Investigating the Central Asian Perspective on Working Women's Level of Competence

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have revealed that women do not get equally paid as men do, and this can specifically impact working mothers to a higher extent. In Central Asian communities many women are underrepresented in high-status professions. Previous research has found that this can be from cultural influence, religious beliefs, and the consequence of the Soviet Union event that Central Asian countries were affected. The overall goal of this research was to find evidence to support that Central Asian women are affected by stereotypes and thus are seen as incompetent in the professional field. This is a follow-up study to Cuddy and Fiske (2004) that examined the Stereotype Content Model, with personalities competence versus warmth. A Google Forms survey was used, to record and compare the responses that rated people's personalities from four different conditions. The participants included were audience from Central Asian organizations and content creators, their ages ranged from 18 to 55 and up. The gathered data was examined through JASP (Anova). The results of this study suggest that working mothers are most impacted, as they are viewed as less competent and warm. With this information, future researchers should investigate understanding how these stereotypes towards women, could influence the younger generations of girls in Central Asia.

Literature Review

Many women in Central Asian countries do not have the same opportunities as men, in many aspects such as education and salary. Young women are much less likely than men to be hired for full-time roles in business and government, and they are more likely to choose careers as teachers or healthcare professionals than any other fields (Kamp, 2016, 270-276).

Consequently, there is a 30% wage gap between men and women in Central Asia (Bjerde, 2022). Previous research shows that women have not been able to break through the "glass ceiling" of top managerial positions in different fields because of existing gender based discrimination (Memela, 2005, 96-99). This issue is particularly pronounced for Central Asian countries. Many Central Asian countries follow Islamic traditions, such as the belief that women should take care of their children and men should be the breadwinners of the family (Kamp, 2016, 270-276). However, previous research has not evaluated the perceptions of Central Asian populations toward working mothers or fathers. This question needs to be addressed because this will help people to understand how complex gender factors from Central Asian backgrounds can play into the judgment of personality and capability.

All Central Asian countries were invaded by the Soviet Union. During that period Central Asia was ruled by the Soviets, and many prejudices against women were reinforced. Although many women were literate and were employed during Soviet times, they were still underrepresented in the working fields and were not considered competent enough. Women were primarily employed in manual labor, while men held positions of higher status (Lubin, 1981, 182-203). Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was made up of government organizations that promised gender equality and supported women's rights. These events have shaped those nations today. One example is that women and men are still treated equally under the law in Central Asian nations, even though Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

do not actively promote gender equality (Kamp, 2016, 270-276). In summary in "The Soviet Legacy and Women's Right in Central Asia" it found that women's role in the Soviet Union vastly impacted the policies now, since women in that period were just starting to have the right to work.

After communism was over, Central Asian countries became independent and had to form their forms of government and build their community. There were religious revivals like the spread of Islam and its traditions regarding gender roles were previously discussed (Kamp, 2016, 270-276). Events like these influenced the Central Asian countries now, and this can be beneficial to understand where people's opinions on gender roles originate from. Further, this research highlights that women still have educational barriers in countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Kamp, 2016, 270-276). From the observations of the author, although the Soviet Union brought more freedom to Central Asian countries, women are still seen as less able than men are. Overall, this article was significant to explain how and why people are biased toward women; however, it does not discuss much about the disadvantage working mothers face.

As Cuddy and Fiske (2004) argued, women with professions lose their competence when they become mothers. By using the Stereotype Content Model in which both warmth and competence are measured from different levels, the study compared the levels of competence and warmth to working mothers, fathers, childless men, and women. The participants were college students and were given four different stories of working people. Within that the participant rated the people in the four stories as either competent or warm. Overall, from their results it was shown that working women are judged as being warm, but they lose their reputation for being able to handle work. In addition to the findings, men do not risk losing their competence when they had children while working mothers did lose their competence. For this reason, childless working women are viewed as more competent but not warm, but working mothers are warm but not competent. This information reveals how societal standards have impacted mothers in the professional field. This study supports that there is prejudice towards working mothers. However, this research does not include a Central Asian sample, therefore it should be evaluated. Using varied kinds of participants can help us further understand whether different cultural backgrounds can also impact the judgments of personalities.

