

# A Study on the Influence of Halo Effect: Teaching Evaluation in Junior and Senior High Schools

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**Abstract.** Teaching evaluation plays an indispensable role in continuously improving the education system and promoting talent cultivation in today's society. The Halo effect, as a common cognitive bias, also affects educational evaluation all the time. Therefore, understanding how the Halo effect affects education evaluation, how it affects, and how to find ways to reduce the deviation caused by the Halo effect are the current core content. Based on previous scholars' research on the Halo effect and teaching evaluation, this paper adopts the method of systematic literature review, and analyzes, incorporates, and summarizes how the Halo effect operates in education evaluation and how much it has influenced from different perspectives, including students and teachers, subjects, grade of students, and different types of schools. Through literature collection, it has been found that both parents and students map to other aspects due to a certain characteristic of the teacher, such as the teaching ability of a certain course. First impressions can affect the evaluation of other abilities. And students often have biases based on the appearance and clothing of teachers when they first meet them and then pass these biases on to the teachers, which can have a significant impact on teaching evaluation. These are all common. The deviation caused by the Halo effect can be reduced mainly through three aspects: first impression, understanding in detail and view from a developmental perspective, and improving professional quality.

**Keywords:** Halo Effect; Teaching Evaluation; Secondary education; Systematic review.

## 1. Introduction

Education evaluation is an important direction to promote education reform, which shows great value in strengthening and promoting curriculum construction in colleges and universities. Based on this problem, although the focus of various studies is different, its fundamental purpose is to use student feedback to promote the development of teachers' professional skills and improve teaching quality, which has considerable research value. In addition, in middle school education, education evaluation is an important factor to improve education mode and course quality, which is helpful for timely analysis, exploration, and practical reform. Meanwhile, the Halo effect is an important psychological phenomenon in the field of educational psychology. In terms of the relationship between teachers and students, the classroom teaching and the teaching evaluation, all will have different influences. Domestic and foreign scholars' research on the Halo effect in educational evaluation can be traced back to the 1980s. With the deepening of the research, scholars pay more and more attention to the influence of the Halo effect on educational evaluation, which has formed a certain scale study, especially for the middle school field. And a large number of related studies have also been produced, mainly focusing on classroom teaching, teaching assessment, and teaching application.

At present, scholars have made complicated and derivative research on the "Halo effect", a kind of classical psychological effect, but most of the literature review on the "Halo effect" is centered on the same core content.

Edward Thorndike first proposed an influencing factor, "the constant error of the 'Halo'" through the analysis of experiments and related data [1]. And the results of this study have become the basic prototype of the concept of the "Halo effect". The topics about Halo Effect have been constantly

studied by scholars. Shi Qiong believed that the Halo Effect referred to the condition that a person's particularly prominent characteristics or qualities would hide people's correct understanding of other qualities and characteristics of others during the communication and cognition between people [2]. And this illusion phenomenon was called the "Halo effect" in psychology. For the research of the Halo effect in teaching evaluation, many scholars mainly study it through written evaluation, oral evaluation, and body language evaluation, and make an overall analysis from the psychological dimension. Liu Xia believed that the psychological activities of evaluators would have various realistic effects on the evaluation quality. And the most frequent psychological deviations of evaluators would be influenced by herd mentality and the Halo effect in the educational quality evaluation work. These psychological deviations will bring negative effects that cannot be ignored to the education quality evaluation [3]. Elies A., Schabmann A., Schmidt B., and Behrmann, L. all clearly pointed out that teachers, under the Halo effect in the teaching process, might lead to bias in information processing, thus affecting the judgment of students [4, 5]. It would also cause the condition that students would be influenced by psychological factors in the evaluation of teachers' teaching so that the teaching evaluation of teachers would also be deviated and influenced. Based on the research mentioned above, Dong Yunfei made an in-depth analysis of the psychological factors of the Halo effect in the teaching evaluation system [6]. He thought that the Halo effect could affect the emotional state, learning motivation, and self-efficacy of students in the teaching evaluation process, thus affecting the evaluation results. For example, the moods of students will directly affect the evaluation of the teachers and the courses. If students' expectations cannot be met, they are likely to have a negative attitude toward teachers and curriculum evaluation. In sum, there are relatively few studies on the Halo effect in the teaching evaluation system at home and abroad. As for the definition of the Halo effect, most people think that this is a general evaluation bias. In the teaching evaluation system of the Halo effect, both teachers and students are the influencing subjects. To establish a fairer evaluation system, diversified evaluation criteria can be set to evaluate teachers and courses, and effective psychological evaluation can be established for students to effectively avoid the bias caused by the Halo effect.

