



# Student's Perceptions of Faculty in Business Schools

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## Introduction

Gender and age stereotypes contribute to biased evaluations, often hindering women and non-male professionals. Judgments based on descriptive traits (what individuals are like) and prescriptive traits (how they should behave) create barriers. Women are expected to have kind and nurturing traits, while assertiveness and decisiveness are seen as more masculine traits. Non-male faculty who display agentic qualities often face negative perceptions, while their male counterparts are praised for the same behaviors (Heilman, 2012). This bias is further reinforced by the structure of managerial and academic roles, which have historically been designed with men in mind. As a result, those who do not fit the prototypical mold may face additional setbacks in gaining recognition and respect within their fields (Atwater, 2004).

Age is another factor influencing faculty evaluations and perceptions. Younger faculty members are having to navigate challenges that previous generations of academics did not face while also striving to establish themselves in their fields. This includes teaching with little prior experience, meeting the expectations and demands of students and administrators, while also dealing with the growing influence of helicopter parents. Biases against younger faculty often stem from the perception that they lack the expertise, authority, or experience necessary for leadership positions, despite holding similar qualifications as their older colleagues. Younger faculty are expected to juggle external expectations, excel in research, maintain high teaching evaluations, serve the community, and remain accessible to students at all hours. Unlike senior faculty who have had time to build their reputations, younger faculty must consistently prove themselves to be recognized. Students growing dependence on their parents further complicates faculty-student dynamics. Many students expect professors to be available at all hours, responding to emails on weekends and evenings (Chory & Offstein, 2017). Additionally, there is a shift toward students seeing faculty members who play an active, nurturing role similar to a parent, expecting them to monitor their progress closely (Chory & Offstein, 2017). This evolving expectation places additional burden on faculty who are already stretched thin with their academic responsibilities. Younger faculty must work on their research to secure tenure while also managing student, administrator, and parent expectations. Younger faculty face multiple challenges balancing teaching, research, and external expectations while also having to prove their competence due to biases against their age. Because of these obstacles, it takes more effort for them to earn respect and recognition compared to older colleagues, who are often presumed to be more experienced and authoritative.

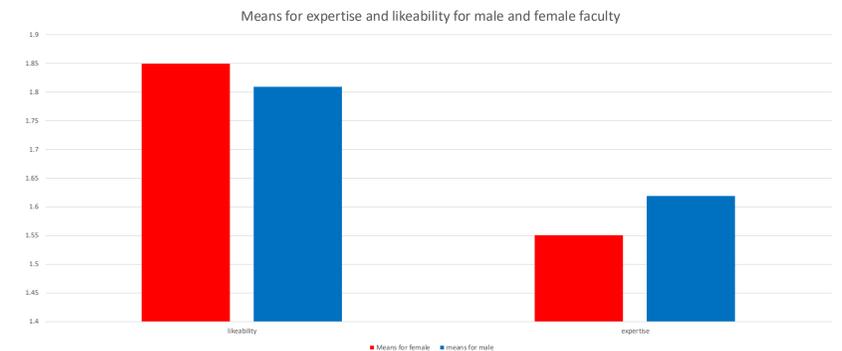
In this study, we hypothesize that female instructors will be perceived as more likeable than male instructors and seen as having less expertise than male instructors. Additionally, we expect age to be negatively correlated with perceptions of likeability, meaning younger faculty will be viewed less favorably. We also anticipate that age will be positively correlated with perceptions of expertise, meaning older faculty members will be seen as more knowledgeable and competent.

## Methodology

We are conducting a mixed-methods survey to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data on student perceptions of faculty in business schools. Participants consist of undergraduate students enrolled in a business school at a Pacific Coast University. The survey was distributed via email, with faculty members forwarding the survey to their students. Each participant is given one of four professor descriptions, varying by gender and age. After reading the description, participants respond to a series of questions assessing their perceptions of the professor's likeability and expertise. Additionally, participants are asked to guess the professor's gender and age based on the description. This approach allows us to understand how age and gender influence student perceptions of faculty members within a business school setting.

