Understanding Gender Identity at workplace for professional occupations

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Abstract:

The paper studies the concept of gender identity at work through certain attributes in professional occupations. These attributes are rated by the respondents as characteristics for professional men, professional women and if those attributes are required to be successful in the profession. It tries to understand if men and women are rated similarly or differently on those traits and if there is some identity gap or presence of certain stereotypical attitudes in the professions. It is important to understand these through hypothesis testing as there is still some biasness and association of stereotypical behaviour which ultimately affect the diversity in the organisation. The statistical analysis reveals that not all attributes are viewed as similar for men and women. It also identifies some attributes particularly significant for professional men and women. There is no clear evidence of stereotypical behaviour in the professions under study. However, the results cannot be generalised because of some limitations.

***Keywords:** Identity, Identity formation, gender stereotyping, social construction.*

Introduction

What is takes to be successful in a profession? Many ways have been used in order to understand the nature of a profession and beliefs attached to it. One of the means to understand it is through the process of identity formation. Identity has no particular definition and can be only understood through the presence of various contexts; identity as existence of something that displays one or more attributes or characteristics (Lane and Scott 2007) or can be used as a reference to self and also as a reference to a social category which shall add to social identity (Ravishankar and Pan, 2008: 222; Stryker and Burke, 2000). The concept of identity evolves through interaction of various individual and social dimensions. An individual follows certain steps or processes in order to complete the

identity phenomenon, namely, identity formation, identity activation and the resulting behavior (Bothma, Lloyd, Khapova, 2015). At workplace too individual characteristics associated with self and the special social norms attached with the profession tends to affect the perceived attitude towards a profession. All such factors affects the behavioral and psychological attitude towards a profession. This paper tries to study such attitudes prevailing in male dominated and professional jobs.

Different theories have been developed to understand identity development phenomenon. Social identity and role identity theories are the basic and prominent theories. These theories provide two perspectives on the socially constructed self concept. Self concept is explained as a product of individual behavior and social structure that

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developed parallel to each other in different disciplines. Social identity theories are categorised into two, namely the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self Categorisation Theory (SCT).SIT explains how people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories such as organisational membership, religious affiliation, gender and age cohort (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). SCT aims to explain the phenomenon where a person based on perceived criteria tends to place himself or other people cognitively in some grouping((Turner,1987).Role identity theories are also categorised into two, namely Identity theory (IT) and Identity control theory (ICT).IT is based on individual role related behaviors. The ICT stems from the second research direction of RIT that focuses on the internal dynamics of the self and its impact on social behavior (Stets, 2005).

The application of these theories helps us in investigating the processes which establishes gender identity at workplace. Such work-related identity includes meanings, expectations, beliefs, norms and core values which acts as behavior guides. These are broadly divided into three dimensions; structural, social and individual psychological. The subjects of our study are professionals and the identity they develop can be explained as something which is consisting of relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences in terms of the professional role they play. Professional identity is one of an individual's many social identities (Ibarra, 1999). This paper aims to understand the perception about the profession and specifically to measure the existence of stereotypical behavior, if any.

Review of Literature

There are professions where still there is an existence of stereotypical behaviour. These attitudes ultimately lead to biasness in appointment and promotion. The more important aspect is that the association of stereotypic characteristics to a particular job or profession restricts the entry of many individuals. Though the scenario might be

changing relating to the male managerial stereotype but, women's positions of power and influence suggests the possibility of no change (Brenner, Tomkiewicz and Schein, 1989). Unlike women, the male counterparts still perceive the managerial positions are meant for men and managerial positions possesses described as characteristics for men (Schein, Mueller, Lituch and Liu, 1996). Favourism might be evident in the recruitment cycle if the thought process continues to view professions as stereotypical. The think manager think male process has to be changed for fair managerial selection. Wass and McNabb (2006) observed that promotion is subject to gender stereotyping leading to women retaining the positions at lower levels and restricting women from moving up because they take responsibility for child care as well as work. Bobbitt-zeher (2011) explored the combination of institutional policies and gender stereotyping across workplace settings contributing to discrimination. They demonstrated how stereotyping in particular feeds discrimination into organizational settings and women experience. Sometimes there is use of policies selectively by authority figures that disadvantage women. Gorman (2005) showed how stereotypical roles are being offered in the organizations. Men and women have certain different gender based possessions and characteristics which essentially shape their strengths and weaknesses. Such sex role stereotyping of managerial work results in the perception that women are less qualified than men in the profession for management positions which can negatively affect women's entry (Schein, 1978). Schein and Mueller (1992) in one of their studies found that the temperaments and attitudes which are associated to men in general are perceived to be possessed more commonly by successful middle managers than women in the same occupations. The perceptions which they form leads to some construction of identity by individuals for self which gets moderated by the external environment. Ely (1995) explored the point of social construction of gender as an ongoing process which means that the meanings and significance is different

