

Men Strong, Women Weak? A Study on Job Seekers' Self-Evaluations from a Gender Perspective

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Abstract. Social gender theory emphasizes that gender is a cultural construct, and thus self-evaluations in the job application process inevitably differ between men and women. This study analyzes the online resumes of job seekers from several technology-based companies in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, and finds the following: 1. Compared to men, women are more likely to highlight their learning ability, positive personality, sense of responsibility, communication skills, teamwork ability, adaptability, and past experiences or certifications in their self-evaluations. 2. In contrast, men are more likely than women to emphasize their hardworking attitude in their self-evaluations. 3. There are no significant gender differences in the presentation of self-assessment on stress resistance and execution ability. This study highlights gender differences in self-evaluation among job seekers. Overall, women's self-evaluations show a more positive attitude than those of men, extending the research on gender perspectives in the workplace and contributing to further studies on the changing personality traits and gender concepts of contemporary workers.

Keywords: Self-evaluation, Job seekers, Social gender, Feminism

1. Introduction and Literature Review

The workplace, as a domain of social division of labor, has long been the subject of sociological research. Sociology focuses on the analysis of actors in the workplace, with one important issue being gender differences in the workplace. Gender differences include both physiological and social differences. Physiological differences refer to the bodily distinctions between men and women, while social differences encompass the disparities in thoughts, beliefs, lifestyles, and other areas between the two sexes. There is a vast body of research on social gender differences and self-evaluation; however, studies specifically focusing on job seekers' self-evaluations in the workplace are relatively few. This study is based on self-evaluation texts in numerous resumes to explore the changes and characteristics of gender-based self-evaluation perspectives in the contemporary workplace and attempts to analyze the underlying structural causes.

Gender can be divided into physiological sex and social gender, corresponding to biological differences and social differences, respectively. Social gender refers to the differences in roles, behaviors, emotions, and thoughts between men and women, which are shaped through cultural influences and social practices [1]. This theory was initially one of the feminist explorations aimed at breaking the gender inequality between men and women, asserting that gender differences are not merely physiological but also products of social influence. These differences primarily manifest in temperament traits, behavioral roles, and the roles and expectations of men and women in the economy and society [2]. One of the most famous works in the history of social gender studies is Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which is regarded as the "Bible" of feminism. The author argues that women are considered the "Other," an object defined by men as they identify themselves as the "Self." Women are constructed in this process, laying the intellectual foundation for the development of social gender theory [3]. Anthropological studies of primitive tribes reveal that the gender traits we associate with masculinity and femininity are not related to physiological differences but rather formed through the cultural influences of the tribe. This challenges the stereotype that gender differences are "either-or" and "inborn" [4]. In *Masculine Domination*, Pierre Bourdieu describes how the traditional gender division of labor in society has become a system of two classes, which are both opposing and complementary. Every job is clearly divided by gender, and women are socially expected to accept the fictional reasons for their inferiority and subordination [5].

The gender structure theory posits that the construction of gender differences comes both from the self-construction process of individual socialization and from the cultural construction of social structures [6]. Individual socialization is reflected in the primary socialization process within the family. In Chinese family culture, female traits are generally described as “considerate,” “kind,” and “empathetic,” while male traits are described as “strong,” “humorous,” and “steady.” The gender role expectations of parents for their children play a crucial role in the socialization process and have a significant influence on an individual’s future self-evaluation [7]. On the societal level, gender stereotypes of men are typically characterized as “positive, enterprising, and adventurous,” while women are stereotyped as “negative, weak, dependent, and submissive” [8]. In traditional Chinese societal beliefs, there is an emphasis on the stark opposition of male and female roles, such as male dominance and female subordination, “men work outside, women work inside,” and “men are strong, women are weak” [9]. The gender structure theory aims to uncover the causal mechanisms behind gender inequality, analyzing gender issues within the same social context as politics and economics, and argues that pure theoretical critique is insufficient, requiring practical solutions to these issues [10]. In summary, from the perspective of gender structure theory, the family, as the most important context for socialization, has a profound impact on individual gender self-construction. Moreover, the cultural construction of social structures further reinforces gender concepts during subsequent socialization.

In China, the traditional “men work outside, women work inside” view has changed to some extent [11], with an increasing number of women entering the workforce and gender ideas becoming more equal. However, recent research has found signs of a resurgence in traditional gender role beliefs [12, 15]. This reflects the dual contradiction that modern women face: on the one hand, if they adopt modern behavioral traits, they are criticized for lacking traditional female qualities; on the other hand, if they behave in a more feminine way, they are seen as insufficient or failing to meet modern societal standards [13]. Even though gender differences in the workplace have gradually weakened in order to reduce gender discrimination, it is evident that self-evaluations in resumes still show gender differences. Men and women have different views on their temperaments, roles, and working styles in the workplace. This study combines social gender theory and self-evaluation to explore the temperamental characteristics and future role expectations of workers from a gender perspective, reflecting the current state of gender concepts in the workplace.

