

Research Article

Gender, Body Mass Index (BMI), and Humor Styles

Suchira Chaigusin¹ and Chaiyaset Promsri*¹

Faculty of Business Administration, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Thailand

Article History

Received: 08.05.2020

Accepted: 06.06.2020

Published: 15.06.2020

Journal homepage:<https://www.easpublisher.com/easjebm>**Quick Response Code**

Abstract: The purposes of this present study were to scrutinize gender differences and body mass index (BMI) differences in humor styles. Data were collected from 168 students who studied in accounting program at a selected government university in Bangkok, Thailand. A modified version of Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was utilized to measure participants' humor styles preference. Results showed that the most preferred humor style of accounting students was 'affiliative humor' whereas 'aggressive humor' was reported as the least preferred humor style. To answer research objectives, independent samples t-test and One-way analysis of variance were computed. Findings revealed no statistically significant difference in humor styles between males and females. In addition, no statically significant difference in humor styles was found between students with distinctive BMI groups. The implications of this study's findings must be done with caution in the same area.

Keywords: Humor style, Body Mass Index, Accounting students, Gender.

Copyright © 2020: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use (Non-Commercial or CC-BY-NC) provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

An investigation of humor styles has increasingly become an interesting topic in the past decades since Martin *et al.*, (2003) developed the instrument called Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) to measure four different types of humor. The emphasis on humor research extensively has focused on the relationship between personality, emotional stability, and well-being (Greengross, 2019; Karahan *et al.*, 2019; Dyck & Holtzman, 2013). Nevertheless, the basic research on gender difference in humor style preference has constantly been examined, which dissimilar findings based on different social context, cultures and settings were found (Crawford, 2003; Wu, *et al.*, 2016; Tosun *et al.*, 2018). For example, a recent research conducted in Spain found that males scored higher than females in all four types of humor (Salavera, 2018). This area is still interesting in studying humor style preference in a different culture and context.

Additionally, many studies attempted to examine the association between nutrition and humor (Bast & Berry, 2014; Pausé, 2012). However, prior research did not focus on relationship between an individual's shape and humor style preference. Although some people believe that fat people are funnier than skinny people, this is just a premise (Subramanian, 2012). This assumption is still questionable and needed more investigation. Promsri (2017c) tried to investigate four humor styles between

different BMI groups of Thai managers and found no significant difference. However, this study recommended examining the relationship between BMI and humor styles in the other settings.

In Thai context, a study on humor styles of individuals has been scarce and needed more exploration (Promsri, 2017a; 2017b) tried to investigate four humor styles between this study aimed at examining gender difference in humor style and body mass index differences and humor style. Therefore, the objectives of this present study were to scrutinize difference in humor style between genders and different body mass index (BMI) groups.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Past research has placed an emphasis on four different types of humor, namely affiliative humor, aggressive humor, self-enhancing humor, and self-defeating humor. These four humor styles can be separated to two distinguishing categories: adaptive humor style and maladaptive humor style. Affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor are included in positive humor type. If individuals try to make joke in order to make connection and relationship with others, this refers to affiliative humor while self-enhancing humor involves an ability to laugh at oneself when facing negative situations. People who try to find the humor in everyday situations to deal with stress demonstrate the use of this humor style. In contrast,

maladaptive humor style encompasses aggressive humor and self-defeating humor. If people intend to insult or put down others by making joke on them, this involves aggressive humor. This type of humor is usually viewed as some form of bullying or abuse. In addition, if individuals try to put oneself down to avoid being threaten or made joke by the others, this is called self-defeating humor (Riggio, 2015).

To measure these four distinctive types of humor, Martin *et al.*, (2003) developed a scale measurement called the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), which contains 32-item of 7-point Likert scale assessing these four humor style. This instrument has been widely used in many humor studies in the past decade though some limitations were found and needed to be adapted (Heintz & Ruch, 2015).