across settings. This concept of social construction highlights the processes that leads to distinctions based on sex. Understanding such constructionist view can guide organizations to develop and implement better strategies and initiatives (Martin and Barnard, 2013) to ensure balanced growth for both sexes in the organization.

The social construction then result into some identity formation for an individual. The two important theories relating to identity are social identity theories and role identities theory. The application of these theories result into social categorisation and formation of self stereotyping process. Men and women use some psychological structure and processes in identity formation. Some researchers assume these structures and development processes similar for both men and women. However, variables like contextual or situational factors in the social structure affect the process of identity formation and these results in gender differences (Kroger, 1997). The analyse aims to study such constructions of identities in various settings by studying the meaning an employee derives from his or her workplace.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the perception of professionals about attributes attached to professional men and professional women and examining their relation.

- To understand the relation between attributes assigned to professional men and attributes for being successful in the professions and professional women and attributes for being successful in the professions by examining the presence of stereotypical attributes.

- To understand the perception of males and females as different groups about the attributes required to be successful in the profession.

- To identify the attributes significantly ascribed to professional men, professional women and success in the profession.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no difference in the average ratings of attributes for professional men and the average ratings of attributes for professional women.

H02(a): There is no difference in the ratings of attributes for professional men and ratings of attributes required to be successful in the profession.

H02(b): There is no difference in the ratings of attributes for professional women and ratings of attributes required to be successful in the profession.

H03: There is no difference in the average ratings of male and female respondents about the attributes required to be successful in the profession.

H04: There is no significant difference between population mean and sample mean for the different attributes ascribed to professional men, professional women and what is required for being successful.

Methodology

The paper tries to study certain traits/ attributes attached to professional occupations. The two set of professionals include Chartered accountants and lawyers. The reason for choosing these professions lies in the fact that the hierarchy is clearly defined and the role and responsibilities are similar in the industry. Both levels and duties are easily identifiable. The sample is selected by the method of stratified random sampling, where samples were drawn from the two professions. The participants for the study were males and females who were lawyers or chartered accountants. Primary source of data collection was opted by means of questionnaire to test the hypotheses statistically. The questionnaire contained demographic factors and 26 attributes divided into two broad categories, behavioural and psychological (Ely, 1995). These attributes are: Aggressive, Works Long hours, Dresses attractively, Well connected to powerful

superiors , Manipulative, Self confident , Flirtatious, Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others, Rainmaker, Boastful, Yells easily when upset/angry , Close to Co- workers, Sensitive to people , Competent, Persuasive, Able to speak knowledgeably and persuasively but with little actual knowledge, Analytical , politically savvy, Concerned with activities outside work , Able to handle many clients , Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating , Expresses individuality at work , Loves one's work , Serious about one's work , Expects to be made partner, Satisfied with workplace. The respondents rated each attribute separately as an attribute ascribed to professional men, professional women and its requirement for being successful in the profession on a five point likert scale where, 1= not at all to 5= extremely. Cronbach's alpha has been used to measure scale reliability. It came out to be 0.923 suggesting good internal consistency. The total number of respondents who originally filled the questionnaire was 92 out of which 8 were eliminated because the respondents omitted some responses. Hence, for the study we took the responses to be 84. The hypotheses were statistically tested through the application of statistical tools in SPSS.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The hypothesis 1 tries to test the correlation between the average ratings for professional men and women on each attribute. Positive correlation indicates that the attribute being associated with professional men has been associated to professional women also. The negative correlation indicates that a particular attribute is not taken to be a characteristic for both professional men and women. The degree to which the attributes are polarised for either professional men or professional women are observed. A paired sample t-test has been applied to find the relation. The results were derived for all the respondents on all 26 attributes in the instrument. The results are depicted in TABLE 1. For the attribute 'aggressive', level of significance is 0.635 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore we do not reject the null hypothesis. It indicates that aggressiveness is taken as an attribute for both professional men and professional women. Similarly, the level of significance for 'works long hours' attribute is 0.000 which means we reject the null hypothesis, meaning that 'works long hours' as an attribute is viewed differently for both professional men and professional women. The results for all the attributes are given in TABLE 1.