2. Conceptual Definitions and Research Hypothesis

The concept of self-evaluation has multiple definitions. Some scholars argue that self-evaluation refers to an individual’s judgment of their own thoughts, desires, behaviors, and personality traits [14]. Others define self-evaluation as an individual’s judgment of their own competence, importance, and value [16]. In the Encyclopedia of Psychology, self-evaluation is described as a form of self-awareness, referring to an individual’s judgment and assessment of their own thoughts, desires, behaviors, and personality traits. In simple terms, self-evaluation is the description of an individual’s core characteristics.

From a theoretical perspective, there are differences in self-evaluation based on gender. Research on self-evaluations of American men and women has found that self-evaluation differs by gender, with men tending to express themselves more positively, while women tend to use more negative language in their self-statements [17]. Similar conclusions have been drawn in domestic studies, which found that male adolescents had significantly higher self-evaluation scores compared to female adolescents [18]. Some scholars have categorized self-evaluation into appearance self-evaluation and personality self-evaluation, discovering that men tend to achieve higher self-esteem through personality self-evaluation, while women gain higher self-esteem through appearance self-evaluation [19]. However, a study spanning 70 years in the United States (1946-2018) showed that in public opinion surveys about communication (e.g., affection, emotion), agency (e.g., ambition, bravery), and ability (e.g., intelligence, creativity), women exhibited increased self-identification and beliefs in their strengths over time, while there was little change for men. This reflected the diminishing gender stereotypes under the long-standing trend of gender equality [20].

Self-evaluations in resumes have particular characteristics. On one hand, most job seekers tend to highlight their positive traits and deliberately avoid mentioning their weaknesses. Therefore, it is rare to find descriptions of weaknesses in the self-evaluations of resumes. This is related to the nature of the workplace, where people often present their strengths to impress interviewers and increase their chances of passing the interview. On the other hand, self-evaluation also reflects role expectations. Job seekers may not necessarily describe their true characteristics in the self-evaluation but instead refer to the role expectations in the workplace, i.e., the traits they believe are required for the job. In this study, self-evaluations in resumes are categorized into ten dimensions: learning ability, positive personality, sense of responsibility, stress resistance, communication skills, execution ability, diligence, adaptability, teamwork spirit, and past experience. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H: There are significant gender differences in the self-evaluations of men and women in resumes, specifically in terms of learning ability, positive personality, sense of responsibility, stress resistance, communication skills, execution ability, diligence, adaptability, teamwork spirit, and past experience.

3. Data Sources and Theoretical Model

3.1. Data Sources

This study uses online resume data from several technology companies in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. After data processing, a total of 1,514 valid samples were obtained, covering variables such as the job seekers' gender, age, marital status, education level, previous work experience, and self-evaluation. Overall, the sample is relatively standardized. Job seekers are required to carefully fill out electronic resumes before entering the interview process, and the self-evaluation section, as an open-ended question, better reflects the job seekers' true status.

3.2. Variable Selection

The independent variable in this study is gender. Using Stata16 statistical software, gender was treated as a binary variable, with males assigned the value of "1" and females assigned the value of "0".

The dependent variable in this study is self-evaluation. Since self-evaluation is an open-ended question, it needs to be quantified. Using NVIVO software, automatic coding was applied to the self-evaluation responses. Based on the results, self-evaluations were categorized into ten dimensions: learning ability, positive personality, responsibility, stress resistance, communication skills, execution ability, diligence, adaptability, teamwork spirit, and past experience. Semantic similarity was used to group similar terms together, and each response was processed accordingly, as shown in Table 1. If a response mentioned an associated expression, the corresponding dimension was assigned the value of "1". If the expression was not mentioned, the value was "0". For example, if a job seeker's self-evaluation reads, "I am eager to learn, honest, dedicated, responsible, and have a strong sense of teamwork. I am serious, active, and meticulous in my work," the dimensions of learning ability, positive personality, responsibility, and teamwork spirit would each be assigned the value of "1", and the remaining dimensions would be assigned "0".

Finally, this study treats age, education level, and marital status as control variables. The sample's age distribution ranges from 18 to 58 years, education level is categorized as high school, college, undergraduate, and graduate or higher, with values assigned as "1, 2, 3, 4" respectively. Marital status is categorized as married or unmarried, with married assigned the value of "1" and unmarried assigned the value of "0".

