

A Study Examining Gender Bias of Female Students in Group Activity Teams

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Abstract: Gender bias is a pervasive issue, and group activities that are commonly seen in schools, workplaces, and other environments may be a form in which gender bias is manifested and exacerbated. Therefore, understanding the existence and impact of gender bias in group activities is of great significance for promoting gender equality and justice. This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, and explored whether female students feel gender bias in group activity teams, in order to further understand the specific manifestations of gender bias in group activity teams and the real experiences of female students. The study found that after group activities, the average scores of Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism among female students increased, indicating that the activities may exacerbate gender bias and strengthen gender stereotypes. In-depth interviews further validated this finding and provided more specific examples. The interviewed female students reported that they experienced gender bias such as interruptions to their speaking and dismissal of their opinions, as well as stereotypical expectations of gender roles. To minimize gender bias, they suggested countermeasures such as grouping by gender and increasing gender equality education and training. These findings reveal the potential impact of group activities on gender bias and provide important references for improving activity design and promoting gender equality.

Keywords: Gender Bias, Group Activity, Gender Equality, Female Students

1. Introduction

Although gender bias in the workplace and social life groups has received a lot of attention, and a large amount of in-depth research has been done [1,2], the exploration of gender bias in school group activity teams still needs further research and systematization. Student groups in schools are miniature social models, where interactions and exchanges may mirror future social behaviors. At the same time, gender bias among students may distort their self-evaluation and evaluation of others, affecting their mental health and learning motivation [3]. Therefore, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the existence and impact of gender bias in student group activity teams, it is imperative to conduct systematic research and analysis on this issue. In light of this, the present study aims to explore the specific situation and manifestations of gender bias against female students within group activity teams. Through a mixed research method of questionnaire surveys and interviews, the author explores gender bias against female students in group activity teams. This paper aims to reveal gender bias in student group activity teams and provide practical suggestions

for educators to promote gender equality in schools, thereby cultivating a fairer social environment for future generations.

2. Gender Bias Research

Previous research has proven that gender bias in the workplace has a significant negative impact on the career development of female employees. As an illustration, female employees tend to face unequal compensation, although they have the same education and work experience as male employees. In addition, it is also more difficult for female employees to get a promotion due to fewer promotion opportunities for women as well as gender discrimination in the workplace [4,5].

Apart from gender bias in the workplace, gender bias in school environments has also grabbed the attention of scholars. Schools are important places for students to socialize, and gender bias can have a profound impact on students' mental health, self-awareness, learning motivation, and career planning [6]. In other words, gender bias in school environments can pose a challenge for students both in their academic achievements and their establishment of social roles and identities [7]. Moreover, it can even lead to the underestimation of female students in certain academic fields. As a result, female students' learning opportunities in science, technology, and other fields are restricted, which in turn affects their career development and achievements in these fields [8,9]. Besides, gender bias can also result in the unequal distribution of educational resources, making it hard for female students to receive the same educational opportunities and resources as male students [10,11]. Meanwhile, gender bias also makes female students more vulnerable and thus become victims of school violence or sexual harassment [12]. This not only has a serious impact on the physical and mental health of female students but may also make them feel unsafe and helpless at school. Due to gender bias, victims often face obstacles in reporting and seeking help, which further exacerbates the severity of the problem.

Although previous research has clearly shown the impact of gender bias in workplace and school environments, research in a specific school environment like student group activity teams has not yet obtained sufficient research. Group activities play an important role in shaping students' attitudes, behaviors, and gender identity, so more research needs to be conducted in this area. In this way, appropriate solutions can be found to address gender bias issues that may arise in this environment.

3. Glick and Fiske's Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

In the study of gender bias, how to accurately measure individual perceptions and attitudes is crucial. Based on a large number of studies and theories, Glick and Fiske proposed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) Scale. The scale focuses on two kinds of gender bias: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Exhibiting in different forms, gender inequality can be found in both of them. The ASI scale consists of multiple items, each describing the perception of gender bias in a specific context. To ensure that the feelings of respondents can be truly expressed, a Likert-Style scoring method is used. At the same time, the scale has been validated and revised multiple times so that it has high reliability and validity [13]. Glick and Fiske's ASI Scale provides a powerful tool for researchers studying gender bias and allows them to measure and analyze individuals' views on gender bias more correctly. In this paper, Glick and Fiske's ASI Scale was used to examine whether female students can perceive gender bias in group activity teams and explore its manifestations, with the goal of helping reduce gender bias in group activities and promote gender equality.

4. Research Design

4.1. Research Object

38 undergraduate students in their second year participated in this study. All of them studied at the same university in China, majoring in tourism management and taught by the author of this paper. With the same academic environment and major background, the number of female students is 18 and that of male students is 20. This can help reduce the complexity of research variables and increase the internal validity of the research. Moreover, the classroom teaching of tourism management involves a large number of group activities, and the students often need to cooperate in groups to complete various projects and tasks. At the same time, the author is also the teacher of this class and very familiar with the learning situation and background of the students, so the data can be more accurately explained and interpreted, thereby increasing the feasibility and reliability of the research.

4.2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, namely questionnaires and interviews, in order to complement and validate each other, thereby obtaining richer and more accurate research results.