Many people are expected to follow social rules, and gender roles are formed as early as childhood. Through socialization, every child is given a role. With that in mind women are expected to be housewives by receiving a doll, while boys are handed a car to learn to drive in the real world (Memela, 2005, 96-99). From traditions like these, gender roles are put out into society. This article is crucial as it defines how gender roles that can apply to any community. When people are prescribed to follow social rules, it can lead to unequal opportunities for them such as not receiving much education or a job. Lungiswa Memela concludes that women should be able to learn to make their own choices in many aspects of life such as at home, work, and education.

When people are in the process of hiring, they look at many parts of the applicants, as well as their competence and warmth. Judgments can impact people's perceptions, as they hire and promote people in the work fields (Cuddy et al., 2011, 73-98). This would especially target working mothers as they are seen as less competent according to the article. In addition, this supports how people's judgments about certain people can play into the performance of working professionals. In the final analysis, the author suggests that the authority like employers, can be unbiased to others by following the observations from their gathered research to avoid making the same mistakes.

With today's research regarding the stereotype content model, most are focused on the population in America, while the current research examines the perspectives of the Central Asian communities. This research brings in new voices because the Central Asian community has a high emphasis on social roles for people to follow. Moreover, this study addresses the missing gaps in the previous research as Central Asian communities have not been explored. As someone who is Central Asian, I have seen how much Asian communities put stress on women to fit into a standard of being a mother, as well as letting the men be the only working person in the family. Therefore, this research paper was made to see if other people in the Central Asian community judged people from that view of the community's stereotypes. From that, it led to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a main effect of gender, such that women will be seen as more warm but not necessarily more competent than men.

Hypothesis 2: Having a child will be related to higher levels of warmth but not competence for women, but that would not affect men.

Methods

Participants

A Google forms survey was used to collect a large representation of the Central Asian population. People's answers and identities were kept private, further making surveys more convenient for my research method. The surveys were given to the viewers of Central Asian content creators and community organizations.

In total 90 participants took the four randomized surveys, and the survey takers were from Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In a survey that talked about the condition of a female with a child, there were 20 participants, while in a survey with a female with no child there were 27 survey takers. On the other survey with the condition of a male with a child there were 20 participants, and with the survey of a male with no child there were 23 participants. A total of 52 females and 36 males took the survey and 2 people preferred not to say. For the demographics many people of different ages took the survey, and the most prominent ages were less than 18, 18-24, and 25-34. The participant's level of education varied from high school to Ph.D., and the majority of the participants either had some high school which was 48%, or a bachelor's degree which was 36%.

To recruit participants, Central Asian organizations and their content creators were asked to share the Google Forms survey with their audience. From that, the survey was able to gain an audience that was mainly coming from a Central Asian background.

Procedure and Measures

The first part of the survey introduced the research at the top. Participants read:

My survey was made to test people's implicit attitudes in given situations. By me giving stories, imagine you are a client of a lawyer and then answer the preceding questions.

Then participants answered questions about their demographics, such as country of origin, gender, age, and level of education. Following that participants were randomly assigned to one of four different conditions were working individuals either had a child or did not have a child. Moreover, one survey gave a story about a working mother, childless female professional, working father, or childless male professional.

The given stories looked like the following:

Ali is a 30-year-old associate attorney who graduated from law school. He has been working for the past 5 years in his field. The practice of law he practices is transactional in which his main duties are dealing with drafting and negotiating business contracts. In his free time, he enjoys reading and biking. He currently goes to his job five times a week.

