

GENDER STEREOTYPES OF THE CLASSROOM: THE TEACHER'S CONTRADICTING PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER-NEUTRALITY AND PRACTICES ON GENDER-INCLUSIVENESS

Jamaica V. Garcia^{1*}, Maria Theresa V. Forneas², Necy Cesaria V. Romo³, Matilde T.
Concordia⁴, Rozen C. Villa⁵, Laura Dane R. Rafanan⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City, Philippines

*For Correspondence; Tel. +639166009737, Email: jamaica.vizcarra@unp.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: *The significant role of teachers in eliminating gender stereotype cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it is deemed important to extend the current and limited body of knowledge concerning teachers' perceptions and practices relevant to gender stereotypes. Guided by Theory of Planned Behavior, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions and practices of public, private and HEIs teachers regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom through the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Data revealed that the teacher respondents are undecided whether gender stereotypes in the classroom are evident or not. Their practices do not support gender stereotyping. The perception variables do not have a significant bearing on the practices of Public, Private, and HEIs Teachers Regarding Gender Stereotypes in the Classroom. Furthermore, teachers' perceived gender roles in the classroom resulted in three significant themes, particularly the inclusive materials; gender-inclusive language; gender-based pedagogy.*

Keywords: gender-based pedagogy, gender roles, teachers' perception

1. INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, the world has become witness to the unequal and unjust treatment and perception of gender. One common and prevalent issue is gender stereotyping. Gender stereotypes exist in all human societies and in all human endeavors, professions, careers, and institutions. It is evident anywhere, may it be at home, office, or school. Stereotype as a subjective perception, which may be an intuition, a prejudice, an imagination, or a past impression of what a person has been [1]. Common gender stereotypes include men being characterized as strong, courageous, intelligent, and independent, while women are described as emotional, expressive, homely, and passive. Women are seen to be disadvantaged in different domains as they are treated to be inferior than men [2].

These biases toward gender have motivated a number of people to call for equality in the contemporary world. They want to push forward the elimination of gender inequality and the stereotypical beliefs about gender as these are deemed unprogressive and detrimental to personal growth and development. Numerous efforts have been employed to promote equality and eliminate stereotyped concepts on the roles of both men and women. Particularly, the United Nations, through the international human rights law framework, "prohibits gender stereotypes and stereotyping which undermine the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. States have obligation to eliminate discrimination against women and men in all areas of their lives."

With this in consideration, it is then understood that education and "teachers at all levels have a key role to play in developing a gender-sensitive future generation" [3]. A plethora of research has been conducted to investigate gender in education. The majority of these researches looked into appropriate strategies for integrating gender studies in pre-service and in-service teacher education [4]. Other

researches explored gender roles and stereotypes in textbooks and other learning materials. EFL textbooks in Japan stereotyped women as homemakers and mothers, which does not reflect the current reality [5]. There is an imbalance in the representation of genders in textbooks. Females are underrepresented in the texts and stereotypes are very evident in the content [6]. The same results, which indicate that men had more visibility compared to women and males are usually mentioned first in the sequence, were found in the analysis of Philippine textbooks [7].

Studies on teachers' perception of gender roles and stereotypes have also been conducted because of their effect on their instructional behaviors. Teachers deny that they hold or perpetuate biased perceptions of males and females but the results of his study showed that most of the teachers surveyed directly or indirectly promote gender stereotypes [3]. Teachers' perceptions largely conformed to typical gender stereotypes, including stereotypical views on gender roles, gendered sports, and story character assumptions [8]. Participants did not attribute stereotype reproduction to themselves as teachers and negative external pressures arose as common reasoning for stereotypical practice. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, have the responsibility and accountability of being impartial and nonjudgmental towards gender in relation to the delivery of instruction. The significant role of teachers in eliminating gender stereotypes cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it is deemed important to extend the current and limited body of knowledge concerning teachers' perceptions and practices relevant to gender stereotypes. This study employed a mixed-methods design in order to gather a more comprehensive and conclusive result. Specifically, it aimed to determine the level of perceptions of public, private and HEIs teachers regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom; determine the level of practices of public, private and HEIs teachers regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom; determine the significant relationship between and among the respondents on the

perceptions and practices on gender stereotype; How do teachers perceive gender roles in the classroom; and how do teachers address gender in the classroom. By investigating the perceptions and practices of teachers, authorities in education will acquire concrete information about gender stereotyping and these can guide them in formulating classroom and school policies that can support gender inclusiveness in academic institutions.