Table 1. Self-Evaluation Dimensions and Their Expressions

Self-Evaluation Dimension	Expression in Self-Evaluation
Learning Ability	Strong learning ability, love of learning, good at learning, eager to learn, etc.
Positive Personality	Cheerful, confident, positive, friendly, optimistic, extroverted, etc.
Responsibility	Strong sense of responsibility, careful, meticulous, serious in work, etc.
Stress Resistance	Strong ability to withstand pressure, good at stress management, etc.
Communication Skills	Strong communication skills, good at expressing oneself, etc.
Execution Ability	Strong execution ability, self-driven, etc.
Diligence	Hardworking, diligent, persistent, practical, willing to endure hardship, etc.
Adaptability	Strong adaptability, quick to integrate into work, etc.
Teamwork Spirit	Focus on teamwork, team spirit, etc.
Past Experience	Rich experience, references to past work, certificates, awards, etc.

3.3. Theoretical Model

This study uses a binary Logit model to explore whether there are significant gender differences across the various self-evaluation dimensions. A separate regression is conducted for each dependent variable dimension, resulting in a total of ten regressions. The theoretical model is as follows:

$$P(y = 1/x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{male} + \varepsilon_1)}} \quad (1)$$

Where, the dependent variable $P(y=1/x)$ represents the occurrence of the ten self-evaluation dimensions, with binary values of 0 or 1. "male" represents gender, with values of 0 for female and 1 for male. β_0 is the constant term. β_1 is the coefficient for gender. ε_1 is the random error term.

Table 2. Variable Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Measurement Method	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Learning Ability	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.399	0.490	0	1
Positive Personality	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.391	0.488	0	1
Responsibility	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.344	0.475	0	1
Stress Resistance	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.128	0.334	0	1
Communication Skills	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.183	0.387	0	1
Execution Ability	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.070	0.255	0	1
Diligence	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.165	0.371	0	1
Past Experience	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.221	0.415	0	1
Teamwork Spirit	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.149	0.356	0	1
Adaptability	Based on content: 1 = mentioned the corresponding expression; 0 = not mentioned	0.101	0.302	0	1
Male	1 = male; 0 = female	0.657	0.475	0	1
Age	Job seekers' actual age (years)	28.16	5.229	18	58
Marital Status	1 = married; 0 = unmarried	0.162	0.369	0	1
Education Level	1 = high school or below; 2 = college; 3 = undergraduate; 4 = graduate or above	2.831	0.601	1	4

Table 3. Gender Statistics for Each Self-Evaluation Dimension

Self-Evaluation Dimension	Male (n=1003)	Female (n=526)	Total (N=1514)
Learning Ability	373	236	609
Positive Personality	354	247	601
Responsibility	298	226	524
Stress Resistance	125	71	196
Communication Skills	154	127	281
Execution Ability	66	42	108
Diligence	181	72	253
Adaptability	78	76	154
Teamwork Spirit	130	98	228
Past Experience	195	140	335

4. Empirical Results Analysis

4.1. Baseline Regression Results

To avoid the impact of multicollinearity, this study first conducted a multicollinearity test. The results indicate that the maximum VIF value for the independent variables is 1.65, the minimum is 1.05, and the average is 1.35, which is far smaller than the critical value for multicollinearity. Therefore, there is no issue of multicollinearity among the independent variables.

Model 1 presents the Logit regression results for self-evaluation with only gender as the independent variable, while Model 2 shows the results after including all control variables. The results in Table 4 indicate that, across the various self-evaluation dimensions, significant gender differences exist in learning ability, positive personality, responsibility, communication skills, diligence, adaptability, teamwork spirit, and past experience. However, no significant gender differences were found in stress resistance and execution ability. The results of Model 2 show that the findings are quite similar to those of Model 1, with the

exception that, in both models, gender differences in stress resistance and execution ability are not significant. Specifically, compared to men, women tend to highlight their strong learning abilities, positive personalities, sense of responsibility, communication skills, adaptability, emphasis on teamwork, and past experiences and certificates in their resumes. Men, on the other hand, tend to emphasize their strong work ethic and diligent attitude. According to the results in Table 5, after incorporating the control variables in Model 2, marital status does not significantly affect the various dimensions of self-evaluation. Regarding age, younger women tend to emphasize their learning ability, positive attitude, and adaptability. As for education level, women with lower levels of education are more likely to highlight their sense of responsibility, while women with higher education are more likely to emphasize their past experiences. Men with lower levels of education tend to highlight their diligence.

