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Course

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Gender Stereotypes at Work

There is no doubt that people belong to the number of living organisms with the well-developed brain. Since their childhood, representatives of our biological species learn to explore the world, using their logical reasoning. During this process, humans face something they do not have an explanation for, and, in order to fill their knowledge gap, they may need to invent their own theories that are never brought into question and are based on a few facts that can be random. In fact, due to people's unwillingness to develop their critical thinking and consider all facts that they possess, there is a wide range of gender stereotypes in different cultures that have a negative influence on the society and can interfere with people's professional development.

Preconceptions and Career Development

Continuing on the topic of gender stereotypes, it is necessary to say that unjust generalizations based on gender are strictly interconnected with the area of expertise of many researchers trying to understand the mechanisms defining the life of the human society. Gender stereotypes can be divided into two groups as they are either positive or negative – in other words, the group of people that is assessed in accordance with the stereotype may derive certain benefits or face injustice. For instance, the common belief that men are less emotional than women are plays an important role when an employer has to choose either a male or a female candidate who aspires to the position that requires stress resistance. According to the given

example, the stereotypes exaggerating certain attribute in one group and minimizing the same one in another group can have both positive and negative effects.

Surprisingly, positive stereotypes turn out to be extremely harmful as they withstand an egalitarian point of view (Kay et al. 287). Speaking about stereotypes that are aimed at highlighting differences between sexes, it is important to note that they often touch upon abstract features that cannot be measured. For instance, many people believe that volitional powers are more manifested in men than in women.

According to Cundiff and Vescio (126) who have conducted their research on gender stereotypes at work, the stereotypes related to self-control and mental capacity of women can be defined as the leading cause why there are very few women holding senior positions in organizations. Gender discrimination and gender stereotypes cannot exist separately, and this statement is proven by numerous cases when professionals are evaluated based not on their achievements, experience, and skills but on stereotypes used to describe a person of their gender. The negative tendencies related to stereotyping that are widespread even in developed countries with the freedom of faith cannot remain unnoticed when it comes to political sphere (Schneider and Bos 246). According to Dolan, gender stereotypes related to hypothetic emotional instability in women often act as the significant barrier preventing female leaders from achieving important results (96). More than that, discussing the detrimental influence that emotion-related stereotypes have on women's career development, the author highlights that female leaders tend to be judged whatever strategy they choose because emotional women are seen as unsound leaders whereas female chiefs demonstrating emotional restraint are claimed to fail "to fulfil their role as women" (96). As is clear from this example,

gender stereotypes may become a trap which does not allow people to achieve success in the spheres of activity they have chosen.

There is another set of stereotypes that interfere with the career development of people in different professional fields and countries – preconceptions related to the notion of empathy. Everyone knows that women are believed to be much more empathetic than men because of the maternal instinct that influences their behavior even if they have no children (Allemand et al. 229). Even though the existence of this instinct is the objective truth, it does not define the degree of empathy that people demonstrate. Moreover, this degree cannot be measured at all. Empathy stereotypes also work in two directions – they can be helpful or destructive to both women and men. Thus, it happens that women working at large companies are often asked to help their colleagues or even fulfil their tasks because their employers see them as sensible and self-sacrificing. At the same time, men do not receive such requests as often because empathy stereotype makes them look more ambitious and objective. Considering the fact that the majority of men would benefit from this stereotype when it comes to professional activity, there still can be cases when it works against them. For example, empathy together with the knowledge in the field of psychology can be listed among the most important characteristics of professionals working with children (Jeong 44). Therefore, a woman can be regarded as a more preferred candidate aspiring to the position of a nurse or an elementary school teacher. Nevertheless, this discrimination does not arouse resentment on the global scale because men tend to despise low-paid work, believing that social status is of great importance to them.

Conclusion

In the end, gender stereotypes can be perceived as an integral part of culture in different countries because children tend to learn them from their parents.

Numerous examples linking the specific attitude to men and women in different professional fields with presuppositions show that gender stereotypes at work may pose a threat to career development of professionals, choosing spheres that do not align with stereotypical images of individuals of their gender.

Works Cited

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