All the four different stories were similar. The only factors that were manipulated were the name, gender, and whether they were a parent. By reading the assigned story, participants then had to rate the traits of the people given. The traits were either competence-related (capable, efficient, organized, skillful) or warmth related (good-natured, sincere, warm, trustworthy). To rate the traits of a character in the story it was measured from 1 to 5. One being

rated not at all and five being extremely. At the end of the survey, participants were asked how likely they would be to request, promote, and recommend the given character. The question given was as follows: "As a client, how likely would you request him as your lawyer?", "As a client, how likely would you be to recommend Ali for a promotion?", and "As a client, how likely would you be to recommend that his law firm continues educating and training Ali?". With that, they had to measure on a scale anchor from 1 to 5. One was less likely and five was very likely.

Results

Capable

Male or Female

The gender of the target did significantly impact the perceived capability of the target such that female targets were seen as less capable than male targets (female mean = 3.66, male mean = 4.52), $F(1,87) = 23.81$, $p < .001$.

Child or No Child

Whether or not the target had a child significantly impacted the perceived capability of the target such that people without children were seen as more competent than those with children (child mean = 3.43, no child mean = 4.59), $F(1,87) = 32.52$, $p < .001$.

Interactions

The interaction of males or females with or without children was significant such that women with children were seen as the least competent (male with a child mean = 4.35, male no child mean = 4.67, female with child = 2.50, female no child = 4.52), $F(1,87) = 17.28$, $p < .001$.
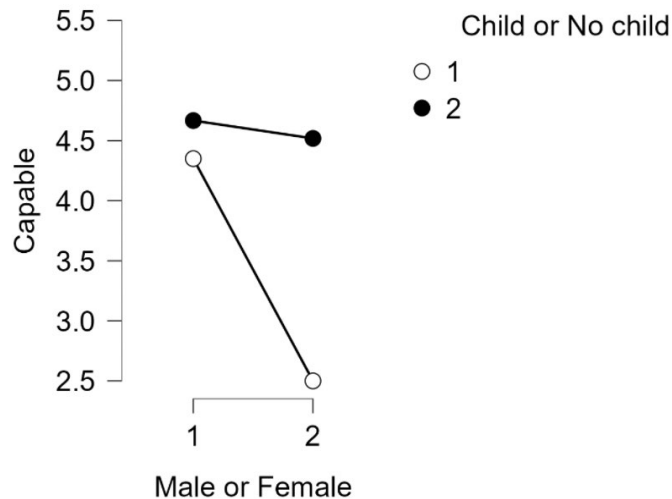This interaction is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. The interaction of Female/Male with child/no child in personality of capability.

Efficient

Male or Female

The gender of the target significantly impacted the perceived efficiency as the female targets were seen as less competent than men were (female mean = 3.61, male mean = 4.34), $F(1,87) = 14.87$, $p < .001$.

Child or No Child

There is a significant impact such that the people with children are not seen as competent as people with no children. (child mean = 3.37, no child mean = 4.43), $F(1,87) = 21.70$, $p < .001$.

Interactions

There is a significant difference between the women with children and the rest of conditions, this showed that the women are not competent enough when comparing personality ratings (male with child mean = 4.30, male no child mean = 4.37, female with child = 2.45, female no child = 4.48).

Organized

Male or Female

Gender factors were significant as this impacted females to be seen as less organized and competent. (female mean = 3.76, male mean = 4.45), $F(1,87) = 17.29$, $p < .001$.

Child or No Child

There is a significant impact for the organization of the target, as the people with children were perceived less competent. (child mean = 3.27, no child mean = 4.74) $F(1,87) = 55.91$, $p < .001$.

Interactions

From the interactions of males and females with children or childless there was an overall significant impact, as women with children were less competent than other targets presented. (male with child mean = 4.05, male no child mean = 4.79, female with child = 2.50, female no child = 4.70), $F(1,87) = 13.77$, $p < .001$.

Skillful

Male or Female

This relation of targets has a significant impact because the female targets were not perceived as skillful as the men targets were. (female mean = 3.61, male mean = 4.36), $F(1,87) = 15.78$, $p < .001$.

Child or No Child

In this data, there is a significant impact on perceived skillfulness, due to people with no children being more competent than people with children. (child mean = 3.32, no child mean = 4.49) $F(1,87) = 28.21$, $p < .001$.

