

Collegiate Competition and the Propensity for Gender Bias

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Abstract

Since the dawn of time gender has played a starring role in human behavior. The behavioral implications of an individual's sex have permeated research findings in a wide variety of academic disciplines. This preliminary investigation will explore the concept and definition of gender, gender bias, and gender stereotype on actions and conduct. Specifically, this inquiry will determine the scope and types of gender bias/stereotypes that exist in the business world with a primary concentration on the area of professional sales. The ultimate objective is to discover the type and level of influence a person's gender contributes to evaluation, performance and judging in student sales competition.

Gender bias and stereotypes exist in both personal and business environments. Merriam-Webster (2015) defines bias as "a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly". The description of stereotype has a similar connotation and means "to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same". When these terms are associated with gender the belief is that males/females are superior or inferior to the opposite sex and males/females have common traits and characteristics. Positive bias/stereotypes may benefit or compliment the recipient, but destructive, caustic bias/stereotypes will have adverse consequences.

Just how significant are gender bias and gender stereotypes on behavior? And how do they influence accomplishments and assessments? This theoretical study addressed these questions through a review of previous gender studies where behavior, performance and evaluation were factors. Tate and Prasad (2008), identify gender differences in microenterprise performance. Results of their investigation indicate an increased motivation in women to engage and cultivate linkages. While males incorporate more diverse expansive networks with trivial relations. However, Tate and Prasad postulate this leads to increased opportunity for grander connections which results in enhanced business performance.

Easterly and Ricard (2011), concluded that gender bias still exists but is less prevalent than what has historically occurred. Most is on an unconscious level or skewed through levels of representation and stereotypes.

In an early study, Comer and Jolson (1991) result's indicated a saleswoman's performance is adversely impacted by how closely the sales manager perceives her conduct conforms to undesirable gender stereotypes. A more recent investigation by Pinar and Hardin (2005) conducted a conceptual examination of research on gender and how it impacts selling and sales performance indicate that gender bias and stereotypes do exist and has implications that should be further investigated, However, the gender of the salesperson, customer and manager all should be considered along with the potential bias/stereotype.

Results of previous research have illuminated possible gender bias occurring in student actions, assessments, evaluations and competitions. Further investigation should be implemented to determine the level of influence gender wields in the competitive environment. Specifically, the possibility and forms it may take in the professional sales arena, with special emphasis on the National Collegiate Sales competition.

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners:

Research has shown that gender bias and stereotypes exist in both personal and business communities. This study explores the influence gender wields in the competitive environment. Specifically, the possibility and forms it may take in the professional sales arena, with special emphasis on the National Collegiate Sales competition.

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TRACK: Professional Sales / Sales Management