Teachers' Awareness about Age and Gender Stereotypes: Case Study of High School Teachers in Tiaret Province

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مدى وعي الأساتذة بالأفكار النمطية عن الجنس والعمر: دراسة حالة أساتذة التعليم الثانوي بولاية تيارت

ملخص:

يعالج هذا المقال مشكل الأفكار النمطية عن الجنس والعمر في المجتمع الجزائري. قد تبدو التصورات النمطية عن الرجل والمرأة، والشيوخ والشباب طبيعية لكن تأثيرها جد خطير على كل من الطلبة وخاصة الأساتذة. ولهذا اخترنا القيام بهذا البحث لتحليل فهم وتصورات أساتذة التعليم الثانوي للأفكار النمطية عن الجنس والعمر. من أجل تأسيس وجاهة فرضياتنا، ارتأينا العمل بعدة طرق بحثية أو ما يعرف بالتثليث. زيادة على ذلك تدعو هذه الدراسة إلى ضرورة تكوين الأساتذة للأخذ بعين الاعتبار العمر والجنس كمتغيرين اجتماعين مؤثرين على عملية تمدرس الطلبة، لأن المدرسة هي أساس ومنبع نشر ثقافة التعايش وقبول الآخر. تبين نتائج هذه المقال كيف أن الأفكار

النمطية هي بصفة رئيسية مشكل ثقافي وجب معالجته لدى التلاميذ منذ نعومة الأظافر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العمر؛ التوعية؛ الجنس؛ الأساتذة؛ الأفكار النمطي.

ABSTRACT:

This paper tackles the issue of gender and age stereotypes which are becoming naturalized in the Algerian society. The stereotypical perceptions about men and women, the elderly and youth seem to be normative to some ofyet, they have insidious impact on both students and most importantly teachers. Thus, we have chosen to work on the examination of teachers' understanding and sensitivity towards gender and age stereotypes. In order to establish validity of our hypotheses, we opted for a variety of methods or what is known as triangulation. Moreover, this study calls for the necessity to train teachers to be aware and consider several social variables while teaching because schools are the foundation of tolerance and mutual respect. The results of this paper demonstrated how age and gender stereotypes are mainly a cultural problem that can most appropriately be debunked from early childhood.

Keywords: Age; Awareness; Gender; Teachers; Stereotypes.

1- Introduction

The inborn impact of social variables on human beings seems to be neglected, uncharted or simply ignored. The intersectionality of age and gender and its contribution in creating a stereotypic mindset about a certain cohort or gender community is widely influencing not only illiterate people but also the so called elite. This paper is the outcome of questionnaires, interviews and disguised observation in context. The setting is a high school in Algeria and the target population of the study is teachers at work.

Relations between women and men in the Algerian workplace are not that equal despite having same duties, rights and wages. If we consider how women are treated while working compared to the other sex, we may find many disparities and inequalities. As our study focuses on how gender roles are perceived in the Algerian educational setting, we can say that the traditional gender stereotypes are still believed by the majority to be the "Truth" or scientifically speaking these stereotypical perceptions are deeply embedded in the Algerian society that they become an agreed upon norm. The Algerian woman at work is in most of the time compelled to either to act like men or endures different kinds of unfair treatments and stigmatization. Some women tend to change their voices at work to a higher pitch, avoid smiling and deal with their colleagues and clients authoritatively to gain obedience and respect.

Otherwise, they will not be able to control their surroundings and may face various unfair treatments and unfair practices. Thus, one may point out how stereotypes can

be very harmful because they can cause a person to mistreat others based on preconceived notions that are untrue. Several studies showed that most people are not aware of how stereotyping automatically influences their thinking and, therefore, believe that their perceptions are based on objective observations. So, what are women supposed to doto uncomfortably imitate men, or remain passive and endure mistreatment and stereotyping?

These negative practices have a huge impact on working women and the quality of their generated results. Believing that women's place is the "kitchen".In other words, domestic settings have led to the policy of occupational segregation in which men and women tend to be concentrated in different types of jobs in the labour market, with men in occupations considered as "masculine" and women in those considered as "feminine". This leads to limited employment opportunities for both sexes, but women tend to be more negatively affected as the jobs associated with them usually carry less prestige and rewards, therefore are kept locked into these jobs.