A study of humor style in Thai context has been very limited. Promsri (2017a; 2017b; 2017c) was among a few authors in this area who attempted to examine the individual differences in humor styles in the different settings in Thai context. In one study of this research, managers in real estate firms were collected to scrutinize their individual difference such as gender, age, and body mass index (BMI) in humor styles. Results indicated that male managers scored higher on self-defeating style than female managers. In addition, this study also found a significant difference in self-enhancing humor between people with different age groups. However, no statistically significant differences in four types of humor were found between managers with distinctive BMI groups (Promsri, 2017c).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this descriptive study was to explore the difference in humor styles according to gender and Body Mass Index (BMI). The samples were accounting students who enrolled in 'strategic management' course at a selected government university. The respondents were asked to participate in this study through the online application in which they had a chance to accept or refuse to fill out the survey questionnaire. A total of 168 students completed the survey questionnaire via the Google classroom.

The instrumentation used for data collection in this study was an online self-administrated questionnaire. This scale measurement had two parts including personal data and Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ). Personal data part consisted of five questions including gender, age, height, weight,

and academic performance in a form of grade point average. Body Mass Index (BMI) was calculated by using a formula: $\text{weight} / \text{height}^2$. Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was adapted from the original version developed by Martin *et al.*, (2003). This scale measurement contained 32-item of 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Content validity and reliability were conducted to ensure the quality of this modified version. Cronbach's alpha score of 0.706 for HSQ demonstrated that this scale was practically acceptable. To answer the research objectives, independent samples t-test and One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated.

RESULTS

Findings of this study reported that female (85.1%) were the majority group of respondents. The average age of participants was 20.35 years. The average height of participants was 161.32 centimeter and the average weight was 57.78 kilogram. To calculate their Body Mass Index, this study used the online program on the official website of private hospital in Thailand to find the BMI of each participant based on the formula: $\text{weight} / \text{height}^2$. Results indicated that 42.3 percent of participants were fallen into a good shape category while 29.2 percent were reported as underweighted followed by fat (13.76%), very fat (10.76%), and overweight (4.2%). To measure mean differences among these categories by using One-Way ANOVA, the sample size of 30 participants was required, according to the basic assumption of One-Way ANOVA. Thus, this study combined some groups of different BMIs and re-categorized them to meet the assumption. The adjusted BMI was fallen into three new categories including underweight, good shape, and overweight and fat. Results showed that the huge group of respondents was reported to have a good shape (42.3%) followed by underweight (29.2%) and overweight and fat (28.6%), respectively.

For participants' humor style, this study found that 'affiliative humor' ($M = 3.82$, $S.D. = 0.565$) had the highest mean score followed by 'self-enhancing humor' ($M = 3.50$, $S.D. = 0.550$), 'self-defeating humor' ($M = 2.81$, $S.D. = 0.703$), and 'aggressive humor' ($M = 2.36$, $S.D. = 0.514$), respectively.

Table 1 displayed mean differences in humor style among students with different gender. Results found no statistically significant difference in any humor style for students with different gender.

Table 1 Independent Samples T-Test according to Participants' Gender

Humor Style	Male (n = 25)		Female (n =143)		t	P-value
Affiliative	3.55	.512	3.86	.563	-2.589	.877
Self-enhancing	3.62	.613	3.48	.538	1.143	.334
Aggressive	2.39	.525	2.36	.514	.236	.852
Self-defeating	2.89	.714	2.80	.702	.567	.967

Table 2 demonstrated no significant difference in any humor styles according to gender. This can be described that BMI differences had no effect on humor styles.

Table 2 One-Way Analysis of Variance of Humor Styles in Relation to BMI

Humor Styles		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Affiliative	Between Groups	.774	2	.387	1.213	.300
	Within Groups	52.652	165	.319		
	Total	53.426	167			
Self-Enhancing	Between Groups	.836	2	.418	1.384	.254
	Within Groups	49.838	165	.302		
	Total	50.674	167			
Aggressive	Between Groups	.428	2	.214	.804	.449
	Within Groups	43.844	165	.251		
	Total	44.272	167			
Self-Defeating	Between Groups	.507	2	.253	.509	.602
	Within Groups	82.085	165	.497		
	Total	82.591	167			

