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An Exploration of Emotion Differences across Gender in CUHK(SZ)

Abstract

Gender difference is a hot topic in recent years. According to the previous study, women expressed more negative emotions and were more expressive than men; however, there were few studies conducted in terms of the participants in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The present study explores the emotion difference across gender concerning the participants in the age bracket, conducted on a college sample in CUHK(SZ). The participants were sent an online structured questionnaire. The cross-sectional qualitative data was collected and analyzed by the T-test at a 5% significance level. The finding revealed that there was no emotion difference across gender in CUHK(SZ), which suggested that society should reduce the stereotype of male's and female's emotion differences.

1.Introduction

Identifying emotions is vital in the life of an individual. Because it is a basic skill in social communication and is beneficial for one to get along well with himself. Accurate appraisal and expression of emotions in oneself and others is a skill related to emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Over the last few decades, several studies have shown that there are differences in emotions across gender. It's commonly considered that women express more negative emotions than men; also, women are more expressive than men in both verbal and non-verbal (Shamim & Muazzam, 2018). However, most of the studies attached importance to either the whole adulthood or childhood. There are few studies conducted in terms of the transition from adolescence to early adulthood. Hence, this research aims to explore the emotion differences across gender with respect to the participants in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood in China.

2.Literature Review

It's conventionally considered that women are more emotionally expressive than men (Kring & Gordon, 1998). In the past decades, some studies have shown differences in emotions across gender. Fujita, Diener, and Sandvik (1991) reported that women expressed more negative emotions and expressed more intense positive emotions than men. The study was conducted on a college sample of 66 women and 34 men, using self-report, peer report, daily report, and memory performance. In addition, a study showed that women were more

expressive than men both in verbal expressions and in bodily expressions (Biehl et al., 1997, as cited in Shamim & Muazzam, 2018).

Furthermore, it's a common acceptance that socialization is one of the main reasons for the differences in emotions across gender. The aforementioned studies support the view that the stereotype of men's and women's emotional differences is that women are more emotional than men and typical women are more likely than typical men to express their emotions in extreme ways (Lutz, 1990). Meanwhile, parents expressed more emotions and used more emotional words to girls in this socialization process, which further amplified gender differences in emotional expression and experience (Fredrickson, 1998). Hence, the main reason for the emotional difference was to adapt to the different roles of different genders in the culture (Brody & Hall, 1993, as cited in Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999).

Nevertheless, previous studies' participants were either in childhood or throughout adulthood. People paid less attention to the students in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood. Additionally, the one-child policy, implemented in China in 1979, had promoted greater gender equality in education in China (Lee, 2012); namely, the children were treated equally and given equal access to education by their parents, no matter they were boys or girls. Therefore, the research focused on this age bracket, grew up in China, to study the differences in emotions across gender.

3. Research questions

The above literature review reveals that there are emotion differences across gender resulting from the distinct treatments of parents and the stereotype of society. Nonetheless, there are limited studies conducted on the students in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood and grew up in China. Thus, the research question is put forward:

What was the difference in emotions across gender in CUHK(SZ)?

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants were the students of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shen Zhen from year one to year four. The sample size was 80 females and 56 males. Arnett(1999) claims that people have more stress during adolescence than at other ages. Most of the participants were aged from 18 to 21 and were faced with the stress from academic life and independent life. Hence, they were more expressive in various emotions; in addition, they

were at an age when gender differences in personality became apparent and tended to mature. What's more, the vast majority of the participants grew up in China. Therefore, they were a suitable sample to explore the above-mentioned research questions.

4.2 Data collection

The data was collected from the students who were studying in CUHK(SZ) from year one to year four. They were given a link to an online survey, which was made by a mini-program, www.wjx.cn. And they completed it from anywhere with an internet connection.

The research adopted a structured questionnaire and collected cross-sectional data to measure emotion differences across gender in several emotions. Participants rated their agreement on a 6-point Likert Scale (1=disagree; 6=agree) with items measuring seven emotions, which were pride, love, compassion, amusement, depression, anger, and anxiety.

The structured questionnaire was mainly in English and some keywords were annotated in Chinese. It aimed at avoiding participants misunderstanding the meaning of the statements and making the data more reliable.

4.3 Data analysis

The questionnaire consisted of two factual questions and four items for each emotion. The items about pride, love, compassion, and amusement were selected from Dispositional Positive Emotion Scale (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006). The items about depression, anger and anxiety were adapted from Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (Radloff, 1977), State-Trait Anger Inventory (Spielberger, 1988), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), respectively.

The research conducted T-test on the mean of the male's and female's scores of pride, love, compassion, amusement, depression, anger, anxiety, positive emotion (integrated all data of pride, love, compassion, and amusement) and negative emotion(integrated all data of depression, anger, and anxiety). A two-sided T-test with a 5% significance level was used to determine whether there were differences across gender in different emotions according to the data of the two groups of men and women.

