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GENDER BIASES ON THE JUDGEMENT OF CREDIBILITY

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Present research was conducted in order to investigate the effect of gender biases on the judgment of credibility. A list of similar controversial statements was paired with a male or a female high credibility source. The expected outcome was that the male source would be perceived as more credible, as can be judged from the number of statements agreed to by the subjects, and more so male subjects would considers the female less credible, even though she might share the same status. An analysis of variance was run, along with t. test. Results obtained support the predictions (F(56)=6.85, P.05) made. Hence it is apparent that sex biases prevalent, influence male and female judgments of credibility.

INTRODUCTION

It is a mere fact, no other area of social psychology has cause as much interest as the phenomenon of attitude change. Going way back, Aristotle was the first to construct the basic skeleton of attitude change inquires, although modern research has added numerous facts and modifications. In his *Rhetoric*,Aristotle states, 'Of the modes of persuasion, furnished by the spoken world there are 3 kinds the — Ist depends on the personal character of the speaker, the 2nd putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; and the 3rd on the proof.....provided by the words of the speech itself'.

In modern times Carl Hovland and his associates at the Yale communication and Attitude change Programme (eg. Hovland, Janis and Kelly '1953) began a systematic inquiry into attitude change processes. To simply and effectively paraphrase the Yale Group's paradigm — the study of attitudes basically involves studying who says what to whom and with what effect.

French '1956 reviews 5 components of the sources power to influence other: expertise, attraction, coercion, reward and legitimacy. Hovland and Weiss '1952 were among the first to study the effects of credibility on persuasion attempts. Subjects received communications on several topics; the source of the communi-

cation was made to seem of either high or low credibility. for example, 'a message on the practicality of building atomic submarines was attributed either to the eminent scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer or to a Russian newspaper Pravda. The communications were identical, regardless of the alleged source. As was observed the highly credible source was significantly more effective in altering opinion than was the communicator with low credibility.

Kelman and Hovland, 1953 had subjects listen to a communication about the treatment of juvenile delinquents. One group of subjects was informed that the speaker was a juvenile court judge (high credibility) and in another condition the speaker was introduced as someone who had been recently picked up for pedding dope (low credibility). Results of the study too, reported similar findings as the above mentioned one. Apart from Hovland and his associates, the effect of credibility is a widely research topic, one in which countless studies have been carried out to quote a few —- Stutart's study ('1958) suggests that II year olds are more influenced by older children than younger ones whom they consider to be superior in expertise.

Bauer's (1965) contention is that so long as the person knows whether the source is high or low in credibility, he can evaluate the conclusion without paying attention to the argument used. Julian and Hollander, 1966 found that subject's rating of hypothetical leadership quality were affected by the competence level of the stimulus person, but not by whether he was elected or appointed to the leadership position.

Harmon and Coney, 1982 studies the persuasive effects to source credibility in buy and lease situations with two hundred 22 to 60 year old businessmen. Results analyzed showed that a highly credible source was more effective than a moderately credible source.

Gotlieb '90 examined the effect of source credibility and price saving on perceived quality and attitudes. Subjects read print advertisements featuring a high credibility source (professor) or a low credibility source (car salesman). Results show that the credibility source had a significant effect on the attitude of subjects.

Macrae, Shepherd and Milne '92 investigated the relationship between stereotypical and individuating information in judgmental tasks, with the hypotheses that aside from considering the nature of the information, subjects would also be influenced by the credibility of source. Results support the prediction that subjects differentiated between high and low credibility sources when they provided individuating information.

Another trickier variable involved in communication and opinion or attitude change manner is that of similarity. Similarity is rarely if ever a feature of the source alone. It almost always involves a match between the source and the perceiver and or audience. Some of the dimensions where similarity of differentiation may be noticed influxes one's sex, race, circumstances, experience, age and even education. The positive persuasive effect of similarity seems to hold for issues that center on unverifiable, non factual points. There is a considerable body of evidence that a person is influenced by a message to the extent that he perceives it as coming from a source similar to himself. Newcomb (1953, 1956, 1961) has shown that similarity induces familiarity and interpersonal liking.

A long series of studies by Stotland and his colleagues (Stotland and Dunn, 1962, Stotland, Zander and Natsoulas, 1961) has shown that subjects adopt the feelings and views of others to the extent that those others have been represented as similar to themselves. They also found that this tendency was perhaps more dominant in females. Similar results obtained by Stotland and Patcher '1961 have likewise established the importance of receiver source similarity for the production of opinion change.

Throughout history, stereotypes have led to prejudices, negatively-toned attitudes and opinions that people hold about and entire group such as a racial minority or women. In most instances the belief on which prejudice is based are either exaggerated or wrong. In case of sexism, people believe that their own sex is superior.

A review of research on husband and wife roles by Stephens, 1963 shows the widespread nature of social inequality between men and women. Even among the technologically advanced countries, there is this distinct inequality and double standards for men and women prevalent. Women usually had low paying jobs and earn less than their male counterparts in the same occupations. (Dornbusch, 1966). Dornbusch '1966 also points out that in support of the idea that women should not receive equal consideration in employment, a variety of myths without basis have been perpetuated, for example, woman are supposedly more likely to be sick, to be absentees and to quit their jobs. In fact, men lose more work' days through illness than women do, the sex rates for absenteeism are identical and only the areas for quitting show women higher.

Hence it is obvious that a nearly Universal component of the female sex role is subordination and inequality.

In Gallop poll taken sometime in the early 1980's showed that more than 80%

agreed that; equality of rights under the law shall not be denied..... on account of sex. However, people do not generally act out the attitudes they express. It's one thing for a man to say he approves the changes in women's roles (which according to a Louis Havis poll, most men say they do); it's another for him to cook dinner. To conclude on a optimistic note Hoffman, 1977 reasons that sex differences may be expected to diminish as socialization practices accommodate to the reality of new adult roles.