## Preliminary Results

The current results are based on participant surveys of 25 students, making them preliminary and subject to change with a larger dataset. Figure 1.1 shows the correlation between age and perceptions of faculty. The hypothesis predicted that age would be negatively correlated with likeability and positively correlated with expertise. However, the results do not support this expectation. The correlation between age and likeability was 0.038, indicating a very weak positive correlation, which does not provide strong evidence that age influences likeability. The correlation between age and expertise was -0.149, showing a weak negative correlation rather than the expected positive correlation. This suggests that older faculty were not necessarily seen as more knowledgeable, contradicting our original hypothesis. Figure 1.2 shows the T-Test for Gender and Perceptions of Faculty. The p-value for gender and likeability was 0.118, and the p-value for gender and expertise was 0.402. Neither statistic indicates a strong correlation between male and female instructors with likeability or expertise. Figure 1.3 shows the means for likeability and expertise by gender. Female instructors had a slightly higher mean likeability (1.85) compared to male instructors (1.81). Male instructors had a slightly higher mean expertise score (1.62) compared to female instructors (1.55). These findings align with the expected trends. However, as shown in Figure 1.2, the differences are not statistically significant and the survey group is only 25 participants so, there is not a strong confirmation but is leading in the direction that aligns closely with our hypothesis. Overall, there is no correlation of age being negatively correlated with perceptions of likeability and no correlation of age being positively correlated with perceptions of expertise. On the other hand, female instructors are seen as more likable than male instructors and also seen as having less expertise than male instructors from the results. Due to the limited information, the hypothesis is not statistically significant but in the right direction.



## Discussion

The results of this study provide preliminary insights into how students perceive faculty based on age and gender. However, given the small sample size of 25 participants, the findings are not statistically significant and only provide insight as to whether the information is heading in a certain direction. Within Figure 1.1, there was no significant correlation between age and student perceptions of likeability or expertise. While the hypothesis predicted that older faculty would be perceived as more knowledgeable, the results did not support this assumption. The correlation between age and likeability (0.038) was too weak to suggest a real trend, and the correlation between age and expertise (-0.149) was in the opposite direction of the expected hypothesis, suggesting that older faculty were not necessarily viewed as more knowledgeable. In Figure 1.2, the results did not show significant statistics on students' perceptions of faculty likeability or expertise. Although female instructors were rated slightly more likable (1.85) than male instructors (1.81), male instructors were rated slightly higher in expertise (1.62) compared to female instructors (1.55), the p-values suggest that these differences were not significant. Figure 1.3 aligns with the expected hypothesis. Female instructors were rated higher in likeability, and male instructors were rated higher in expertise. A larger sample size would further confirm certain hypotheses or go against others. These results show what direction aligns with or goes against certain expected results. Overall, while these results do not provide statistical confirmation of the hypotheses, they suggest directional trends that align with expectations or go against them. Female instructors were perceived as more likable but less knowledgeable, while age did not show a strong impact on faculty evaluations. These findings point toward potential biases within participant surveys, but a larger study is needed to draw a more definitive conclusion.

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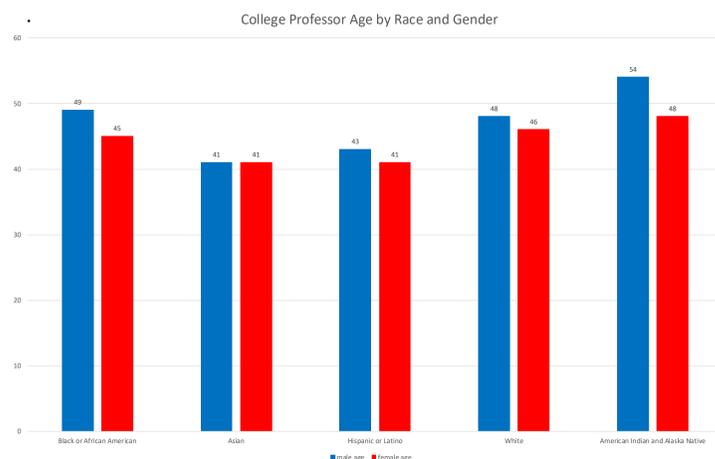


Figure 1.1  
Correlation of age and perception of likeability: 0.038210747  
Correlation of age and perception of expertise: -0.149526929

Figure 1.2  
1 Tail T-Test for gender and perception of likeability: 0.117608  
1 Tail t-Test for gender and perception of expertise: 0.401549507

	Likeability	Expertise
Means for Female	1.85	1.55
Means for Male	1.809524	1.619048