5.Findings

The cross-sectional data was analyzed by using a two-sided T-test with a 5% significance level to find the significant differences in different emotions across gender. The

descriptive statistics revealed that the sample size consisted of 41.18% males (N=56) and 58.82% females (N=80).

The result of the T-test analysis showed that pride was significantly different across gender at a 5% significance level where (p-value=0.021); what's more, the score of males (M=4.13) on pride was higher than females (M=3.72). Therefore, males express more pride than females.

	Total N	N of male	N of female	Mean of male	Mean of female	p-value of mean
Pride	136	56	80	4.13	3.72	0.021
Love	136	56	80	3.90	3.97	0.759
Compassion	136	56	80	4.28	4.46	0.377
Amusement	136	56	80	4.39	4.14	0.212
Depression	136	56	80	3.21	3.20	0.889
Angry	136	56	80	3.69	3.47	0.211
Anxiety	136	56	80	3.95	3.54	0.070
Positive emotion	136	56	80	4.18	4.07	0.460
Negative emotion	136	56	80	3.62	3.40	0.124

Nevertheless, Table 1 shows that the other emotions (p-value: love=0.759, compassion=0.377, amusement=0.212, depression=0.889, angry=0.211, anxiety=0.07) between males and females were not significantly different at 5% significance level; besides, the positive emotion (integrated all data of pride, love, compassion and amusement, p-value=0.460) and the negative emotion (integrated all data of depression, anger, and anxiety, p-value=0.124) between male and female were also not significantly different at 5% significance level. Hence, there were no significant differences in emotions across gender in CUHK(SZ).

6. Discussion

The finding showed that all the studied emotions (except pride), overall positive emotion and overall negative emotion were not significantly different between males and females in CUHK(SZ); accordingly, there was no difference in emotions across gender in CUHK(SZ).

The result of the present study was opposite to the previous study that women expressed more negative emotions than men (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991) and women were more expressive than men (Biehl et al., 1997, as cited in Shamim & Muazzam, 2018). The possible reason was that the participants of the present study grew up in the era of the one-child policy in China and had not yet been exposed to too many social stereotypes about men and women. As supported by related literature, the main reasons for the emotion differences across gender were the distinct treatments of parents towards boys and girls (Fredrickson, 1998) and the social stereotypes of men's and women's emotional differences (Lutz, 1990). Nonetheless, parents treated their children the same and provided them equal education access, no matter they were boys or girls, in the era of one-child policy in China; besides, most of the participants were aged from 18 to 21 so that they had grown up under the protection of their parents and had not yet changed much to cater to different roles of different genders in society. As a result, there was no difference in emotions across gender in CUHK(SZ).

In summary, the reasons for the non-difference in emotions across gender might be that the participants were in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood and grew up influenced by the one-child policy.

7.Conclusion

The present research has found that there was no difference in emotions across gender, based on the study conducted on a college sample in CUHK(SZ).

In the previous study, people didn't pay too much attention to the students in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, especially those who grew up in the era of the one-child policy in China. The current study helps to fill this gap to some extent; further, it appeals that society should reduce stereotypes about men and women except their biological differences and it may raise parents' awareness that both boys and girls should have the ability to express and control emotions.

Nevertheless, the explanation of the emotion non-difference across gender was only supported by some related literature and lacked direct evidence. Further studies can focus on how the one-child policy affects emotion differences across gender in China.

8.References

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9. Appendix

What is the difference in emotions across gender in CUHK(SZ)?

[Below are several statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-6 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest with your responding.]

1. I'm male/female.

2. I'm ____ student. Year1 year2 year3 year4

[disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 agree]

Pride:

3. I am proud of myself and my accomplishments.

4. Many people respect me.

5. I always stand up for what I believe.

6. People usually recognize my authority(认可我的权威).

Love:

7. I develop strong feelings of closeness to people easily.

8. People are usually considerate(体贴的) of my needs and feelings.

9. I can depend on people when I need help.

10. I find it easy to trust others.

Compassion:

11. It's important to take care of people who are vulnerable(处于弱势的).

12. When I see someone hurt or in need, I feel a powerful urge to take care of them.

13. Taking care of others gives me a warm feeling inside.

14. I often notice people who need help.

Amusement:

15. I find humor in almost everything.

16. I really enjoy teasing(逗乐) people I care about.

17. I am very easily amused.

18. I make jokes about everything.

Depression:

19. I feel that I was just as good as other people.

20. I feel that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.

21. I feel hopeful about the future. (reverse).

22. I usually have trouble keeping my mind on what I'm doing.

Angry:

23. I get angry when I'm slowed down by other's mistakes.

24. I feel annoyed when I am not given recognition for doing good work.

25. When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone.

26. When I get mad, I say nasty things.

Anxiety:

27. I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter.

28. I get in a state of tension or turmoil(心乱如麻) as I think over my recent concerns and interests.

29. I feel that difficulties are piling up so that I cannot overcome them.

30. I take disappointments so keenly that I can't put them out of my mind.