



PSYCHOL 6505 Social Psychology

Assignment 3

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Section 1: Social Problem

1. The real-world issue I aim to address is how implicit bias can negatively impact the way teachers engage with autistic students, reducing their educational outcomes.

1.1. 6 – 10% of Australian adolescents are diagnosed with ADHD although due to economic disparity and access to assessment, this number is estimated to be higher (May, 2023).

Adolescents with ADHD demonstrate poorer academic performance than neurotypical students even when receiving treatment (Arnold, 2020). While the actual symptoms of ADHD are a significant factor in these differences, Toye et. al. found that the negative stigma implicit bias associated with ADHD leads to lower levels of inclusion and therefore, poorer academic outcomes (Toye, 2019). It has also been found that education professionals, particularly earlier in their careers hold a moderate to strong negative implicit bias towards students with disabilities (Hebert, 2023). Coupled with the tendency of ADHD students to overestimate their own capabilities, it is difficult for teachers to keep these students in the zone of proximal development, negatively impacting their educational outcomes (Emeh, 2018).



Section 2: Psychological Theory, Framework or Approach

2. The basis of the proposed intervention will be the social psychology principle of implicit bias (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

2.1. Implicit bias is the phenomenon of individuals developing and holding unconscious attitudes which may be different from their conscious explicit attitudes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Implicit biases are based on past experiences although the individual may not be able to consciously recall the experience. Greenwald and Banaji's work on implicit bias focused largely on physical traits such as race, gender and age, demonstrating significant unconscious stereotyping. Implicit bias was revealed through the Implicit Association Test (IAT) Greenwald and Banaji developed which measured the strength of association between two different concepts such as a specific gender and words such as good or bad. Strength of association was used as a marker to assess the unconscious bias indirectly. The understanding of implicit bias has been important to social psychology as knowing it exists, and having insight into its mechanisms, the unconscious attitudes can possibly be changed, or at least their explicit manifestations can.

2.2. Implicit bias can be examining on two levels; the intra-individual, and the inter-personal. On the intra-individual level, the nonconscious attitudes and their links to stereotyping, personal experience and memory would be the focus of investigation, and in the inter-personal level, the way the implicit bias affects and informs interpersonal interactions would be the focus.

While the research on implicit bias largely supports the original theory, one of the main criticisms is that implicit bias is not always an indicator of explicit behaviour (Gawronski, 2019). Another criticism is that implicit bias is not always stable over time and can be altered by further



individual experiences. While the link between implicit bias and explicit behaviour may not be reliable, most research in this area has been based on bias against physical characteristics rather than diagnosable neurodiverse traits (Kellison, 2010). In the case of adolescent ADHD, increased teacher implicit bias has been associated with lesser inclusion of ADHD students and decreased educational outcomes (Toye, 2018 and Hebert, 2023). As for the lack of stability in implicit bias over time, that speaks to part of the applied value of implicit bias theory, because it means that further experience and education can be utilised to lessen implicit bias. This has also been demonstrated in the literature where more experienced education professionals and those with a greater understanding of ADHS were found to hold less implicit bias against students with ADHD (Hebert, 2023).

In the case of implicit bias and ADHD student outcomes, the bias itself is only a part of the issue, but one with a measurable effect. Other factors include the level of diagnosis and treatment the student receives, additional learning support from school and home, the personality of the student, and the quality of the relationship between the student and teacher.



Section 3: Understanding the Problem

3. Implicit attitudes and stigma to adolescents with ADHD have been measured with the ADHD Stigma Questionnaire (Kellison, 2010). While the IAT has been criticised for not being validated for neurodivergent traits, the Implicit Relational Assessment Procedure (IRAP) has been validated in adolescents with autism (Kelly, 2013). As autism and ADHD are frequently comorbid, the IRAP could be adapted to reflect ADHD implicit bias to support the information gained from the ADHD Stigma Questionnaire (Hours, 2022).

The implicit bias affecting adolescents with ADHD is seen in staff across the school environment, not only teachers, but support and administration staff as well (Hebert, 2023). As part of this stigma, adolescents with ADHD can be considered lazy and erratic instead of having a diagnosable and treatable condition (Flanigan, 2021). This can lead to students not receiving adequate accommodations or differentiation in their class work and assignments, and not receiving adequate behavioural considerations and being further labelled as disobedient or disruptive (Flanigan, 2021). Therefore, the implicit bias contributes to a lack of equity in the school environment for ADHD students.



Section 4: Applying Theory to Practice

4. As implicit bias can have more than one root cause and operates on both the intra-individual and interpersonal levels, any intervention should approach the issue on multiple fronts. Implicit biases are primarily based on previous experience, and while these cannot be altered, new experiences can take their place as demonstrated by teachers and school workers with more experience of students with ADHD demonstrating lower levels of implicit bias (Toye, 2019).

As blinding is not a possibly way to circumvent implicit bias in a classroom setting, any interventions should be targeted at the root causes of the bias; previous experience and increasing understanding in a supportive environment. Simply acknowledging the presence of implicit bias is enough to reduce explicit behaviours resulting from the bias (Hahn, 2019).

School inclusion policies and the Disability Inclusion Act mandate the inclusion of neurodiverse students at a policy level; however, inclusion strategies can be difficult to implement for early career teachers particularly when awareness of their own biases and support from an inclusive learning or administrative team are lacking.

Interventions should include training for classroom teachers and facilitated support for teachers to implement relevant behaviour management, teaching, and assessment strategies.



Section 5: Intervention Proposal

5. Target Participants: The target participants will be early career teachers (0 – 5 years' experience) as these are more likely to hold higher levels of implicit bias. This can be facilitated through universities, schools, or the Teachers' Registration Board.

Education: Education on working with ADHD students including understanding the condition and its treatments in a functional capacity, inclusive classroom strategies, effective differentiation, ADHD behaviour management strategies, and appropriate assessment strategies. Professional development workshops would ideally be delivered by school inclusive learning coordinators in consultation with educational psychologists. This is to ensure the information on ADHD is correct and up to date, while the strategies are directly applicable to classroom environments. At this stage, participants will also learn about implicit bias and its potential effects on student wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Mentorship: Participant early career teachers will be partnered with a more experienced mentor teacher at their school to help them implement strategies and discuss any difficulties.

Inclusive Learning/Administrative Support: Inclusive learning/administration support will regularly check in with the participant teachers to ensure strategies are being applied and collate feedback to ensure future professional development addresses any shortfalls of the initiative. In conjunction with the mentor teachers, the inclusive learning/administration support can help assess whether any explicit bias is present.



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