The concept of gender or gender relations is not that well-known among laymen, due to the "blind" reproduction of traditional gender roles taught by our culture, traditions and norms. These are reinforced by gender stereotypes which are deeply imbedded in every aspect of life. Thus, it is notably lucid that agents of socialization had the greatest impact on peoples' perceptions of masculinity and femininity. On the basis of a complementarity in procreation, what is assumed to be natural is also formed historically. That is to say, men and women were raised and taught to believe in their opposition to

the other. This created the unbalanced gender roles and attitudes which prejudice both sexes. Consequently, the belief of men's superiority over women is highly accepted and even praised not only by men but by some women, even mothers teaching their daughters to be silent in the presence of men, to obey and serve the husband who is considered as orders giver and the woman as the one who implements.

Accordingly, gender relations in the Algerian society are regarded by some as the relation between the "strong" breadwinner and the "docile" housewife. The impact of such beliefs and practices are not confined only to education but are present and prominent in any domain. Still, what is alarming is that we still do not dare to ring the tocsin and start thinking of an alternative model and campaign that may enlighten if not every single one, at least we begin with teachers. In a word, there is a massive need to diminish the danger of stereotyping, self-stereotyping and gender blindness all together.

The gender division is reproduced by many and in many contexts, for instance, in schools a male teacher treats his female colleague differently from a male one and vice versa. This reinforcement of stereotyped gender roles led unfortunately to using the syllabus in a way that maintains gender stereotypes, and unfortunately this is transmitted to pupils' minds affecting their conceptions of how to consider and treat the other sex.

Relations between the sexes, particularly between teachers as they are the focus of our study need to be revisited and given much attention if we are determined to get our

schools out of "darkness"since they are the most powerful and affective institutions that spread consciousness and awareness.

2- OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study addresses the issue of teachers' gender and age insensitivity and its impact on students, and the process of teaching. The paper attempts to answer questions like: Are high school teachers immune to ageist and biased stereotypes? Do gender and age awareness have an impact on teachers and students? How can we bring genders and generations together? We suggest that Algerian high school teachers perpetuate the traditional perceptions about the four groups: young men, old men, young women and old women because teachers were socialized and raised in an environment that cherishes norms.

They believe that they are "the truth" that needs to be abided by. It is agreed that stereotypes are deeply embedded in societies and it is hard for ordinary people to identify and avoid them. Thus, the need for gender awareness necessitates conducting research to spot the reasons behind the insensitivity and propose an alternative model which contributes to the enlightenment of educators at in the first place, then consequently, laymen, students and future generations.

3- METHODS

Choosing the most appropriate means of research is certainly a matter of many factors. (Beiske2002: 1) states that "while factors such as time and costs certainly play an important part in deciding how to approach a particular research problem, the subject of the research itself should ultimately determine the methods used. "It should be noted

that a good approach of the subject greatly depends on the right choice of the research method"(Scandure & Williams, 2002; cited in Beiske, 2002). In this study, it was opted for a set of methods, questionnaire is one of them. Questionnaires were administered to a sample of 200 high school teachers. 100 questionnaires were administrated to women teachers, and another hundred to men teachers. Another 200 questionnaires were equally handed to teachers of different age cohorts. The first 100 questionnaires were given to young teachers whose age is between 20 and 30, and the last 100 ones to old teachers whose age isbetween 50 and 60.

