Gender Bias in Online Patient Healthcare Reviews

Cao, Amanda (School: New Rochelle High School)

Over the past few years, as internet usage has skyrocketed, online review sites have grown in popularity as well. Recently, the idea of review sites has expanded into the medical sector, in a form known as physician-review websites (PRWs), where patients are able to review the performance of their physicians. However, although this access to information may seem benevolent, negative reviews posted on these sites could have serious repercussions for physicians. Due to factors such as prior bias, patients could potentially leave unfairly negative reviews that may not represent the physician's true quality of care. Thus, this study will analyze potential gender bias in said reviews, as gender bias is undeniably one of the most prevalent in society. This study aimed to analyze gender bias in online patient healthcare reviews between two websites, Healthgrades.com and WebMD.com. To determine this, two-tailed t-tests were performed, and the data was considered significant if $p<0.05$. It was determined that gender bias was not present in the content of the reviews themselves; the only significant values were produced by differences in the number of reviews (Healthgrades $p < 0.001$, WebMD $p < 0.001$). However, this could have been a result of the comparatively small sample size of females in the study, as data was only collected for 273 female physicians versus 2021 male physicians. Additionally, in this study, only two websites and two genders were studied, so a larger number of websites and genders would likely offer a more accurate comparison.

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