, and expounds its influence from three aspects: life, work and political participation, as well as ways to reduce its negative influence.

1. Introduction

Since Walter Lippmann put forward the concept of stereotype in 1922, it has become a hot research topic in the community of social psychology. In addition, many other fields have taken great interest in it, and some scholars of communication, education and science have also studied it. Stereotype refers to an individual holding a stable view of certain people or things under the influence of society. It not only has positive effects, such as simplifying our cognitive process and saving a lot of time and energy, but also has negative effects, for instance, it will make people ignore individual differences and make perceptual mistakes when they recognize others. Among many types of stereotypes, the most concerned is gender stereotype.

2. The Definition of Stereotype

Different scholars have different definitions of gender stereotypes from different angles. Gender stereotype, as its name implies, is the impression people have on the "theoretical" characteristics of men and women. As far as gender stereotypes are concerned, most people themselves hold a view of gender differences. As for the gender differences between men and women, it is generally believed that men are highly masculine, such as brave and strong, while women are highly feminine, such as petite and strong dependence. These views exist stably in people's minds and are recognized by people, so they are called gender stereotypes.

3. The Impact of Gender Stereotype on Women

Gender stereotype refers to "the collective recognition in the society, the specific concept about the attributes of both sexes", which is mainly manifested in the fixed belief in cognition, character and performance of both sexes. Women, more than men, are thought to be communal—that is, friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive. Men, more than women, are thought to be agentic—that is, masterful, assertive, competitive, and instrumentally competent [1]. It is precisely because of these fixed views that people have some cognitive biases when they evaluate others or their own behaviors. This is particularly evident in women.

3.1. The Impact of Gender Stereotype on Women in Life

Due to the specific concept of gender attributes in society, people tend to believe that men should work hard outside to decide the major events in life, while women should do the trivial chores of washing and cooking well. For example, when the light bulb at home is broken, and without men,

women can fix it but they will not fix it because they have no confidence in their abilities. Not only men, but also women often put themselves in the position of vulnerable groups. It is not that contemporary women need to be strong, but it may be a better choice for women to put themselves in the correct position and do what they can do.

3.2. The Impact of Gender Stereotype on Women in Work

The construction of gender allowed women and men to work differently in the field they felt adapted to, thus releasing much pressure of surviving in society then. However, it also brought problems to society. The stereotypes left by society pressured women through labor, and this stereotype exploited women's right to work out of home just like men. Women initially were forced to be at home and raise their children, and were considered to be inferior and less smart than men. The stereotypes make it hard to find a job compared to men, resulting in the exploitation of their right to work. This plight of women finding jobs can be seen all over the world. Many women work in harder conditions and get lower pay, and the chance of improving those is almost 0. The global labour force participation rate of women is about 49%, however, that of men is 75% which is 26% higher. In some regions, the difference could sometimes be higher than 50%. From an economic perspective, the elimination of the gender gap in labor force participation enables and speeds up the global GDP improvement [2].

3.3. The Impact of Gender Stereotype on Women in Political Areas

Women were not encouraged to be involved in political areas before, because the stereotypes created by gender structure exploit their right to express ideas. Women before were greatly exploited by society. At that time, people thought women couldn't think independently since women were forced to rely on men. In many families in America, it was hard for women to find a job and married women couldn't own property and had no legal claim to any money they might earn [3]. Overall, women accumulated 10% less wealth over their political tenure than men. This seems to indicate that women are less likely to engage in corruption and more likely to be risk-averse than men [4]. As a result, the only function of women was considered to be an inalienable part of home instead of being a distinct individual. Under the pressure of stereotypes, women can't express their ideas. Conversely, if women have more chances to be involved in political areas, more children and women's concerns will be brought to court, and it also may lead to higher economic growth.

4. Ways to Reduce the Negative Impact of Gender Stereotypes

Since gender stereotype has brought bad influence to women to a great extent, many scholars have found ways to weaken or eliminate gender stereotype. On the one hand, it will be beneficial to increase the confidence of the stereotypical group. For example, encourage women to read more successful female scientists, doctors, lawyers and other materials, so as to set an example of women's success, so that women feel that they are not worse than men. On the other hand, change the awareness of stereotyped groups toward stereotype threats. Researchers found that teaching participants about stereotype threats in advance: in the situation of stereotype threats, teaching stereotyped groups the knowledge about stereotype threats and helping them understand this phenomenon can achieve the goal of reducing stereotype threats.

5. Conclusion

The gender role creates pressure in females and has a negative impact on society. This paper mainly discusses the definition of gender stereotype and its negative impact on women from three aspects: life work and political participation. Thus, the unequal situation for women should be paid great attention, because everyone should be born with equal rights. In a word, It is of great significance to advocate the concept of gender equality and establish a correct understanding of it.

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