Table 4. Regression Results of Gender on Self-Evaluation

	Model 1	Model 2
Learning Ability	-0.322*** (0.110)	-0.276** (0.114)
Positive Personality	-0.495*** (0.110)	-0.445*** (0.114)
Responsibility	-0.587*** (0.112)	-0.668*** (0.117)
Stress Resistance	-0.113 (0.160)	0.0167 (0.165)
Communication Skills	-0.543*** (0.135)	-0.513*** (0.140)
Execution Ability	-0.158 (0.208)	-0.184 (0.214)
Diligence	0.329** (0.152)	0.272* (0.156)
Adaptability	-0.712*** (0.172)	-0.651*** (0.177)
Teamwork Spirit	-0.409*** (0.147)	-0.361** (0.152)
Past Experience	-0.418*** (0.127)	-0.388*** (0.131)
N	1514	1514

Table 5. Regression Results After Including Control Variables

	Gender	Marital Status	Age	Education Level
Learning Ability	-0.276** (0.114)	0.0710 (0.188)	-0.0488*** (0.0137)	0.00473 (0.0908)
Positive Personality	-0.445*** (0.114)	0.0524 (0.191)	-0.0578*** (0.0141)	0.00703 (0.0919)
Responsibility	-0.668*** (0.117)	-0.0348 (0.188)	0.0137 (0.0133)	-0.243*** (0.0937)
Stress Resistance	0.0167 (0.165)	-0.213 (0.314)	-0.0585*** (0.0225)	0.290** (0.136)
Communication Skills	-0.513*** (0.140)	-0.335 (0.257)	-0.0293 (0.0179)	-0.00245 (0.117)
Execution Ability	-0.184 (0.214)	-0.212 (0.354)	0.0138 (0.0241)	-0.0629 (0.171)
Diligence	0.272* (0.156)	0.158 (0.237)	-0.00741 (0.0170)	-0.229* (0.117)
Adaptability	-0.651*** (0.177)	-0.0166 (0.325)	-0.0442* (0.0241)	0.0864 (0.152)
Teamwork Spirit	-0.361** (0.152)	-0.129 (0.266)	-0.0199 (0.0189)	0.0982 (0.126)
Past Experience	-0.388*** (0.131)	0.296 (0.207)	0.00861 (0.0151)	0.198* (0.107)
N	1514	1514	1514	1514

4.2. Robustness Test

To ensure the robustness of the research findings, this study conducted a robustness test by changing the dependent variable. According to the results of the baseline regression, eight out of the ten dimensions of self-evaluation show significant gender differences, with seven of these dimensions being more strongly expressed by females. Therefore, the ten dimensions were summed to obtain a total self-evaluation score. In theory, the total self-evaluation score still exhibits significant gender differences, with females scoring higher than males. Model 3 represents a univariate linear regression of the total self-evaluation score and gender, and the results indicate significant gender differences in the total self-evaluation score. Model 4 presents the results of a multiple linear regression after adding control variables, and the results show that, even after the inclusion of control variables, significant gender differences in the total self-evaluation score remain. Therefore, the robustness test further confirms the reliability of the above findings.

Table 6. Robustness Test Results

	Model 3	Model 4
	Total Self-Evaluation Score	Total Self-Evaluation Score
Gender	-0.593*** (0.0754)	-0.559*** (0.0769)
Age		-0.0335*** (0.00873)
Marital Status		0.00601 (0.123)
Education Level		-0.00499 (0.0605)
N	1514	1514

5. Results, Characteristics, and Reasons

This study empirically analyzes self-evaluation in job seekers' resumes using the Logit model. After conducting robustness checks, the following conclusions are drawn: (1) Compared to men, women are more likely to showcase their learning abilities, positive personality traits, sense of responsibility, communication skills, teamwork abilities, adaptability, and past experiences or certifications in their resumes. (2) Compared to women, men are more likely to emphasize their work ethic in their resumes' self-evaluation. (3) There is no significant difference between men and women when it comes to showcasing their ability to handle stress and their execution ability. This finding aligns with previous research. A study on personality differences among university students found that female students are more inclined to adhere to conventional norms, exhibit self-restraint, care more about others' reactions to them, and strive to leave a good impression while being more inclined toward teamwork. Male students, on the other hand, tend to be more dominant, focusing on achievements [21]. Another study on gender stereotypes indicated that male traits are more likely to be positively evaluated than female traits. Positive evaluations of men focus on their abilities, rationality, and confidence, while positive evaluations of women emphasize warmth and expressiveness [13].

