The Role of Human Choices in the Learning Process

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Abstract: Human decision-making plays a crucial role in the learning process, affecting engagement, motivation, information processing, and social interactions. Learners have the autonomy to select materials, study times, and strategies that suit their preferences and strengths. When faced with complex concepts, learners make cognitive choices that impact their understanding and knowledge application. Additionally, in collaborative settings, learners actively decide when and how to seek help and engage with peers.Understanding the significance of human choices in learning has important implications for educators and instructional designers. By fostering a supportive environment that encourages autonomy, active decision-making, and collaboration, educators can empower learners to take charge of their learning journey and improve outcomes.In conclusion, human choices shape the learning process, influencing engagement, motivation, information processing, and social interactions. Acknowledging and harnessing the power of decision-making can enhance educational practices and empower learners to become active agents in their learning journey.

Keywords: Learning process, Decision-making, Human, Human choices

Introduction

Gender equality and equal opportunities are important topics in today's society. Within the corporate environment, the issue of gender equality between women and men is receiving increasing attention, and companies are increasingly striving to provide women with equal opportunities in leadership positions and other key decision-making roles. However, there are still many areas where women are underrepresented in leadership positions and find it challenging to have a say in decision-making processes.

The research I conducted aimed to examine how decision-making processes and preferences differ between women and men both within and beyond the corporate environment. The chosen studies utilized various methods, such as online surveys, observations, and interviews. By involving women and men working in the corporate setting, I collected information on their decision-making processes, preferences, and challenges. Through analysis, I looked for patterns and differences that could help understand the gender-related disparities in decision-making. Understanding the findings of these studies can be advantageous for companies as it enables a better comprehension of the gender-based decision-making differences. This understanding can aid in providing equal opportunities for both women and men in decision-making, thus promoting gender equality in the corporate environment. Empowering women to be more effective participants in corporate decision-making can contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive business setting.

Literature Review

The Impact of Emotional Factors on Decision-Making

Emotions and emotional traits hold a central place in the stereotypes associated with "typical" women and men. Most psychological research exploring the relationship between gender and emotions focuses on when and why emotional differences between genders occur. Beliefs about emotions and behavioral gender differences are

often context-dependent, meaning that the extent of differences depends on the area of study and how the research context is framed. (Kim, 2010) These are also significantly influenced by generational differences and characteristics, mainly due to the impact of digitalisation and innovation. (Csiszárik-Kocsir &Varga, 2023a, 2023b; Csiszárik-Kocsir & Dobos, 2022, 2023; Dobos et al., 2022; Mizser et al., 2022; Garai-Fodor et al., 2022a).

It is evident even from our everyday lives that emotional factors play a crucial role in decision-making for both women and men. However, as research from recent decades indicates, the influence of emotional factors on decision-making can vary between the two genders. Women tend to listen to their emotions more during decision-making. This is attributed to women generally being more open about expressing their emotions and being more inclined to consider their feelings and intuitions when making decisions. These factors can significantly impact the choices women make and how they respond to events in their surroundings. As a result, emotional influences can heavily affect women's decisions and often influence their overall quality of life and workplace performance. (Eagly, 1990).

For men, the impact of emotional factors is generally smaller, and they are often more inclined to approach decision-making rationally and logically. They tend to favor decisions supported by facts and data and are less prone to emotional influence. However, research shows that emotions can still play a role in men's decision-making, especially when it comes to significant life choices, such as career or family-related decisions.

It's important to note that the impact of emotional factors on decision-making is not necessarily negative. Emotions can assist individuals in making the most appropriate decisions for a given situation, and considering them during business decision-making can be advantageous. (Fodor et al., 2022).This chapter discusses the gender differences in various aspects of emotions and future directions for studying the relationship between gender and emotions. (Fodor, 2023).

Differences and Context

It's crucial to create various contexts to observe gender-related emotional differences adequately. Factors influencing gender differences include:
a) whether the observed behavior occurs publicly;
b) whether the behavior is identified as "feminine" – for example, an activity that girls or women are generally good at;
c) asking about retrospective events/behaviors.