4-RESULTS

### 5- Questionnaire Analysis and Interpretation:

Graph N°1: Exchange of accusations
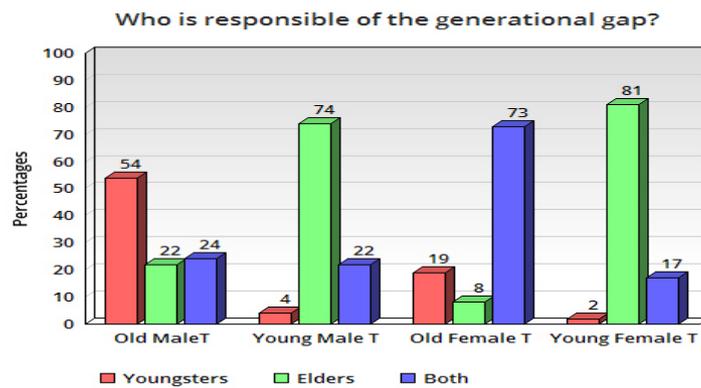
Teachers' answers about who is responsible of the gap between generations revealed how stereotypes and prejudice are deeply rooted in their minds because most answers were

sort of accusations to the other generation. Despite including (both) as a third answer choice, only few of the informants believe that both sexes are responsible, except for old female teachers (O.F.T) who held a different opinion since about 73% believed that it is both the responsibility of the young and old generation. This graph may be another proof that generations or at least teachers in Algeria are at clash. The divergent perceptions have enormous negative impact not only on teachers but also on the generations they raise. Even more, on students who keep reinforcing these stereotypical biased views instead of working all together on the eradication of ageist beliefs.

Graph N°2:Different Attitudes, Different Impressions
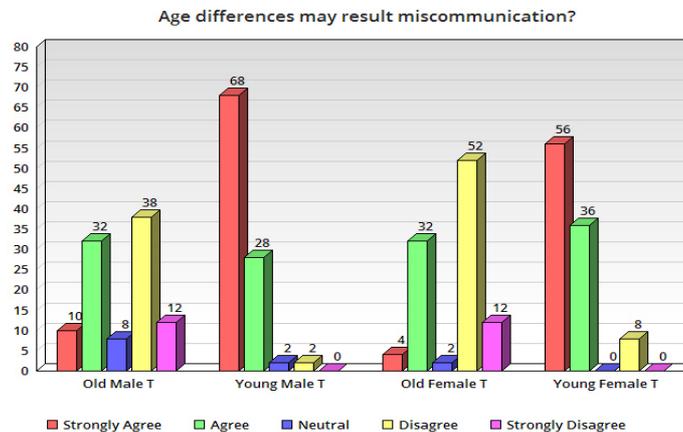
Findings show that young male teachers (Y.M.T)and young female teachers (Y.F.T)strongly believe that communicating with the other generation is a hard task to accomplish. While most of old female teachers (O.F.T) and old male teachers (O.M.T) disagree or do not acknowledge the fact that being of another cohort is a barrier preventing full understanding between generations. What is particular about

these answers is that the younger generation, regardless of its gender, it stresses on the existence of a tension in communication with elders, referring to not considering their views and opinions as worth implementing, just because of the stereotype of; "You are still novice and maybe not well trained".

On the other hand, we figured out that the older generation is hesitant to acknowledge the conflicts of communicating with the younger generation. In fact, the biggest deficiency here is the two divergent perceptions; each generation holds the other one, as we observed how some young talented teachers blame elders for not including them in the decision making of rules affecting the school and students. Per contra, the older generation is not able to accept rivalry or at least their language use is different from younger generations. The conflict and prejudice appear to be a fixed canon that will not be unraveled easily. The exchange of accusations and describing elders as bureaucratic, outdated and arrogant workers is faced by other beliefs of the incompetent, novice and stubborn younger generation.