Table 1

Relationship of Attributes for Professional Men and Professional Women

S.No.	Attribute	Mean for Professional Men	Mean for Professional Women	Mean Difference	T	P
1	Aggressive	2.81	2.85	-.048	-.477	.635
2	Works Long hours	3.21	2.60	.613	4.838	.000
3	Dresses attractively	3.10	3.50	-.403	-3.031	.004
4	Well connected to powerful superiors	3.47	3.18	.290	2.557	.013
5	Manipulative	2.92	2.95	-.032	-.237	.813
6	self confident	3.56	3.48	.081	.869	.388
7	Flirtatious	2.58	2.08	.500	3.449	.001
8	Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others	3.13	3.18	-.048	-.370	.713

9	Rainmaker (generates profit)	3.47	3.29	.177	2.180	.033
10	Boastful	2.85	2.87	-.016	-.178	.859
11	Yells easily when upset/angry	2.61	2.68	-.065	-.386	.701
12	Close to Co- workers	3.18	3.00	.177	1.396	.168
13	Sensitive to people	2.48	2.92	-.435	-3.129	.003
14	Competent	3.53	3.53	.000	.000	1.000
15	Persuasive	3.21	3.27	-.065	-1.158	.251
16	Able to speak knowledgeably and persuasively but with little actual knowledge	3.06	2.94	.129	1.158	.251
17	Analytical	3.45	3.08	.371	3.277	.002
18	politically savvy(informed)	3.44	2.79	.645	5.114	.000
19	Concerned with activities outside work	3.08	3.03	.048	.319	.751
20	Able to handle many clients	3.63	3.37	.258	2.294	.025
21	Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating	3.18	3.21	-.032	-.261	.795
22	Expresses individuality at work	3.06	3.13	-.065	-.587	.560
23	Loves one's work	2.90	3.03	-.129	-1.134	.261
24	Serious about one's work	3.26	3.26	.000	.000	1.000
25	Satisfied with workplace	2.82	2.97	-.145	-1.321	.192
26	Expects to be made partner	3.42	3.08	.339	2.838	0.006

Hypothesis 2(a) tests if relationship exists between average ratings of professional men and average ratings of characteristics that contribute to the success of the firm. If the degree of association is high, it implies that the characteristic attributed to professional men are the same for being successful in the profession. Paired sample t-test has been used to test the hypothesis statistically. The 'aggressive' attribute for example has a significance value of 0.014 implying that we can reject the null hypothesis and the trait that might be a characteristic for professional men but might not be a significant attribute which is required for being successful.

In the similar way, the test has been used for the 26 attributes. The results are shown in TABLE 2.

Hypothesis 2(b) tests the correlation between the attributes characteristics of professional women and their requirement for success. Paired sample t-test has been applied for 26 pairs and the results are summarised in TABLE 3. The null hypothesis is rejected if the value of significance is less than 0.05 implying the average ratings for an attribute for professional women is different from average ratings for being successful for an attribute

Table 2
Relationship of Attributes for Professional Men and Requirement for success

S.No.	Attribute	Mean for Professional Men	Mean for Successful	Mean Difference	T	p
1	Aggressive	2.81	2.50	.306	2.584	.014
2	Works Long hours	3.21	2.85	.355	2.437	.017
3	Dresses attractively	3.10	3.42	-.323	-3.532	.006
4	Well connected to powerful superiors	3.47	3.50	-.032	-.331	.735
5	Manipulative	2.92	2.66	.258	1.822	.077
6	self confident	3.56	3.81	-.242	-2.745	.007
7	Flirtatious	2.58	1.73	.855	4.888	.001
8	Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others	3.13	3.31	-.177	-1.746	.085
9	Rainmaker (generates profit)	3.47	3.68	-.210	-2.141	.036
10	Boastful	2.85	2.63	.226	1.875	.090
11	Yells easily when upset/angry	2.61	1.74	.871	5.811	.001
12	Close to Co- workers	3.18	3.24	-.065	-.552	.582
13	Sensitive to people	2.48	2.74	-.258	-2.247	.052
14	Competent	3.53	3.77	-.242	-2.954	.008
15	Persuasive	3.21	3.31	-.097	-1.000	.324
16	Able to speak knowledgeably and persuasively but with little actual knowledge	3.06	3.18	-.113	-.829	.418
17	Analytical	3.45	3.76	-.306	-2.804	.006
17	Analytical	3.45	3.76	-.306	-2.804	.006
18	politically savvy(informed)	3.44	3.24	.194	1.724	.084
19	Concerned with activities outside work	3.08	3.18	-.097	-.759	.462
20	Able to handle many clients	3.63	3.87	-.242	-2.576	.013
21	Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating	3.18	3.45	-.274	-.2.591	.015