For example, in reports about experiencing emotions, gender effects more closely resemble gender stereotypes when individuals recall their behavior and emotions afterward than when emotion reports are in real-time. For instance, when asking women and men about their ability to empathize with others, women generally report higher levels of empathy than men. However, this difference decreases or disappears when measuring empathic behavior in an actual situation. (Goboly & Foldi, 2022).

Reactions to Emotional Factors for Women and Men

Women and men can exhibit different emotional reactions. In general, women pay more attention to their emotions and attach greater significance to them during decision-making compared to men. Men tend to seek more rational solutions and are more likely to engage in logical analysis rather than emotional reactions. This difference can impact decision-making. Women are more likely to prioritize emotional considerations and may take longer to make decisions when they are unsure about the correctness of their self-posed questions. As a result, they often spend more time on decision-making and are more thorough in making these decision.(Csiszárik-Kocsír & Garai-Fodor, 2018).

Men, on the other hand, are generally quicker to make determinations and are more likely to consider logic and facts over emotional reactions. This often results in faster and more decisive decisions compared to women.
However, research suggests that when emotional factors play a crucial role in decision-making, women generally outperform men, particularly in decisions that significantly affect their lives, such as career or family-related choices. These reactions are important when facing choices that impact their future, life, and happiness. Additionally, sentimentality is particularly significant in the business world, where decisions often involve

financial risks. Studies show that female leaders tend to perform better in emotional intelligence than men, and this can help them manage risks and conflicts more effectively. (Csapó et al., 2018)

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) has proven to be a relevant construct in various aspects of everyday life, including mental and physical health, social functioning, as well as academic and workplace performance. Numerous studies have explored the mechanisms through which EI operates in individuals. However, several authors have also analyzed the differences in emotional abilities based on sociodemographic variables such as gender, ethnic background, age, and socio-economic or educational attainment. (Fodor, 2022).

Traditionally, the emotional dimension of human beings is more associated with the female gender, as they tend to experience positive and negative emotions more intensely than men. The biological explanation suggests that women's biochemistry is more prepared to consider their own and others' emotions as crucial elements for survival. This is supported by the idea that specific areas of the brain dedicated to emotional processing may be larger in women than in men, and the processing of emotions may be more extensive. Emotional differences between genders are influenced by numerous factors, including culture and socialization. For example, emotional expressions may differ between genders, and women generally have more opportunities to practice and develop their emotional intelligence in emotional situations. On the other hand, Baron-Cohen's "extreme male brain theory of autism" relies on biological and social arguments, suggesting that male and female brains have different structures. According to this theory, the female brain is largely built around empathy, while the male brain is more focused on understanding and constructing systems. Baron-Cohen argues that the cognitive and behavioral systems of men and women functionally differ from each other. (Garai-Fodor et al., 2022b). A study on emotional intelligence tested a total of 267 university students (156 female, 111 male) in exchange for course credit. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years (average = 20.02, SD = 3.60). Among the participants, 56.9% were Caucasian, 13.1% were Spanish, 12.4% were Asian, 8.2% were African-American, 5.6% were Pacific Islander, and 3.4% were from other ethnic backgrounds.

The test is based on emotional intelligence as a combination of skills, including recognizing and understanding emotions, managing and regulating emotions, and using emotions in communication and problem-solving. The MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test) consists of four branches:(Szemere et al., 2022) Identifying Emotions: Participants have to interpret emotion expressions in given situations, such as faces, voices, or words. (Baranyi et al., 2022).

Perceiving Emotions: Participants have to recognize emotional states in others through their facial expressions, voices, or words.

Using Emotions: Participants have to use emotional information in various situations, such as problem-solving or communication. (Foldi, 2015). Managing Emotions: Participants have to regulate emotional states, such as reducing stress or anger.