This study focuses on middle and high school students as the research subjects mainly use literature analysis to search and summarize the research studies on the Halo effect, mostly in the past twenty years. From the perspective of whether the Halo effect will have a negative impact on students' evaluation of teaching, the degree and direction of the impact are clarified. This study followed the principles of timeliness, relevance, and representativeness and searched literature from the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index Database (CSSCI), CNKI, Web of Science, ERIC, and Academic Search Ultimate (ASU). Mostly from 2003 to 2023, literature in the past ten years, which are related to the Halo effect and teaching evaluation, are selected to create the research literature database of this paper.

This paper uses "Halo effect," its synonyms, and "teaching evaluation" as keywords to conduct a subject search in the literature database. According to the search requirements, the search expression is constructed, which basically realizes the complete search of relevant literature covering the impact of the Halo effect on the teaching evaluation of middle and high school students from an international perspective. A total of 17 papers were included in the research literature database of this paper, including three studies on the definition of the concept of the Halo effect, two applied literature, and 12 papers on the direction of influence. The 12 papers include five empirical studies, three literature reviews, and four theoretical studies. The systematic review was used to analyze the existing literature on the Halo effect in teaching evaluation. The systematic review is a repeatable analysis method that collects and analyzes educational case data directly related to the review question and systematically answers the literature research method about the influence of the Halo effect on teaching evaluation. Compared with traditional literature review methods, it uses more rigorous and explicit criteria to identify, screen, and critically review literature on specific topics. This study refers to the Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Guidelines proposed by the American Journal of Vocational Education and uses four steps to identify, which are screen, review, and select the review objects.

## **2. The Negative Influence of Halo Effect on Teachers and Students in Educational Evaluation**

### **2.1. The Halo Effect Has a Light Influence on Teachers in Teaching Evaluation.**

One form of cognitive bias known as the Halo effect arises when an individual's overall opinion of another person affects how that person's unique features or skills are perceived. The appraisal of educators in terms of their pedagogical skills may be profoundly affected by this phenomenon [7].

Teachers are continually evaluated in the classroom by students, parents, and administration. Teacher performance and future opportunities are heavily influenced by these assessments. A sort of prejudice known as the "Halo effect" can sneak into assessments of educators and lead to judgments that aren't always accurate depictions of their actual effectiveness in the classroom [8].

According to the Halo effect, if students have a positive impression of a teacher in one subject, that impression will carry over to their other subjects. A teacher's nice and approachable personality, for instance, could lead students to incorrectly assume that they are more competent and informed than they actually are [9]. Therefore, their overall rating could be inflated regardless of how well they actually teach or how well they communicate course material to their students.

The Halo effect is not limited to educational contexts, though. A teacher's popularity in the community, whether through extracurriculars or volunteer work, may be reflected in how they are judged as a classroom instructor. As a result, subjective opinions are given greater weight than the teacher's actual educational abilities [10].

The Halo effect might extend to the evaluations given by principals and colleagues [11]. A teacher's assessments may be more generous if they are known to be particularly skilled or experienced than if they are less well-known. The Halo effect causes discrepancies in assessments amongst instructors despite the fact that they may provide identical instruction quality.

The Halo effect's pervasive nature in educational contexts can have significant implications for teacher evaluations and career opportunities. When students, parents, and administrators are influenced by this bias, it may lead to inaccurate assessments of a teacher's actual effectiveness in the classroom. A teacher's likable personality or popularity in the community might overshadow their pedagogical skills, leading to inflated ratings that don't necessarily reflect their teaching abilities. Moreover, even evaluations from principals and colleagues may be affected by the Halo effect, with more well-known teachers receiving more generous assessments compared to their lesser-known counterparts, despite potentially delivering the same quality of instruction [12].

In non-educational settings as well, the Halo effect can exert its influence on various aspects of judgment and decision-making. For example, in business and hiring processes, a person's overall positive impression may lead to an assumption of competence across different skills and domains, even if not supported by concrete evidence. This could impact recruitment, promotion, and overall career advancement, potentially overlooking highly qualified individuals who may not have the same level of immediate likability or popularity.