**Graph N° 3: Gender stereotypical perceptions among teachers**
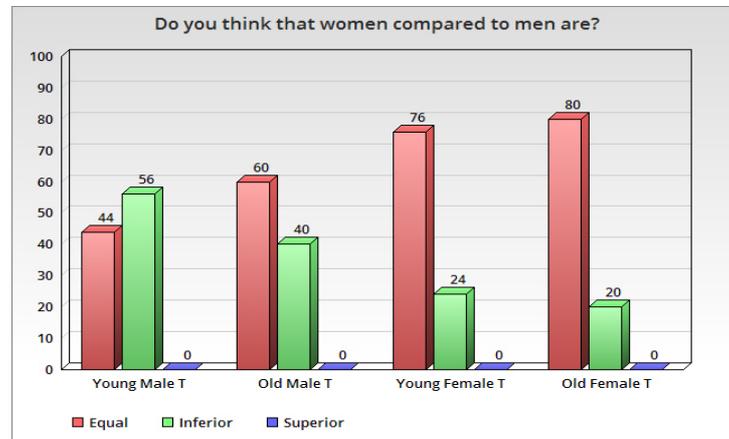
Another unexpected answer was the one provided by 56% of young male teachers who claimed that women can never be equal to men due to their biology and religious reasons as well. These deeply rooted conceptions are backed up by some patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. These could successfully indoctrinate that a woman's typical place is her house, husband and children. Some teachers went further by saying men's responsibility is to take care of women and be their protector. In fact, this is what Glick and Fiske called benevolent sexism which a compliment intended to maintain women's traditional roles by giving smooth and affectionate comments having an insidious impact on women's perception of themselves. In other words, "It is a chivalrous ideology that offers protection and affection to women who adopt conventional gender roles. Because benevolent sexism may superficially seem like positive regard rather than prejudice, it can go unnoticed or even be embraced by women themselves." Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). On the other hand, most women teachers agreed that they are equal to men and that they need to entertain same rights and opportunities.

Graph N° 4:Gender blindness in schools?
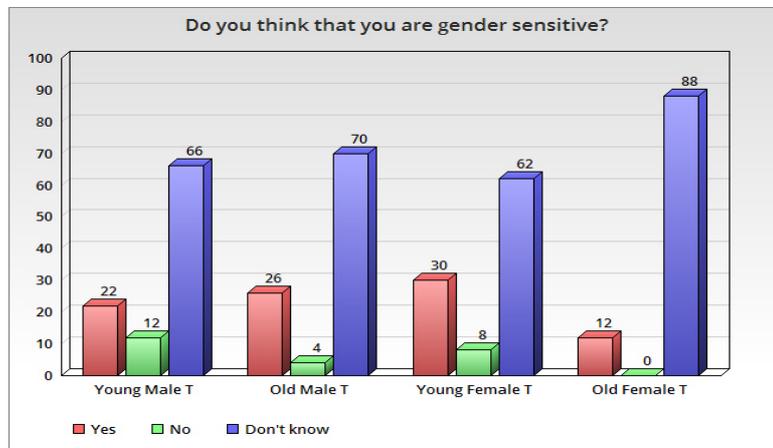
Results provided demonstrate adequately teachers' unawareness of gender sensitivity. A percentage of 62% to 88% mentioned that they have no idea about what it means to be gender aware, while only 12% to 30% stated that they view themselves as gender sensitive which is not always the case. Answers showed how teachers' understanding of gender sensitivity is confined to providing girl students with aid, due to what their innate physical inferiority compared to their male colleagues. Teachers' stereotypical beliefs about gender may seem as having no impact on their students, roles and responsibilities, but in fact, teachers' perceptions can also affect the way they interact and communicate with their students (Gray & Leith, 2004); influence students' motivation and achievement (Martin, Yin, & Mayall, 2006); and project social representations of gender onto boys and girls (Ivinson& Murphy, 2003).

Teachers may have a similar knowledge level, but teach in different ways since their personal beliefs and perceptions have a powerful influence on their teaching methodology and standpoints. For instance, among teachers questioned, a teacher of science stressed: "I do not allow girls to sit with boys to protect them from any kind of verbal, physical or sexual harassment". Such an answer asserts that the teacher believes in segregation and girl students' isolation as a solution to gender based violence.

6- Positive and Negative Algerian elderly Terms

Elderly people in Algeria are subject to stereotyping by other cohorts and even themselves. Adjectives used to stereotype old people fall usually into these; senile, rigid in thought and manner, with old-fashioned morality and skills. Similarly, older adults are also portrayed as eccentric and sometimes arrogant, tough, and not accepting a person outside

of their cohort. This apparent misunderstanding or divergence led to generating negative thoughts about the notion of old age, that is to say, people tend to believe that older adults are different, and may eventually cease to view them as worthy human beings. Paradoxically, old people are not only negatively stereotyped but also entertain some sort of appreciation. Elders in Algeria are usually described and treated as wise, experienced and honored. Some examples are given down here to demonstrate terms and vocabulary used to describe old people both positively and negatively.

