Introduction

- **Cultural diversity and implicit biases** highly prevalent in modern societies [1] with tremendous effects.
- **Interference with decision-making processes**
- **Unconscious and automatic features of prejudiced judgement** and social behavior.
- **Influences of Stereotype Threat** in educational settings on grades, career choices, work environments.
- **Critical reflection** in Higher Education to bring **lasting and effective change** in students’ lives [2].
- Concept of self-reflection **encourages habits** of individual and collective attention and analysis.
- Societal challenges addressed by drawing on **prior experiences**.
- **Cognitive dissonance** brings awareness of **discrepancies** between behavior and professed views, motivating behavioral change [3].

**Issue**: self-other asymmetry in people’s recognition of biased thinking and behavior that results from preexisting beliefs (myside bias) and social stigmas (social biases) [5].

**Approach**: raising awareness of existence of implicit bias as important first step towards reducing bias [6].

- **Can we make students aware of their own biases by provoking cognitive dissonance?**

Methods

**Sample**: 404 participants, enrolled in bachelor studies (teacher training and vocational training).

**Measures**:
- Implicit Association Test (IAT) on skin-tone [7], including 12 computer-generated faces (6 female, 6 male) with light or dark skin tones and 16 German adjectives (8 positive, 8 negative).
- Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT) [8,9,10] and self-rating items.

**Procedure**:
- Part of preparation process for mandatory introduction lecture on Educational Psychology for BA students.
- Pre-lecture survey with two CRT items, IAT and self-rating items on stereotypes and biases.
- Lecture, providing background on origins and impacts of stereotypes and biases in education; part of the debriefing process.
- Post-lecture survey includes three CRT items and fosters reflection on previous IAT results.

Results

- Results from pre-lecture survey based on 348 cases (due to missing cases or too many errors in IAT):

  Students described tendency to having stereotypes and biases as predominantly low or very low.


  - **39% of students also participated in post-lecture survey**:
    - Were there changes in the approach to solving CRT-questions post online lecture? (Yes: 29.3%, No: 54.2%)
    - Were there changes in interpreting IAT results post online lecture? (Yes: 24%, No: 46%, No answer: 30%)
    - Reported changes included taking more time to think and reflect about things.

Discussion

- **Students are often not aware of their own biases**.
- Results evoked **strong reactions** towards IAT results to dissolve cognitive dissonance.
  - Criticism of test validity and/or results
  - Anger toward the test
  - Desire to change and increase awareness of own biases

**Limitations**:
- More fine-grained response categories to determine the preference of skin-tone needed.
- No randomized order of category combinations.

**Implications**:
- IAT useful tool to initiate self-reflection process about (unconscious) bias and stereotypes.
- Importance of guided “debriefing” after taking the IAT to support self-reflection processes.
- Resulting cognitive dissonance and various strategies to deal with it need further exploration.

References

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