In summary, the Halo effect is a cognitive bias that can significantly impact how teachers are evaluated and perceived in educational settings. It extends beyond the classroom and can affect judgments in various spheres of life. Being aware of this bias is crucial in making more accurate and fair assessments, ensuring that educators' true abilities and qualifications are recognized and rewarded appropriately.

### **2.2. Halo Effect Has a Serious Influence on Students in Teaching Evaluation.**

Indeed, the Halo effect can have a substantial impact on students' opinions expressed in classroom evaluations. Students' perceptions of their teachers may be influenced by this cognitive bias, which may lead to inaccurate ratings.

When students have a generally favorable view of their teacher, it can have a "Halo effect" on their evaluations, making some parts of the teacher's performance seem less important. Teachers' popularity, friendliness, and bias toward some students can all affect how their pupils evaluate their

teaching skills and overall efficacy. This can lead to inflated ratings across the board, regardless of the teacher's real skill level in areas like content mastery, classroom management, and pedagogical acuity [13].

Furthermore, the Halo effect might cause unfair assessments to be made based on criteria other than classroom performance. Teachers who are beautiful, well-dressed, or personable may be rated more highly by their students than their less aesthetically appealing colleagues, even if they are equally effective educators. The teacher's charisma or outward appearance becomes more important in the rating than the quality of their instruction [14].

The level of student interest is also affected by the Halo effect. Students may overlook a teacher's flaws in instruction if they like them and they give them liberal grades or have a pleasant attitude [15]. So, even if they aren't being taught anything new or given any challenging academic material, kids could nevertheless feel more involved. Even if a rigorous or harsh teacher leads to greater learning, pupils may report lower levels of engagement.

It's possible that the leniency with which someone is rated, as well as other subjective aspects of grading, are affected by the Halo effect. Students may think their professor is less strict with grades if they have a positive image of their teacher. Because of this misunderstanding, some students may believe they deserve better grades than they receive [16].

In addition to student evaluations, the Halo effect can also impact the way teachers perceive themselves and their abilities. If teachers receive consistently positive feedback from students due to the Halo effect, they may develop an inflated sense of their effectiveness as educators. This self-perception could hinder their professional growth and willingness to seek constructive feedback or make necessary improvements in their teaching methods, ultimately affecting the overall quality of education they provide.

In summary, the Halo effect can significantly influence how students perceive and evaluate their teachers. Positive impressions of a teacher's likability or appearance may lead to inflated ratings, overshadowing important aspects of their actual teaching performance. This cognitive bias can distort student interest and engagement, as well as influence the way teachers view their abilities. Educators and educational institutions need to be aware of the Halo effect's potential impact to ensure fair and accurate evaluations that truly reflect teachers' pedagogical skills and effectiveness in the classroom.

### **3. The Negative Influence of the Halo Effect on Different Dimensions of Teaching Evaluation**

#### **3.1. The Differentiation in Evaluation Subject**

Humans use categories to learn this world efficiently. Thus, stereotypes are very strong when people try to make a general impression of a certain person. When it comes to scientific courses such as math and physics, both male and female students view male teachers as more competent [17]. At the same time, when the subject is related to interpersonal skills, the students often rate females as more competent [17]. This is a form of schema [17]. As long as the students find out the teachers have some characteristics that fit with the schema, they immediately think that other features of the people who fit in with the schema also apply to this person. This is efficient when people first start to learn this world, but not when they need to provide accurate evaluations.

Typically, younger students are more vulnerable to being influenced by the Halo effect since they do not have fully developed reasoning and inhibitory control abilities. Most of them rely more on intuition and often rate likable teachers as good teachers. However, studies have shown that training could efficiently reduce the Halo effect [18]. By teaching the students the reasons why evaluation is necessary and important and letting them treat every element separately, students will make significantly more objective judgments, especially when the evaluation form is given right after the education [18].

### **3.2. The Differentiation in Evaluation Systems**

A research study has mentioned that in Italian, the university fee is very low, and students often study part-time while working a job [19]. Therefore, they often pay less attention to schoolwork. When the experimenters asked the students to fill out evaluation forms, one-third of them chose not to do it, even if they needed to finish it before they could take the final examination [19]. Considering they already have a job, some of them do not think getting a bachelor's diploma is necessary or meaningful. Thus, they are more influenced by the Halo effect since some of them do not want to spend much time doing evaluations. Typically, good-looking teachers often get significantly higher scores [19]. In contrast, for schools that need students to pay full attention and set higher assessment standards, students often can evaluate teachers from different perspectives and provide more objective feedback since they spend much longer time in school.

