

## *Stereotype Threat and Minorities in an Iranian male-dominated company; 2 case studies*

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**Abstract**— People spend almost half of their day at work or in contact with colleagues. Therefore, due to the impact that interactions have on the physical and mental health and efficiency of people, the importance of healthy and respectful interaction is felt more than ever. Myriad studies have shown, women and gender minorities are often not welcomed in male-dominated workplaces, or/and are subjected to verbal and physical abuse because of gender stereotypes. However, due to the culture and criminality of non-heterosexual gender identities in, there is a lack of research that investigates the experience of sexual minorities and women in Iran. These two case studies were undertaken to document the experiences of working in a male-dominated company as a woman and as a gay man and the way they deal with social pressure and distress. Stereotype threat was found to be a critical barrier to job satisfaction and mental health. Establishing and developing culture-based interventions and education is recommended.

### **Keywords**

*stereotype threat, minorities, male-dominated workplace, mental health*

## INTRODUCTION

### *Stereotype Threat*

While studying the gender gap in mathematics, [1] first described the stereotype threat as a psychological phenomenon. Stereotype threat theory states that individuals belonging to groups in which negative stereotypes exist fear that others will judge them based on those stereotypes and fear that those stereotypes will be confirmed by them [2, 3]. Stereotype threat can undermine performance by triggering physiological and psychological processes such as reduced cognitive resources [4], anxiety [4], negative cognitions and emotions [5, 6], physiological arousal [7], Lower performance expectancy [8], and less effort [9] and self-control [10]. However, [11] discuss that Stereotype threat can happen regardless of whether a vendor has negative

stereotypes or exhibits bias. Rather, the stereotypic threat is caused by activating specific stereotypes about the social group to which the target belongs.

### *Minorities*

Minorities or Minority Groups refer to a subgroup of the population whose practices, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics are less numerous than the majority of a community or society in general. The term usually refers to any group that is subjected to oppression and discrimination by members of a dominant social group [12]. Examples of groups that have been labeled minorities include women, sexual minorities, and immigrants among others [13]. Usually, Sexual minorities comprise LGBTQIA; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual individuals [14].

### *Male-dominated workplaces and minorities*

A male-dominated society, organization, or area of activity is one in which men have most of the power and influence ([www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)). Historically, women have been underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic) employment. This gender disparity may signal that women do not belong or cannot succeed in these fields [15]. Women enter STEM majors at lower rates than would be predicted by their abilities in these fields [16]. In addition, women continue to face unwelcoming environments in traditionally male fields that contribute to women's decisions to leave those fields [17, 18]. This decision in women and minorities arises from masculine organizational culture with low level of flexibility and disregard for skill levels [19]. This culture and resulting