22	Expresses individuality at work	3.06	3.29	-.226	-2.122	.046
23	Loves one's work	2.90	3.45	-.548	-4.617	.001
24	Serious about one's work	3.26	3.73	-.468	-5.130	.001
25	Satisfied with workplace	2.82	3.47	-.645	-5.031	.001
26	Expects to be made partner	3.42	3.26	.161	1.397	.169

Table 3

Relationship of Attributes for Professional Women and Requirement for success

Sl. No.	Attribute	Mean for Professional-Women	Mean for Successful	Mean Difference	T	p
1	Aggressive	2.85	2.50	.355	2.813	.007
2	Works Long hours	2.60	2.85	-.258	-1.899	.062
3	Dresses attractively	3.50	3.42	.081	.727	.470
4	Well connected to powerful superiors	3.18	3.50	-.323	-2.818	.006
5	Manipulative	2.95	2.66	.290	2.065	.043
6	self confident	3.48	3.81	-.323	-3.327	.001
7	Flirtatious	2.08	1.73	.355	2.605	.012
8	Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others	3.18	3.31	-.129	-.929	.357
9	Rainmaker (generates profit)	3.29	3.68	-.387	-3.279	.002
10	Boastful	2.87	2.63	.242	1.999	.050
11	Yells easily when upset/angry	2.68	1.74	.935	5.819	.000
12	Close to Co- workers	3.00	3.24	-.242	-1899	.062
13	Sensitive to people	2.92	2.74	.177	1.333	.188
14	Competent	3.53	3.77	-.242	-2.576	.012
15	Persuasive	3.27	3.31	-.032	-.275	.784
16	Able to speak knowledgeably and persuasively but with little actual knowledge	2.94	3.18	-.242	-1.761	.083
17	Analytical	3.08	3.76	-.677	-5.693	.000
18	politically savvy(informed)	2.79	3.24	-.452	-3.546	.001
19	Concerned with activities outside work	3.03	3.18	-.145	-.976	.333
20	Able to handle many clients	3.37	3.87	-.500	-4.559	.000
21	Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating	3.21	3.45	-.242	-1.964	.054
22	Expresses individuality at work	3.13	3.29	-.161	-1.456	.150
23	Loves one's work	3.03	3.45	-.419	-3.758	.000
24	Serious about one's work	3.26	3.73	-.468	-.4.267	.000
25	Satisfied with workplace	2.97	3.47	-.500	-3.921	.000
26	Expects to be made partner	3.08	3.26	-.177	-1.259	.213

Hypothesis 3 is studying if male and female respondents rate the attributes similarly for requirement to be successful. Independent sample t-test has been used for it. Except for Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others, the null hypothesis is not rejected for any other attribute. Only for this attribute the average ratings of males and females differ significantly. This is the attribute to which significantly different values are being ascribed by different groups. The rest are viewed similarly by both groups as a requirement for success. The results for all the attributes are being depicted in Table 4.