Interactions

There is an interaction between the child or no child and male or female because women with children were shown as less competent than other targets. (male with child mean = 4.15, male no child mean = 4.54, female with child = 2.50, female no child = 4.44), $F(1,87) = 12.46$, $p < .001$. This interaction is shown in figure 2.
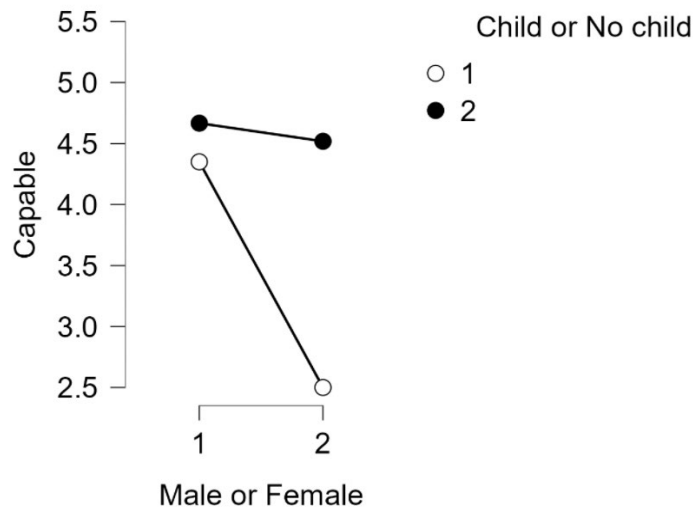
Figure 2. The interaction of Female/Male with child/no child in personality of skillfulness.

Good Natured

Male or Female

There is no significant impact level on the gender types. (female mean =4.04, male mean = 3.79), F (1,87) = 0.64, p 0.424.

Child or No Child

There was no effect in these two conditions. (child mean = 3.65, no child mean = 4.13) F (1,87) = 3.35, p 0.07.

Interactions

In all of the four conditions there were no significant effect interactions. (male with child mean = 3.65, male no child mean = 3.91, female with child = 3.65, female no child = 4.33), F (1,87) = 0.64, p 0.42.

Warm

Male or Female

The gender factor did affect the significant impact of warmth, which made mothers be perceived as more warm than other people. (female mean = 4.02, male mean = 3.45), F (1,87) = 4.81, p 0.03.

Child or No Child

In these two factors there we no significant impact on perceived warmth. (child mean = 3.70, no child mean = 3.78) F (1,87) = .063, p 0.80.

Interactions

For the significant impact judgment of warmth, this affected females with no children as they were the warmest out of four conditions. (male with child mean = 3.55, male no child mean = 3.37, female with child = 3.85, female no child = 4.14), F (1,87) = 0.93, p 0.33.

Sincere

Male or Female

In this scenario of significant effect, this impacted women, as they were warmer. (female mean = 4.04, male mean = 3.43), F (1,87) = 4.71, p 0.03.

Child or No Child

Depending if there are children or not there is no significant effect on this trait. (child mean = 3.72, no child mean = 3.76) F (1,87) = .001, p 0.97.

Interactions

There is no interaction between the significant impact on sincere people. (male with child mean = 3.70, male no child mean = 3.20, female with child = 3.75, female no child = 4.25), F (1,87) = 3.89, p 0.51.

Trustworthy

Male or Female

There is a significant impact because women are perceived to be more warm than competent. (female mean = 4.00, male mean = 3.25), F (1,87) = 7.49, p 0.007.

Child or No Child

There is no significant effect on the factors given. (child mean = 3.62, no child mean = 3.64) F (1,87) = .006, p .939.

Interactions

In this interaction, there is a significant impact, and women with no children were warmer than in other conditions. (male with child mean = 3.65, male no child mean = 2.91, female with child = 3.60, female no child = 4.29), F (1,87) = 8.66, p 0.004.

Request

Male or Female

There was a significant impact because the men were more requested than women were. (female mean = 3.38, male mean = 4.09), F (1,87) = 13.83, p < .001.