The survey instrument utilized the Chinese-translated version of Glick and Fiske's Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) Scale [14]. The ASI Scale is a widely used self-report scale to measure individuals' perceptions of gender bias with good reliability and validity. A questionnaire survey was also conducted among 18 female students in the class before and after the group activity to ensure that all the students could answer the questions based on their actual feelings during the group activity. Considering students' preferences and convenience, the questionnaire was provided in both paper and online formats. All students were arranged in a quiet, undisturbed environment to complete the questionnaire, ensuring that they could answer truthfully without pressure. Students were informed that they had sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, ensuring that they would not answer hastily due to time pressure.

Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, this study selected some female students who were willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on the following key points: first, the perception of gender bias in group activities was focused on, in order to explore whether female students felt gender bias in group activities, as well as its specific manifestations. Second, gender roles and expectations were focused on, in order to understand female students' views on gender roles, and whether they felt stereotypical expectations of gender roles in group activities. Third, coping strategies and effectiveness were focused on, in order to explore the coping strategies that female students adopted when faced with perceived gender bias, as well as the effectiveness of these strategies. Fourth, suggestions and expectations were focused on, in order to collect female students' suggestions for reducing gender bias, as well as their expectations for future group activities. The interview process was recorded and collated into written materials for subsequent data analysis.

4.3. Research Results

Before the group activity, the average score of the ASI Scale for Hostile Sexism among female students was 2.09, and the average score for Benevolent Sexism was 2.27. After the group activity, the average score of the ASI scale for Hostile Sexism among the female students was 2.39, and the average score of Benevolent Sexism was 2.37. Before the activity, the average score of Hostile Sexism increased to 2.39, indicating that the activity might have had some adverse effects on the

hostile sexist attitudes of the female students, or that it failed to effectively improve the situation. At the same time, the average score of Benevolent Sexism among girls slightly increased to 2.37 after the activity, indicating that group activities might have a slight reinforcing effect on female students' benevolent sexism attitudes. Although this change is relatively small, it is still noteworthy, as the increased score in Benevolent Sexism attitudes might also imply a certain degree of strengthening of gender stereotypes. After the Independent Sample T-Test, the P-value difference between female students' Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism were both less than 0.05, indicating that there was a significant difference between female students' Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism attitudes before and after the group activity. The results showed that group activities might exacerbate female students' hostile sexism attitudes to some extent, that is, the activities did not effectively improve or even might have worsened this attitude, indicating that more attention needs to be paid to preventing and reducing gender bias in activity design. The benevolent sexism attitude of female students also showed a slight upward trend after the activity, although the magnitude of the change was small, suggesting that group activities may have strengthened gender stereotypes to some extent.

In order to better understand the manifestation of gender bias in group activities, this study conducted in-depth interviews with 4 female students.

In terms of gender bias perception in group activities, all four female students said that they did feel some degree of gender bias in group activity teams, including being interrupted, having their opinions disregarded or ignored, and being assigned to more supporting roles. They said that these biases not only affected their participation and enthusiasm but also had a negative impact on their self-confidence.

In terms of gender roles and expectations, female respondents generally believed that stereotypical gender roles and expectations still exist in group activities. They felt that compared with male students, who were usually seen as leaders or primary decision-makers, female students were generally expected to be more cooperative and responsible for certain tasks, and they were thought to be more emotional.

In terms of coping strategies and effectiveness, all four female students admitted that they did not adopt any specific coping strategies when facing gender bias. This may be due to various reasons including a lack of experience, concerns about the negative impact of challenging biases, and thoughts that they were not able to change the situation by themselves. Failing to take any direct action indicated the complexity of gender bias issues, as well as the helplessness and powerlessness of individuals when facing these issues.

In terms of suggestions and expectations, firstly, to enhance students' understanding of gender equality, female respondents suggested increasing education and training on gender equality. Secondly, they preferred same-gender grouping. They believed that grouping female students with female students and male students with male students could promote in-depth communication and collaboration between the same gender, improving their mutual understanding and respect, thus creating a more harmonious and equal environment. Finally, in order to reveal the harm of gender bias and help students learn to avoid and eliminate it, female respondents proposed organizing more regular lectures, seminars, or workshops on gender equality themes.

5. Conclusion

By conducting an in-depth analysis of the survey data and interviews, this paper gains a deeper understanding of gender bias issues in group activity teams. The results of the study indicate that group activities impact the attitudes of female students towards Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism, with the average scores for both attitudes increasing after the activity. This suggests that unconscious elements or behaviors in the organization and implementation of group activities may

exacerbate gender bias. Therefore, it is imperative for activity organizers to design and organize activities more carefully to avoid any factors that may reinforce gender bias. The results of the in-depth interviews provided more specific and authentic experiences of gender bias, with the statements of the interviewed female students confirming the existence of gender bias in group activity teams, including specific behaviors such as interrupting speeches and disregarding opinions. These actual experiences and questionnaire data mutually corroborate each other, providing a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the problem.

While facing these challenges, this study also received valuable suggestions from female students. They hope to increase gender equality education and training to raise people's awareness of gender equality; avoid reinforcing gender bias in the design of group activities; promote an in-depth understanding of gender bias through holding regular gender equality-themed activities, and learn coping strategies. These suggestions are real and feasible and can provide some guidance for the improvement of future group activities.

In summary, this study reminds people to pay attention to gender bias in group activities and calls on organizers to actively take measures to reduce the existence and impact of gender bias. Only in this way can schools strive to create a truly equal, fair, and inclusive group activity environment, where everyone can freely express themselves and participate equally, taking a solid step towards achieving the goal of gender equality.

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