In our study the sex of the high credibility source was manipulated to study it's effect on subjects of both the sexes. The rationale behind this was that existing sex biases embedded in our society would affect the subject's judgment. The hypothesized outcome of the present study being that even with the same status, males will be judged as more credible than females, and that male subjects will perceive females as less credible than their male counterparts.

Male subjects tend to agree more with the male credibility source because they are affected by the credibility source firstly, then the similarity (sex) variable and last but by no means the least the sex biases against women.

METHOD

Sample:

30 male and 30 female subjects of the Karachi University age between 20-25.

Procedure:

The credibility source assigned to the hypothetical figure had to be established, earlier. The same experimenters had earlier conducted a pilot study in order to check which professionals were generally considered to have a high credibility source, among a few prominent ones, a university professor was unanimously agreed to be high credibility source (Probably he's learnt so much, he/she knows what he/she's talking about).

Another pilot study was carried out in order to choose controversial statements. The controversial statements were those statements where it was equally possible either to agree or disagree with them. From an original list of 17 statements, students were asked to pick out 10 that they considered most controversial. The most frequently marked 10 statements were then chosen to make up the list that was to be used.

Since more then one experimenter were involved in the study, therefore the controls of randomization and counterbalancing were also employed in order to

reduce any practice effect of the experimenters that could contaminate the results.

The experiment was consisted of following conditions:

1. Male Subjects———- Male high Credibility source
2. Male Subjects———- Female high Credibility source
3. Female Subjects——— Male high Credibility source
4. Female Subjects——— Female high Credibility source

Procedurally, the experiment was a simple one; Subjects were presented with a list of statements and the following instructions were given according to the requirement of each condition.

'These statements have been made by a male/female university professor with a doctorate degree. Please go through these statements carefully and tick those that you agree with'. The instructions remained the same with only an alteration of the sex of the credibility source.

No time limit was imposed on the subjects and as such they could devote proper attention before making any choice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of variance was run to see the difference between the four conditions i.e. male credibility source with male and female subjects and similarly female credibility source with male and female subjects. Results obtained suggest that a significant difference does exist between the four conditions. ($P<.05$) (refer table 1).

Table No.1

F ratio	df	
6.859	3/56	$P < 0.05$

The t value was calculated to see the difference how males and females judge the same credibility source with only one basic difference—-the gender. Results obtained show that there does exist this difference and that even with equal status men are judged as more credible than females ($P<0.05$ refer table 2) both by males and females.

Table No.2
Showing t value obtained for Male Credibility source
Vs. Female Credibility (male & females) subjects.

t value	df	
4.55	59	P<0.05

Moreover, it was further hypothesised that male subjects would perceive females as less credible than their male counterparts, in order to check this hypothesis, the t value was calculated and results show that there does exist a statisticaly significant difference (P<0.05); and that males do hold a bias and judge male sources as more credible as compared to a woman with the same status (refer table 3).

Table No. 3
Showing t value obtained for Female Credibility (Female vs Male subjects)

t value	df	
3.246	28	P<0.05

To further support the hypothesis, and in order not to loose out on any information, four supplementary values were, calculated.

The t value calculated between the male credibility source (male subjects) and the female credibility source (male subjects) showed that there was a significant difference (P<0.05 refer table 4). In this case, it is apparent that the variable of similarity also has an effect on how influenced males are by their own sex. Male subjects agree more with the male credible source whereas females agreed less with the female credibility source. So for them the similarity was not an opinion forming factor.

Table No.4.
Showing t value obtained for Male Credibility (male subjects)
Vs. Female Credibility (male subjects)

t value	df	
2.55	28	P<0.05

The t value calculated between the male credibility source (female subjects and, Female credibility source (female subjects) also shows a statistically significant difference ($P<0.05$ refer table 5). Even females agreeing more with the male credibility 'source, can be easily explained because, in our culture it is inculcated in a young girl mind that males are supposed to be more knowledgeable than women and it is not surprising that even the female subjects perceived the male University professor as more credible.

Table No.5
Showing t value obtained for Male credibility (female subjects)
Vs. Female Credibility (female subjects)

t value	df	
3.07	28	$P<0.05$

The t value obtained for the credibility source male Vs. female subjects did not show statistically significant difference $P>0.05$ (refer table 6). As mentioned earlier, even female subjects view males as more highly credible as, this alleged superiority and knowledgeability of the male sex appears to influence the young mind since early ages.

Table No.6.
Showing t value obtained for Male Credibility (Male Vs Female subjects)

t value	df	
0.194	28	$P>0.05$

The final t value calculated was between males and females judging a female credibility source, the statistical data obtained shows no significant difference ($P>0.05$ refer table 7). This shows that female credibility source was judged approximately in the same manner by male and female subjects.

Table No. 7.
Showing t value obtained for Female Credibility
(Female Vs. Male subjects).

t value	df	
0.335	28	P>0.05

The results very clearly endorsed the hypothesis that irrespective of the status achieved by women, males are not willing to recognize their status. However, the bias towards females does not restrict to males only.

The interesting finding is that females are not willing to accept their own sex. Females form their opinion on the basis of set social beliefs i.e. males are more credible than females, rather then supporting their own sex in reality. Hence it can be said that opinion about credibility of the sources are influenced by the social values more than on the basis of similarity of sex. Gender biases in favour of males are definitely there, ironically uphold by both genders.

CONCLUSION

An overview of the statistics calculated hence show that sex biases are very much prevalent and as such influence credibility sources.

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