Table 1. Sex differences for the MSCEIT distribution

Branch	Sex	Mean	Standard Deviation	Effect size	Comparing Means
Perceiving	Male	97.08	14.76		
	Female	99.68	16.40	-.17	$t(265) = 1.33, p = .184$
Using	Male	91.80	18.91		
	Female	95.12	17.58	-.18	$t(265) = 1.48, p = .141$
Understanding	Male	85.02	14.18		
	Female	90.36	13.95	-.38	$t(265) = 3.06, p = .002$
Managing	Male	85.46	13.82		
	Female	90.46	15.23		$t(265) = 2.75, p = .006$
				-.34	

Note. Effect size = mean difference / standard deviation.
$* p < .05. ** p < .001.$

The scoring of MSCEIT is done with consensus-based scoring, meaning that participants' scores are based on the percentage of normative group respondents who provided the same response. For example, if 55% of the normative group chose option C, a participant would receive a score of 0.55 for selecting that option.(Csiszárik-Kocsír & Garai-Fodor, 2018). Women scored higher in all branches of MSCEIT than men. However, these

differences were only significant in two branches: understanding and managing emotions. (Foldi & Medveczky, 2017). Although women scored higher in all four sections of the test than men, only two of them showed significant differences.

Social Pressure

The leadership role can often be more challenging for women due to societal expectations. The dominance of men in the workforce and politics remains strong, which can be disadvantageous for women. Women leaders often face the social expectation to be assertive and confident while also being caring and nurturing mothers and wives. As a result, women often struggle to find a balance, and it is not uncommon for them to feel torn between work and personal life. (Garai-Fodor, 2022).

Men's leadership role is not immune to societal pressures either. Men are generally expected to be confident and assertive and be able to lead and control. However, these stereotypical roles can lead men to suppress their emotions and present a tougher, stronger exterior. This can lead to emotional exhaustion and mental health problems. (Pervez et al., 2022).

In addition to societal pressures, it is essential for both women and men to consider individual goals and values to be truly content and happy in their leadership roles. Emphasizing acceptance that everyone has their unique style and that women and men can learn from each other strengthens the leadership culture and promotes diversity in workplaces.(Csiszárik-Kocsír & Garai-Fodor, 2018).

Material and Methods

In the context of social pressures and how they affect women and men regarding societal expectations, I conducted a questionnaire, the results of which are presented below.

The survey included 324 female and 84 male participants. Among them, 65% fell within the age range of 18 to 35, with the remaining percentage distributed across older and younger age groups. The questionnaire encompassed various aspects of societal pressures on women, revealing that 80% of female respondents felt under high pressure, while only 20% indicated experiencing low or moderate pressure. Notably, 70% of women believed that the media and advertising significantly influenced the societal standards of female beauty.

Conversely, the assessment of societal pressure on men demonstrated more diverse perspectives. Among male participants, 55% perceived the pressure as moderate, while 15% believed it to be very strong. In contrast, 30% of male respondents stated that they experienced low or negligible pressure. Moreover, 40% of men acknowledged the impact of media and advertising on the male ideal of beauty.

An intriguing finding was that 70% of all respondents believed their lives were significantly influenced by trends, social media, and beauty ideals. Among this group, 30% expressed feeling these influences strongly, while 40% considered the effects to be relatively mild. On the other hand, 20% of respondents reported experiencing minimal presence of social pressures, and 10% claimed not to feel these influences at all.

This data sheds light on the complexity of societal expectations, particularly concerning gender roles and beauty standards, and how individuals perceive and respond to these pressures. However, it is essential to continue researching and understanding the multifaceted nature of these issues to foster more inclusive and supportive environments for all individuals.

The questionnaire aimed to identify potential strategies to counteract and mitigate the impact of these societal pressures in today's world, encompassing both social media and traditional media, as well as fundamental human values.

Regrettably, in contemporary society, it has become quite common for celebrity 'influencers' to utilize their popularity not to challenge or alleviate social expectations and ideals, but rather to reinforce them. This phenomenon manifests in women's pictures or videos showcasing the pursuit of a flawless physique, a picture-perfect face, and conforming to feminine stereotypes imposed by society. Similarly, men are often portrayed adhering to narrow definitions of masculinity. However, there is considerable speculation on how to shift this narrative towards a more inclusive and accepting direction.

To address these challenges, several key approaches and possibilities emerged from the questionnaire. First and foremost, fostering media literacy and critical thinking skills is essential. By empowering individuals to discern between authentic content and unrealistic portrayals, we can reduce the harmful influence of media on body image and societal expectations. Promoting diverse representations of beauty and dismantling stereotypes can lead to a more accepting and inclusive culture that celebrates individuality.