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of this present study were to examine gender differences and body mass index (BMI) differences in humor styles of accounting students in a selected public university in Thailand. Results of this study revealed no statistically significant difference in humor style between genders. This finding was inconsistent to the previous research (Crawford, 2003; Wu, *et al.*, 2016; Promsri, 2017c; Tosun *et al.*, 2018). This result was remarkable because the number of both genders was not equal and females were the most population in this study. This must be explained very carefully as some male students in accounting program might have some opposite characters and acted like a woman. This area should be reinvestigated with a bigger sample size in the next future. In addition, this study found no statistically significant difference in humor style preferences between students with BMI groups. This finding supported the previous study of Promsri (2017c) in which no relationship between these two variables was found. Thus, the assumption on an individual's shape that has an effect on humor should be

ignored. It might be difference in personality that can explain individual's humor preference. Hence, the next study should place its focus on the relationship between humor style and personality among accounting students rather than BMI.

Although this study found no statistically significant difference in humor styles between genders and BMIs, this study was still useful for other studies in this area to use as a reference to develop research hypothesis and proposition. However, the implications of this present study must be conducted with caution in the same context and area only.

Contribution

Both authors had equally contributed in doing this research from the first stage to the final stage.

Acknowledgement

We are very thankful to Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon for the financial sponsorship and support for this publication.

REFERENCES

1. Bast, E. S. & Berry, E. M. (2014). Laugh away the fat? Therapeutic humor in the control of stress-induced emotional setting. *Rambam Maimonides Medical Journal*, 5(1). Doi:10.5041/RMMS.10141
2. Crawford, M. (2003). Gender and humor in social context. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(9), 1413-1430.
3. Dyck, K. T. H. & Holtzman, S. (2013). Understanding humor styles and well-being: The importance of social relationships and gender. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55(1), 53-58.
4. Greengross, G. (2019). *The relationship between humor styles and personality. How healthy and unhealthy humor styles relate to your personality.* Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/humor-sapiens/201912/the-relationship-between-humor-styles-and-personality>
5. Heintz, S. & Ruch, W. (2015). An examination of the convergence between the conceptualization and the measurement of humor styles: A study of the construct validity of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 28, 611–633.
6. Karahan, T. F., Yalcin, B. M., Erbas, M. M., & Ergun, S. (2019). The relationship between the dominant humor style, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills in trainee teachers in Turkey. *Humor*, 32(1), 73-95.
7. Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., and Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 48-75.
8. Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. (2nd). New York, NY:McGraw-Hill.
9. Pausé, C. (2012). *Big belly laughs – why is it okay to laugh at fat people?* Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/big-belly-laughs-why-is-it-okay-to-laugh-at-fat-people-5329>
10. Promsri, C. (2017a). Does humor really enhance innovative work behavior? A case study of Thai commercial bank employees. *The International Journal of Business & Management*, 5(8), 282-286.
11. Promsri, C. (2017b). Relationship between the use of humor styles and innovative behavior of executives in a real estate company. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(9), 342-351.
12. Promsri, C. (2017c). Individual differences in managerial humor styles of Thai managers in real estate firms. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(9), 836-841.
13. Riggio, R. E. (2015). *The 4 styles of humor. What do you find funny? How do you use humor?* Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/cutting-edgeleadership/201504/the-4-styles-humor>
14. Salavera, C., Usán, P., Jarie, L. (2018). *Styles of humor and social skills in students. Gender differences.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322413379_Styles_of_humor_and_social_skills_in_students_Gender_differences
15. Subramanian, S. (2012). Is fat funny? Some bloggers, tweeters think so. Retrieved from <https://www.everydayhealth.com/weight/0531/is-fat-funny-some-bloggers-and-tweeters-think-so.aspx>
16. Tosun, S., Faghihi, N., & Vaid, J. (2018). Is an ideal sense of humor gendered? A cross-national study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 199. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00199>
17. Wu, C. L., Lin, H. Y., Chen, H. C. (2016). Gender differences in humour styles of young adolescents: Empathy as a mediator. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 99, 139-143.