

1.

Gender bias is the differential treatment between men and women based on stereotypes rather than real differences. There are two types of gender bias..

2.

Alpha bias is the tendency to exaggerate the differences between men and women. Consequently resulting in theories that devalue one gender (usually females) in comparison to the other. For example, Freud viewed femininity as failed masculinity. He thought females had a weaker superego since they do not experience castration anxiety. Therefore, according to Freud, women have weaker morals. Freud was exaggerating the differences between men and women.

3.

Beta bias is the tendency to ignore or minimise the differences between men and women. For example, the fight or flight response was assumed to be universal. Biological research typically uses male samples as variations in female hormones makes research harder. The assumption was that the male findings could be applied to females. However, Taylor et al. challenged this and provided evidence that females produce the tend and befriend response which is adaptive for the survival of their offspring. Therefore the consequence was that early research did not understand a real difference between men and women due to beta bias.

4.

It is important to consider gender bias in psychology as most psychologists are male and they tend to produce theories that reflect males. This may create issues in areas such as mental health diagnoses. If abnormalities are based on male research (androcentrism) then female mental health cannot be properly understood. This can lead to stereotypes and unequal treatment of women.

5.

However, an issue with addressing gender bias by trying to equal certain social processes for men and women is that it may be disadvantageous. For example, research has found that equal parental leave ignores the biological demands of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and the unique abilities of women. This is therefore disadvantageous to women. This matters because arguing for equality between men and women draws attention away from women's unique abilities. By equalling policies for men and women it tends to benefit the group with more power. Therefore some would argue that beta bias should be avoided to ensure that significant differences are taken into account.

6.

Therefore, another way to reduce gender bias is to take a feminist perspective and acknowledge real biological differences between men and women. For example, Eagly claimed that women are less effective leaders than men. This matters because by acknowledging such gender differences, females can be provided with greater support, such as training programmes in the workplace to help them to succeed. Therefore, feminist psychology can be used to understand behaviour and thus increase equality in society. However, whilst feminist psychology aims to correct the imbalances, it may lead to a new kind of bias called gynocentrism which is the dominant or exclusive focus on women in theory or practice.

7.

This shows we must be careful to consider the research methods used in psychological practices to minimise gender bias. For example, Eagly and Johnson reviewed studies in a meta-analysis and noted that studies in real settings found women and men were judged more similar in styles of leadership than in lab settings. This matters because feminists argue that the lab experiments disadvantage women because findings in these controlled settings lack generalisability of the behaviour of women in the real world. Therefore, androcentrism in psychology may stem from the way data is collected in studies on women.



8.

So, another way to reduce gender bias is to develop theories which show the differences between men and women but while emphasising the value of women. For example, Kohlberg argued that females are less morally developed than men. This matters because Kohlberg's research was androcentric as he used male-oriented dilemmas and based his theory of moral development on research conducted on male participants. Later, Gilligan found that women are not less morally developed, they simply favour a care oriented moral system rather than a justice oriented moral system. Therefore, Gilligan's research showed that males and females are different but women's approach to moral reasoning is not inferior. This reduces gender bias.

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