Another vital aspect that participants highlighted is the need for positive role models and influencers who actively challenge societal norms and advocate for self-acceptance. Encouraging individuals who embrace their uniqueness and advocate for body positivity and gender equality can inspire others to do the same. Additionally, encouraging open conversations about these issues in various social settings, such as schools, workplaces, and families, can create safe spaces for individuals to express their struggles and seek support. By reducing the stigma around mental health and body image discussions, we can promote a healthier dialogue and understanding of these challenges.Furthermore, promoting self-compassion and nurturing a healthy relationship with oneself is vital. Emphasizing the importance of intrinsic values, such as kindness, empathy, and personal growth, can counterbalance the emphasis on external appearances and societal validation. To effect broader change, media outlets and platforms should take on greater responsibility in promoting positive content and discouraging harmful narratives that perpetuate unrealistic standards. Encouraging advertisers to diversify their representations and avoiding the use of overly edited images can contribute to more authentic and inclusive media portrayals.

In conclusion, while societal pressures and narrow beauty ideals are pervasive in today's world, the questionnaire revealed hopeful possibilities for change. By fostering media literacy, embracing diverse representations, encouraging positive role models, facilitating open conversations, and promoting self-compassion, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and accepting society that embraces the uniqueness of every individual.

As per the respondents' feedback, a significant portion (45%) highlighted the need for increased awareness and education regarding gender stereotypes. They emphasized the importance of providing this education from an early age, which can be facilitated by parents, schools, and other educational institutions. Additionally, the importance of addressing gender stereotypes among older generations, who might have grown up in environments where challenging such norms was discouraged, was emphasized.

The workplace emerged as a crucial arena for promoting awareness and combating gender expectations, as these stereotypes often influence job positions and pay discrepancies. Respondents stressed the significance of creating a more inclusive work environment by fostering flexibility in expectations and offering equal opportunities for both women and men. While it may be challenging to completely eradicate societal expectations, the consensus among respondents was to make dedicated efforts to alleviate them and create a more equitable society.
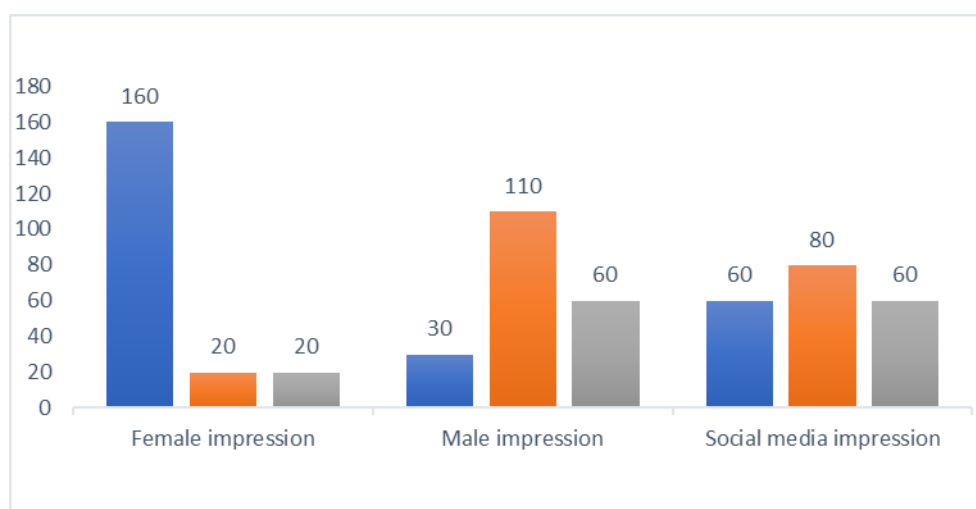

Figure 1. Percentage of responses to the questionnaire

Strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence was deemed vital by 20% of both genders. Respondents recognized that societal pressures to conform to gender expectations can lead to a lack of confidence and self-esteem issues. This aspect is particularly relevant for individuals who are still forming their self-image, such as

teenagers and young adults. To complement these suggestions, the respondents also proposed implementing mentorship and support programs that empower individuals to navigate and challenge gender norms. Having role models and mentors who have overcome similar challenges can be inspiring and provide invaluable guidance.Furthermore, incorporating diverse perspectives and representations in media, advertising, and other public platforms was seen as essential to combat gender stereotypes. By showcasing a wide range of role models and success stories, society can challenge rigid gender norms and promote inclusivity. Moreover, the importance of engaging men as allies in the fight against gender expectations was highlighted. Addressing gender stereotypes and promoting equality should be seen as a collective effort, involving both men and women working together to create positive change.