2. METHODS

The study employed the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Male and female teachers from the public, private, and HEIs in Ilocos Sur were the respondents of the study. The study of [9, 10] also used male and female. The instrument used to gather quantitative data was adopted while the qualitative data was gathered through an interview guide [3]. Mean and simple correlation, and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework were utilized to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

The study underwent two distinct phases, which began with the quantitative phase followed by the qualitative phase. In the first phase, the researchers gathered data on teachers' gender stereotyping perceptions and practices using a Likert scale. In order to refine, extend, and explain the determined perception and practices of teachers, the results from the survey were used as a basis in the development of interview questions for the second phase.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of perceptions of the respondents regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom is seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Level of perceptions of public, private, and HEIs teachers regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom.

Item	Private		Public		HEIs		Over all	
	\bar{X}	D R	\bar{X}	D R	\bar{X}	D R	\bar{X}	DR
1. Boys can handle pressure situations better than girls	2.71	U	2.72	U	3.21	U	2.88	U
2. Male are strong and female are weak	1.97	D	1.91	D	1.89	D	1.93	D
3. Male students generally do better in mathematics than female students	2.74	U	2.63	U	2.53	D	2.63	U
4. Boys generally possess more scientific skills than girls.	2.85	U	2.46	D	2.74	U	2.68	U
5. Females are better in reading than their male counterpart.	3.38	U	3.16	U	3.21	U	3.25	U
6. Boys are naturally better at most sports	3.91	A	3.54	A	3.42	A	3.63	A
7. Boys are more active and outspoken than girls.	2.68	A	2.69	U	2.58	D	2.65	U
8. Girls are well dress and neat than boys.	3.59	A	3.16	U	3.11	U	3.28	U
9. Men should be the head of the family	4.18	A	3.43	A	3.68	A	3.76	A
10. Women's place is at home	2.35	D	1.91	D	1.79	S D	2.02	D
OVER ALL MEAN	3.04	M	2.76	M	2.82	M	2.87	M

The overall level of perceptions of the teacher respondents on gender stereotypes in the classroom is moderate. This could mean that the teacher-respondents are uncertain of their perceptions on many gender stereotypes. Looking closely at the table, it could be noted that indicators stating boys are better than girls especially in particular subjects and skills acquired an "undecided" rating. This could probably be due to the fact that successful performance in school could not be

determined by one's gender. Teachers may have handled various classes and they may not have noted a pattern on which gender excels more in the subjects they teach. As one respondent claimed, *"I think many teachers responded with 'undecided' because for them the statements about boys being better in some cases are partly true but not all the time because they might have girl learners who perform better also. I guess it is simply a case-to-case basis."* Another respondent also justified the "undecided" rating for the first indicator with, *"In my opinion, I think most of the teachers answered undecided because boys are not that vocal in expressing what they feel to other people. They just keep it by themselves rather than telling their friends or relatives."*

Teachers' Perception of Gender Roles in the Classroom Gender Neutrality as Adopted Ideology

When asked about the teachers' perception on gender roles in the classroom, majority of the participants emphasized their stand that gender roles do not play a significant factor in the classroom. Teachers believed that gender should not be a consideration in planning and conducting instruction because learners should not be categorized according to their gender and should not be boxed according to stereotypes the society has assigned to them. Teacher F claimed that by disregarding gender roles in the classroom, educators can promote flexibility in learning and that, *"there are no limitations or hindrances to the academic and values development of both boys and girls."* This finding affirms the study of Gul et al. which revealed the majority of university teachers believed that boys and girls should be given equal opportunity and not treated differently; they have a positive attitude towards gender roles since they do not discriminate between girls and boys [11]. This is also in congruence with the finding that secondary school teachers should encourage both male and female students equally to carry out the same activities in order to promote fairness inside the classroom [12].

Teachers in basic education both public and private and instructors in the academe collectively expressed the need to maintain neutrality about one's perception of gender roles in the classroom. They believe that the best way to teach is by being neutral. This could be supported by the response of Teacher E: *"We must be neutral in all circumstances. It is better to give things/activities in a homogenous manner because it will tend to promote equality among the students."* These perceptions support the recommendation that teachers must learn to recognize and eliminate gender bias in their student-teachers interactions not only within but also outside the classroom [11]. Equal conditions should be created in the classroom and if gender differences need to be discussed, it should be without prejudice [13]. The neutral stance of teachers, which leads to the offering of equal opportunities for both genders, is deemed a vital way of addressing common stereotypes [14].

As seen on the table, the overall level of practices of the teacher respondents on gender stereotypes in the classroom is Very High. This indicates that the teachers' practices do not support stereotypes inside the classroom.