5.1. The Contemporary Characteristics of Gender Self-Evaluation

From the results, gender differences in self-evaluation are significant, with women showing more positive self-assessments. This contradicts some previous findings [17][18]. This suggests new trends in the current workplace: On one hand, self-evaluation reflects a new stance for women in today's workforce, showcasing characteristics traditionally associated with men, such as communication skills, responsibility, adaptability, and teamwork. On the other hand, self-evaluation reflects the role expectations for both genders in the future workplace, with women's career role characteristics becoming more well-rounded. Women's awareness of autonomy, competition, initiative, and innovation has also increased [22].

5.2. Reasons Behind the Shift in Gender Self-Evaluation

From the individual perspective, the reasons for the shift in self-evaluation can be analyzed from two dimensions. On one hand, the reference group for individuals has shifted from traditional to modern norms. In traditional societies, gender roles were strictly defined, and self-evaluation was often done in comparison to same-gender peers. For example, when women evaluate their own kindness, they tend to compare themselves with other women, not men. However, in today's society, where men and women must cooperate in work, self-evaluation now involves comparisons based on shared traits [23]. On the other hand, some scholars argue

that this change is due to different attribution processes in different cultural traditions. In individualistic societies, women displaying unique qualities are seen as making a free choice and expressing their individuality. In collectivist societies, the same qualities may be seen as conformity to gender roles and are thus overlooked [24]. For example, the trait of “execution ability” is viewed as a characteristic of professional women in Western countries, but in China, it is often considered a quality of women in the home, where they are expected to be “virtuous, diligent, and keep the household in order.” The essence of the “execution ability” trait is the same, but it is attributed to either the workplace or the family depending on the context.

From a socio-historical perspective, the changing social structure in China is a decisive factor in the transformation of self-evaluation. The concept of gender and discourse in China has undergone three phases: from traditional discourse to national discourse and then to market discourse [25]. Under China’s traditional small-scale agricultural economy, Confucianism dominated, emphasizing “male superiority, female inferiority,” and “men work outside, women stay inside.” Women were defined by their roles as wives, daughters, and mothers, with their ethics revolving around men. As Bourdieu described in *Masculine Domination*, the physical differences between men and women are constructed according to male-dominated social models, regardless of how large the biological differences might be. Traditional views naturalized these power relationships by linking them to biological differences, making them legally and culturally accepted [27]. Specifically, in traditional society, gender division was marked by spatial and temporal structures: men belonged to public spaces and workplaces, while women were confined to the family and kitchen; men worked during the day, while women occupied the quiet of the night [28]8-9. In sum, the gender structure of traditional Chinese society was solidified over thousands of years under ethical norms, and although some scholars argue that Confucian philosophy does not emphasize oppression of women in the same way Western feminism criticizes it [26], the three obediences and four virtues still positioned women below men.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China and before the Reform and Opening Up, gender ideas were shaped by national policies and laws, promoting gender equality, freedom of marriage, and equal pay for equal work, reflecting the discourse of the state. This can be seen as “state feminism.” Women’s liberation was incorporated into the broader national liberation, but it had strong utilitarian characteristics, strengthening women’s sense of “ownership” in driving the construction of a socialist state. The slogan “Women hold up half the sky” marked a shift in women’s views, somewhat weakening male-dominated order and improving the status of women. This also reveals the power of structure, where the state influences personal will through state action.

Since the Reform and Opening Up, Chinese society has unleashed unprecedented vitality, and the market economy has intensified competition in the job market, with large numbers of women entering the workforce and participating in social division of labor. This represents the discourse of the market, where gender roles are now determined by the market. In this process, women have realized they still face inequality and factual disadvantages in society. They have gradually started to pursue their rights, with increasing self-awareness [29], striving to change the status quo. As a result, women now exhibit more positive self-evaluations in the workplace, with a more confident and empowered attitude.

6. Conclusion

An important indicator of social progress is the issue of social fairness, which depends on both factual equality and individuals’ overall perception of social fairness. Gender differences are objectively present, but they should not be the sole standard for evaluating individuals, especially in the workplace. It is inappropriate to judge men’s and women’s job competence simply based on gender differences in a resume [30]. Currently, gender discrimination in Chinese workplaces has improved, reflecting social progress. Studies show that gender perspectives are closely related to women’s achievements. The more modern and equal gender perspectives are, the more likely women are to achieve higher success [31][32]. The most important shift in gender perspectives is liberation from traditional constraints, abandoning the notions of “men stronger, women weaker” and “male dominance, female subordination,” reducing gender discrimination. In workplaces that emphasize ability, gender equality remains an eternal pursuit.

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