In conclusion, the respondents' insights underscore the significance of awareness, education, flexibility in expectations, self-esteem building, mentorship, and inclusivity in combating and mitigating the influence of gender stereotypes. By implementing these strategies in various aspects of society, we can move towards a more equitable and accepting world, free from the constraints of narrow gender expectations.

These findings hold significant importance in understanding the factors influencing decision-making among women and men. The results suggest that women might face a certain disadvantage, given that a substantial proportion of respondents reported their lives being more affected by societal pressures. While men may experience a slightly higher sense of freedom in this regard, they are not immune to these pressures either. However, it is evident that gender stereotypes have a notable impact on their positions in the workplace and career progression, potentially even more so than for women.

The gender disparities reflected in the survey highlight the need for further exploration and targeted efforts to address these challenges. One possible explanation for women facing a greater impact could be the enduring prevalence of traditional gender roles and expectations in society. From a young age, girls and boys may be exposed to different societal norms, leading to contrasting experiences and perceptions when it comes to decision-making and life choices.

To promote gender equality and empower women, it is crucial to foster an environment that challenges traditional stereotypes and offers equal opportunities for personal and professional growth. Encouraging girls and young women to pursue careers in male-dominated fields and providing mentorship and support can help break down the barriers that hinder their progress.

Similarly, men's experiences with societal pressures also warrant attention. Despite enjoying relatively more freedom in certain aspects, they might encounter rigid expectations surrounding masculinity, emotional expression, and career trajectories. Encouraging open discussions about male experiences, emotions, and vulnerabilities can contribute to healthier and more authentic expressions of masculinity.

Efforts to dismantle gender stereotypes in the workplace should be a priority for creating a level playing field. This involves promoting inclusive policies, pay equity, and diversity in leadership positions. Additionally, fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and sensitivity in the workplace can help combat harmful gender expectations. Educational institutions and media outlets play a vital role in shaping societal norms and perceptions. By incorporating diverse and inclusive content in educational curricula and media representation, we can challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance. Moreover, engaging men as allies in the fight for gender equality is essential. Emphasizing that gender equality benefits everyone in society can lead to broader support and cooperation in challenging harmful norms.

In conclusion, the survey results shed light on the different ways societal pressures influence decision-making among women and men. By acknowledging these disparities and working collectively to challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality, we can create a more equitable and empowering society for all.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that female leaders generally exhibit a more cooperative and collaborative approach, while male leaders tend to be more individualistic and competitive. Women are inclined towards risk aversion and attention to detail, whereas men often focus on assertiveness and quicker decision-making abilities. However, it is essential to emphasize that these differences do not necessarily confer advantages or disadvantages to either women or men. Leaders must adapt to the circumstances and specific situations to make the best decisions.

The results indicate that societal expectations and stereotypes significantly influence decision-making, particularly in leadership positions. Often, individuals make their decisions based on societal norms and expectations associated with their gender. For instance, there is often an expectation for women to be "attentive" and "sensitive," which can reinforce their inclination towards cooperation and attention to detail. On the other hand, men might feel pressure to be "decisive" and "competitive," reinforcing individualism and quick decision-making. However, leaders must be capable of breaking free from these stereotypes and finding a balance between different leadership styles and approaches. It is crucial that leaders base their decisions not on gender-associated stereotypes but on the specific context, the needs of the team, and the goals at hand. Promoting equality and inclusivity is also a crucial goal in leadership. Both women and men should have equal opportunities to demonstrate their leadership abilities and styles. Societal expectations should be shaped to support and foster diversity and various leadership approaches.

In conclusion, recognizing and understanding the gender differences in decision-making is an important step towards developing inclusive leadership practices and promoting equality. Empathy, open communication, and critical examination of societal norms can contribute to ensuring that leaders make the best decisions possible, regardless of their gender.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the author.

Acknowledgements or Notes

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