This could be supported by one respondent when asked to explain her practice in terms of the task given to students, *"Regardless of the activities we have in class, we should disregard gender and be neutral in all circumstances. This*

will create more fairness in our class. I tried to use girls vs boys as a grouping in my activities before but it just lead to the conflict between the girls and boys. So right now, I usually use a heterogeneous group of boys and girls in order to create fairness in a group and not to create conflict”

Table 2. Level of practices of public, private, and HEIs teachers regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom

Item	Private		Public		HEIs		Over all	
	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR
1. Teachers should encourage male and female students to carry out the same activities.	4.71	SA	4.56	SA	4.42	SA	4.56	SA
2. Teachers should devote more time to encouraging girls than boys.	2.24	D	2.23	D	1.95	D	2.14	D
3. Girls/women should be encouraged to enter traditionally male jobs such as engineering, medicine or architecture.	4.21	SA	3.90	A	4.11	A	4.07	A
4. There should be concerted efforts to raise students with a non-sexist orientation, at home and in schools.	4.56	SA	4.11	A	3.89	A	4.19	A
5. Teachers should be involved in shaping their students' perceptions about gender roles.	4.85	SA	4.19	A	4.58	SA	4.87	SA
6. Teachers should discourage students from acting out gender-stereotyped roles.	4.03	A	3.49	A	3.53	A	3.68	A
7. Boys and girls should be given equal opportunity and not treated differently.	4.79	SA	4.74	SA	4.74	SA	4.76	SA
8. I use gender-equitable language in my lessons.	4.56	SA	4.32	SA	4.26	SA	4.38	SA
9. I obtain and use instructional materials which are gender-neutral in my lessons.	4.59	SA	4.46	SA	4.32	SA	4.45	SA
10. I try to discourage gender-stereotyped behavior in my classes.	4.38	SA	3.88	A	4.00	A	4.09	A
11. My classroom practices encourage students to respect another gender	4.71	SA	4.72	SA	4.58	SA	4.67	SA
12. Every student needs to learn about gender issues.	4.71	SA	4.75	SA	4.68	SA	4.71	SA
13. Awareness about gender-stereotyped issues should be incorporated into all school subjects.	4.71	SA	4.60	SA	4.16	A	4.49	SA
14. Schools and the government are not doing enough at the moment to create awareness about gender issues in the country.	3.38	U	3.70	A	2.89	U	3.33	U
15. Teacher education programs should foster awareness of gender-stereotyped issues.	4.68	SA	4.49	SA	4.47	SA	4.55	SA
16. Teacher education programs should prepare students to deal with gender-stereotyped and bias in the classroom and school.	4.47	SA	4.43	SA	4.37	SA	4.42	SA
17. Teacher education programs should promote gender-sensitive behavior.	4.71	SA	4.59	SA	4.37	SA	4.56	SA
OVER ALL MEAN	4.04	H	4.01	H	4.18	H	4.21	VH

Teachers should focus on the learners' differences and the need to mold students as confirmed by one of the respondents, *“It's not about gender that must be considered, it must be the individual differences. Learners differ from each other. Teachers must consider giving activities that can cater to these things. We must be neutral in all circumstances. It is better to have the things in a heterogeneous manner because it will tend to uplift those*

who have low self-esteem.”

The results suggest that teacher respondents highly practice activities, strategies, and behaviors that break gender stereotypes inside the classroom. They further assess themselves as instruments in shaping students' perceptions of gender stereotypes and treating students fairly regardless of gender in the classroom. Thus, teachers disagree that they have to focus more attention on girls than on boys. Gender differentiation in schools is influenced by two key sources: teachers and peers. Teachers and colleagues have a significant impact on gender differentiation by delivering distinct learning environments and input to boys and girls [15]. However, gender-related programs and activities by the school and government were perceived as uncertain by the teachers. This maybe due to the fact that the INSET (GAD) program of the Department of Education (DepEd) is only conducted once a year, towards the end of every year, which shows a lack of sustainability.

Teachers' Gender Inclusive Practices in the Classroom

The careful analysis of the teachers' responses from the interview about their practices concerning gender in the classroom resulted in three significant themes particularly (1) Inclusive materials; (2) Gender-inclusive language; and (3) Gender-based pedagogy.

Inclusive Materials

Teachers believe that they do not foster and support gender bias in their respective classrooms because they make sure that they do not instigate gender stereotyping in their lessons. Some respondents claim that they extra caution in the selection of teaching materials, may it be the texts, videos, or visual aids they present to their students. They see to it that they make use of gender-neutral materials and this could be supported by statements such as, *“I use instructional materials which are gender-neutral in my lessons.”* and *“I always encourage my pupils to respect each other and use instructional materials that are gender-neutral.”* When asked why they find it imperative to do this in class, most of them answered that this is an effective way of opening the eyes of students to gender flexibility and refraining from the development of gender bias among learners.

This practice is congruent to the findings of Lualhati and Tarrayo et al. who found out that the teaching practices of Filipino ELT practitioners and educators include the presentation of instructional materials that exhibit the same hierarchical levels and in non-stereotypic roles[16][17]. This could imply that Filipino teachers have a clear understanding of gender-inclusive teaching since gender has been mainstreamed in many platforms and agencies including the education sector. Moreover, teachers see the value of helping students become gender-sensitive so they exert effort in the selection of appropriate teaching materials.