7- Arabic Transliteration System

The table below represents the Arabic transliteration system which is meant as a system for general scholarly use. The script is codified for writing the Arabic language. It is written from right to left, in a cursive style, and includes 28 letters.

ي و	ه ن	م ل	ك ق	ف غ	ع ظ	ط ض	ض ص	ش س	ز ر	ذ د	خ ح	ج ث	ت ب	أ
y w	h n	m l	k q	f gh	ʻ ẓ	ṭ ḍ	ṣ sh	s z	r dh	d kh	ḥ j	th t	t b	ʼ

Source: BGN/PCGN 1956 System

Table 1: Arabic transliteration system

Terms	The Connotation
/Shi:kh/	Old person (sometimes experienced like ; Teacher or Imam)
/Sɪlhæ(d)j/	Has religious meaning ; (often for a muslim who went to

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	pilgrimage)
/Sidi/	Sir or master (used mostly by women to address a relative old person)
/Si mʊħeməd/	/Si/ equals Sir or used for calling. Mohamed is added when we do not know the person's name. (It also connotes the prophet, it is a form of respect)
/ʕami/	Stands for uncle, it shows respect to an old person (usually to an unknown in public)
/b'bʌ/	Means father, (used to show respect to Elders, not necessarily a father)

Table 2: Positive representation of elders

Terms	The meaning
/ʃɪbænɪ/	Perceived as less polite, denotes an old man with gray hair.
/ʃæ'jəb/	Someone who has gray hair, a sign of senescence.
/ʃærəf/	Represents senile or very old age
/ʕju:z/	Derived from **/ʕajz/** which

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	means incapability or incompetence due to being aged.
/gəru:m/	means decrepit person that is weak.
/mqerqʌb/	Used in Tiaret province. means the ineffectiveness or inefficacy of overly aged.
/mtʌbteb/	Means impotent and feeble old person
/ṯʕʌʕin fi s'sin/	Advanced in years or so old.
/bæqilehl'məjehmə/	Pejorative expression used to show that the person one step from death.

Table 3: Negative representation of elders

The above mentioned negative or ageist language is a problem for older adults. Many of the terms are commonly used to describe older adults without much thought or understanding of how these terms hurt and degrade the individual. Such attitudes towards older adults have to be revised by specialists who may stress the danger of denigrating older people and introduce at least neutral terms and adjectives that portray them fairly. In similar vein, youth need to be considered active contributors in their society. This needs to be implemented by trained teachers who can move beyond the traditional binary division of genders and cohorts. Consequently, we may engage in a sensitization process that brings generations and genders together which will positively affect students' performance, mitigate the sexist/ageist language and practices.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has uncovered how the issue of generations and genders in Algeria is dismissed or not given much importance due to the scarce literature available on it. Ergo, we believe that addressing this issue by decision makers, researchers and the ministry of education is a must for a country that wants to move beyond inequalities and divergence caused by Age and Gender.

As recommended by the European institute for gender equality, gender mainstreaming need to be implemented in all domains but priority should be given to education as it is the means that facilitates sensitization and makes it rapid. However, the target of this sensitivity campaign must be educators because the results of this study demonstrated how either unaware or negatively indoctrinated to stereotype people for their gender or generation. In addition, governments need to organize seminars and workshops dedicated to the teaching staff in schools particularly high schools where students have formulated a set of perceptions on themselves and others. Moreover, providing university students with fellowships and scholarships to study gender and get trained on these issues is also a big step towards enlightenment.

Conclusively, one may point out that the challenge of getting people out of the gender blind zone cannot be realized overnight but it is a whole campaign and mission of leaders, feminists, teachers and students. The insidious impact of stereotypes on people is creating a lot of areas on injustice which hinders communication, collaboration and achievements as well.

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