Child or No Child

Factors like having children or not did have an impact because having no children involved higher chances of being requested. (child mean = 3.25, no child mean = 4.09) F (1,87) = 13.36, p < .001.

Interactions

The interaction of males or females with or without children was significant because females with children were least likely to be requested (male with a child mean = 4.20, male no child mean = 4.00, female with child = 2.30, female no child = 4.18), F (1,87) =20.45, p < .001.

Promote

Male or Female

There was no significant effect depending on gender roles (female mean = 3.48, male mean = 3.97), F (1,87) = 6.40, p 0.013.

Child or No Child

Factors like having a child did have an important effect on whether or not someone got promoted, and a person with no child would most likely get promoted. (child mean = 3.20, no child mean = 4.13) F (1,87) = 14.374, p < .001.

Interactions

There is a significant impact on promotion if a candidate is a woman with a child, thus they will less likely get recommended to be promoted (male with a child mean = 3.95, male no child mean = 4.00, female with child = 2.45, female no child = 4.25), F (1,87) = 12.86, p < .001.

Train

Male or Female

The gender of a target did not particularly influence the likelihood of training workers. (female mean = 3.46 , male mean = 3.90), F (1,87) = 5.28, p 0.024.

Child or No Child

There is no significant impact on having or not having children. (child mean = 3.35, no child mean = 3.94) F (1,87) = 4.60, p .035.

Interactions

In the interaction, it can be best seen that female professionals will be most consequence to receive the likelihood of training. (male with child mean = 4.30, male no child mean = 3.58, female with child = 2.40, female no child = 4.25), F (1,87) = 23.40, p < .001.

Discussion

The original goals of this study were to see if gender would be the main effect in determining competence versus warmth and if a working mother would be considered incompetent. Results of this study demonstrated that working mothers are perceived to be incompetent and very warm by other people. Consequently, there was no main effect of gender as a working male with child/no child and female with no child had a similar rating in their competence.

This result relates to Cuddy and Fiske's (2004) original finding that working women are seen as less competent. Although in this investigation, there was no support for their statement that working mothers were warmer in their personality ratings. An additional new finding was that a working childless woman was rated higher for warmth, than a woman with a child. This might show a shift from the perspective a Central Asian person might have as of now, versus a college student from the United States, might have contemplated it as.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated which condition was viewed as the most incompetent among childless males and females, and the people with children, the person who was the most incompetent was the working mother. Working mothers were consistently rated as incapable of handling work from the judgment of the results of the surveys.

Although hypothesized that gender would be the main consequence of competence versus warmth, found that it did not affect females as much as thought it would. Now that know gender is not the main effect and gained new knowledge about how the Central Asian community views workers. This helps us to understand that while there are many stereotypes about working mothers, they do not directly affect working childless women.

Implications

This research brought in the first perspective on the Stereotype Content Model from a Central Asian population. Moreover, this helps to understand how other cultural backgrounds might regard women in the workforce as; however, the weakness of this research includes not a big pool of participants. The follow-up study of Cuddy and Fiske (2004) had 122 college students who participated in their study, while in this research only 90 people took part in the survey. If more people participated in the survey, then the more reliable this research study would have been.

Another weakness of this research was that participants were not asked why they rated their given conditions the way they did. Although their decision might come from cultural influences, potential stereotypes, and religious beliefs toward women in the workforce. If this was done, then it would help us understand some of the ratings that were given to the working mothers.

Future Directions

One area where research could be expanded, is to examine if a given condition's rating differed by people's ages. This would potentially bring in new findings to see if the older generation's views on working mothers, would be different from the young generation's perspective of working mothers. Moving forward other researchers could use this survey to delve deeper into research and find if there was a similarity in people's answers given their age group.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, this study was a significant discovery about the Central Asian community. The follow-up study by Cuddy and Fiske (2004) found that working women especially mothers were expected to not be competent enough when compared to working fathers. In this research, we found a similar result to a study that was done decades ago. Although many people would have assumed this study would find a different finding from what was done a long time ago, the pattern continues in countries like Central Asia.

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