Gender-Inclusive language

Most of the respondents collectively mentioned the use of gender-fair language when teaching. Teacher J particularly shared, *“I use gender-neutral language when referring to children, e.g. instead of saying, ‘Choose a boy to go with you’; say, ‘Choose a friend to go with you’.”* This practice is similar to the employment of neutralization in teaching discourse [18]. Neutralization is the use of common gender nouns to promote gender-inclusive language in the classroom.

This teaching practice of the respondents is similar to several types of research which claim that the use of non-sexed terms can greatly reduce gender bias and promote gender equality [19] [16] [20]. The use of paired pronouns and other “actively invented gender-neutral pronouns” can eliminate male bias, which has been predominant in many communities even in the present day[20].

It can be deduced that teachers heed the call of the government to promote gender-fair language in their classrooms.

Gender-based pedagogy

Gender has been a sensitive topic for many as feminists would oftentimes suggest. Given the issues and problems that arise from the lack of gender sensitivity and awareness among people, policymakers and education practitioners forward the need to incorporate gender education into the curriculum. For example, the Department of Education (DepEd) through its DepEd Order 32, s. 2007 established the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy which aims to integrate the principles of gender equality, gender equity, gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights, in the provision and governance of basic education. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on the other hand mandated the establishment of Gender and Development in higher education institutions to facilitate gender-responsive services and instruction to their clients. These specific mandates in the country may have contributed to the evident practice of integrating gender issues and topics in the lessons by the respondents. This could be supported by the statement of Teacher K who said, *“First is to have guidelines and clear understanding to genders and then second is to incorporate gender in their activities and exercises. If there will be issues regarding gender, it should be moderated with talks and clear misunderstandings and conflicts.”*

This is similar to the finding of Tarrayo et al. who revealed that Filipino English teachers give their students gender-issue-centered readings; facilitate class discussions on gender-fair and inclusive language and deconstruction of sexist examples used in Philippine media, and debates on gender concepts; and incorporate GFL-consciousness-raising activities such as role-playing [17].

Many teachers believe that the best way to eliminate gender stereotyping in the classroom is to ensure that there is equal and fair treatment of males and females. This implies the application of gender-sensitive pedagogy of teachers where they strive to design and implement instruction that enables students to feel equal and not restrained because of their gender. By allowing students to participate in activities regardless of gender, teachers encourage their students to perform beyond stereotypes and socially constructed roles, thereby molding them to become “equal citizens with equal rights and possibilities” [16]

Relationship between and among the respondents on the perceptions and practices on gender stereotype

The null hypothesis is rejected. It suggests that perception does not influence how individuals practice gender stereotypes in the classroom. These could possibly happen since the respondents’ level of perceptions on gender

stereotypes in the classroom was described as “Moderate”. This could mean that the teacher-respondents are unsure if gender stereotype is exercised inside the classroom. They are not sure if equal opportunities and treatment among boys and girls as they are learning, doing academic activities in the school is implemented or not. On the other hand, the respondents’ practice gender stereotypes inside the classroom are “Very High”.

Contrary to the current study results, the study of Preece and Bullingham showed that teachers’ perceptions largely conformed to typical gender stereotypes, including stereotypical views on gender roles, gendered sports, and story character assumptions. Participants did not attribute stereotype reproduction to themselves as teachers and negative external pressures arose as common reasoning for stereotypical practice [8]. It contradicts the study of Vásquez-Guarnizo et al. in which it showed how participants’ lived experiences had an impact on them as they helped them shape their perceptions at a given time in their lives [11]. Thus, their goals are different now, and the way they see their future has changed 180 degrees over time thanks to those gender-stereotyped messages they grew up with. That is why they feel they belong to a different generation one that thinks and wishes things in a different way.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The public, private, and HEIs teachers’ respondents were not sure about the perceptions regarding gender stereotypes in the classroom while their practices do not support gender stereotyping. The perception variables do not have a significant bearing on the practices of the respondents. Majority of the participants emphasized their stand that gender roles do not play a significant factor in the classroom. Teachers’ perceived gender roles in the classroom resulted in three significant themes, particularly inclusive materials; gender-inclusive language; and gender-based pedagogy. The researchers then recommend that among the various aspects of education, programs, activities, and actions to minimize imbalances and inequities, as well as steps to promote gender equality, should be taken into consideration. The Center for Gender and Development (CGAD) office in basic education should be empowered to educate and train their teachers to support gender-inclusive practices in the classroom. Terminologies used should be updated to ensure that gender-neutral language is utilized throughout the work, as well as a fair representation of both women and men. Relevant Gender-based activities should be integrated into the conduct of different activities in the school to further educate teachers about eradicating gender stereotypes in the classroom. Another study maybe conducted using different variables.

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