Table 4
Comparison of Ratings by Females and Males for Attributes Required for Being Successful

Sl. No.	Attribute	Mean Value Females	Mean Value Males	Mean Diffeence	T	p
1	Aggressive	2.38	2.63	-0.25	-1.099	.277
2	Works Long hours	2.72	3.00	-0.28	-.964	339
3	Dresses attractively	3.31	3.53	-0.22	-.971	.336
4	Well connected to powerful superiors	3.53	3.47	0.06	.241	.810
5	Manipulative	2.47	2.87	-0.4	-1.503	.138
6	self confident	3.91	3.70	0.21	.723	.472
7	Flirtatious	1.56	1.90	-0.34	-1.255	.214
8	Able to promote (i.e. sell) oneself to others	3.00	3.63	-0.63	-2.236	.029
9	Rainmaker (generates profit)	3.66	3.70	-0.04	-.163	.871
10	Boastful	2.56	2.70	-0.14	-.488	.627
11	Yells easily when upset/angry	1.78	1.70	0.08	.367	.715
12	Close to Co- workers	3.16	3.33	-0.17	-.666	.508
13	Sensitive to people	2.84	2.63	0.21	.810	.421
14	Competent	3.91	3.63	0.28	.939	.351
15	Persuasive	3.25	3.37	-0.12	-.421	.675
16	Able to speak knowledgeably and persuasively but with little acta-lal knowledge	3.25	3.10	0.15	.498	.621
17	Analytical	3.94	3.57	0.37	1.321	.190
18	politically savvy(informed)	3.09	3.40	-0.31	-1.051	.298
19	Concerned with activities outside work	3.31	3.03	0.28	1.050	.298
20	Able to handle many clients	3.81	3.93	-0.12	-.465	.643
21	Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating	3.41	3.50	-0.09	-.335	.740
22	Expresses individuality at work	3.47	3.10	0.37	1.318	.192
23	Loves one's work	3.72	3.17	0.55	1.948	.056
24	Serious about one's work	3.91	3.53	0.38	1.465	.147
25	Satisfied with workplace	3.50	3.43	0.07	.302	.764
26	Expects to be made partner	3.25	3.27	-0.02	-.055	.956

Hypothesis 4 tests the significance of a particular attribute for professional men, women and what is required for successful. This has been done through one sample test where the test value is taken to be 3. Any score above the test value is giving the result that the attribute is a significant attribute for professional men, professional women and as a requirement for being successful. If the significance level is less than 0.05, then we reject the null hypothesis implying that there is significant difference between population mean and sample mean. If the hypothesis is rejected then it can be concluded that an attribute is a significant characteristic trait. The results for professional men, professional women and its requirement for being successful are found. 'Well connected to powerful superiors', 'self confident', 'Rainmaker', 'Competent', 'Analytical', 'politically savvy(informed)', 'Able to handle many clients', 'Expects to be made partner' have been given higher values than the test value and are significantly described as attributes for professional men. For professional women 'Dresses attractively', 'self confident', 'Rainmaker', 'Yells easily when upset/angry', 'Competent', 'Persuasive', 'Able to handle many clients' are attributed as significant characteristics. There is a difference in attributes ascribed as significant for men and women. 'Dresses attractively', 'Well connected to powerful superiors', 'self confident', 'Rainmaker', 'Competent', 'Persuasive', 'Analytical', 'Able to handle many clients', 'Sets out to be reasonable when negotiating', 'Loves one's work', 'Serious about one's work', 'Satisfied with workplace' are being viewed as positive significant factors for being successful.

Conclusion

The respondents do not view all professionals in the same way. Social construction of gender in these occupations can be one of the reasons for such differences. Different attributes are viewed as attributes characteristic of professional men and professional women. This means that there still are prominent differences that exist for men and women in the profession. Not same attributes are attached to both males and females which can be because of some pre conceived notions and observations. It is clear from the hypothesis testing that there are no clear evidence of attachment of stereotypical attributes to the professions. Some attributes which have been shown as significant characteristic of men in the profession have not been attributed to being successful and attributes significant characteristic for professional women are not having relation with being successful significantly. If males and females respondents are taken as different groups, almost all the attributes for what it takes to be successful are rated the same. There is a difference in the opinion of respondents regarding the significance of the attributes attached to the professionals and their importance for being successful. It indicates that if a common set of attributes are present in a person irrespective of their gender, then there is a possibility for the person to be successful. How people see themselves and others in the profession determines their own identity and changes the perspective while rating on the attributes. If identity formation process changes, it might give some difference in the ratings.

Limitations of the Study

• The attributes could have been divided in categories in order to understand which category

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Workplace Ethics

Workplace ethics and behavior are crucial part of employment as both are aspects that can assist a company in its efforts to be profitable. In fact, ethics and behavior are just as important to most companies as performance, as high morale and teamwork are two ingredients for success. Every business in every ndustry has certain guidelines to which its employees must adhere, and frequently outline such aspects in employee handbooks.