The most common type of evaluation is questionnaires. In most research studies, the experimenters set specific questions and asked the participants to rate the teachers and the overall quality of the courses on a pre-set scale. However, sometimes these questions are not clear enough for students [20]. For example, some students will confuse vocal clarity with verbal clarity. Studies have suggested that vocal quality is not related to teaching results, but verbal quality is. Considering these misunderstandings, interviews will help students provide more accurate feedback, although it would be more time-consuming.

### **3.3. The Differentiation in Teaching Styles**

Studies have suggested that students' evaluations are based on students' feelings toward the course and the instructor [17]. A lot of elements are involved, including the teacher's accent, class length, and classroom pleasantness [17]. Some of them are not related to the overall quality of the course but strongly affect students' evaluation. This is because when students often provide more positive feedback when they are in a good mood and do the opposite when they are in a bad mood. Teachers who have sociability and extraversion often are at an advantage when receiving students' ratings [17]. Especially when external references are few, students often rely on their feelings as the major source to make their judgments, which is usually highly subjective since their effect can magnify Halo effects.

## **4. Pedagogical implications on reducing the negative impact of the Halo effect**

### **4.1. Pay attention to the Teacher's First Impression Management**

The influence of the Halo effect on students and teachers is often manifested in the fact that people's cognition and judgment often spread only from part but get the overall impression, which is often generalized. Therefore, the first way to reduce the negative impact of the Halo effect is to manage the "first impression". Teachers themselves should pay attention to establishing a good first impression [22], including mental outlook, teaching attitude and clothing, sound, and appearance.

At the same time, the Halo effect works in both internal and external ways [23]. In terms of external factors, because the Halo effect has the characteristics of psychological stereotype, teachers can first let leaders, colleagues, or senior students introduce themselves in the first class, such as the teacher's moral character, specialties, and academic achievements, to enhance their attractiveness, leaving a good first impression on students and establish prestige among them. In terms of internal factors, as teachers have different personal qualities, teaching styles, and majors, the methods of establishing a good first impression are also different. According to the central expansion of the Halo effect, if a teacher leaves a good first impression on students, it will make them more likely to have a favorable impression of the teacher in the subsequent learning process, and gradually extend this favorable impression to the courses taught by the teacher.

#### **4.2. Understand Students in Detail and View from a Developmental Perspective**

Because the Halo effect often comes from people's lack of deep and detailed understanding, people are easily influenced by the superficiality of feeling and the selectivity of perception. Therefore, teachers should seek truth from facts and master students' information comprehensively in their teaching, and avoid blinding them [24]. Teachers' evaluation of each student should be carried out after in-depth understanding and comprehensive analysis, regardless of grades or gender, all students should be treated equally and democratically [22].

First of all, teachers can consult the students' data files before taking classes. If conditions permit, it is best to visit each student at home or have a telephone interview with their parents to understand the student's learning foundation and interest in learning various subjects [25.]

Secondly, the key for teachers to overcome this negative evaluation is to have more contact with students and master all kinds of information about students comprehensively in daily life. Teachers must not simplify the problem, nor make arbitrary conclusions about students' performance, remembering to make judgments after communication [24].

Thirdly, students will continue to grow, so teachers should view students from the perspective of development [26]. Students are developing people, as their abilities, behavior habit, and psychological quality are immature. Teachers should not only see their staged and temporary shortcomings but also see what progress students have made. What's more, once students are found to have made progress, teachers should praise them in time to strengthen this behavior [23].

#### **4.3. Improve Teaching Professional Quality**

To reduce the negative influence of the Halo effect, teachers should pay attention to the rational application of their knowledge and improve their professional quality. Teachers should be good at creating their own "the Halo" [27]. Constantly improving the personality, knowledge, and professional quality, internalizing the talent of teachers, in this way, the teacher's images can be powerful in class [25].

Specifically, professional quality can be improved from these three aspects. First, update the educational concept. The Halo effect is largely due to the lag of teachers' educational concepts. Therefore, to eliminate the Halo effect, teachers should change their educational concepts and face students' development truly. Second, accumulate professional knowledge. People's inherent knowledge is one of the factors that produce the Halo effect, and their knowledge structure determines the perspective of looking at the problem. Therefore, teachers should constantly improve their quality, change their knowledge system and update their teaching methods. They should not only accumulate professional knowledge but also enlarge the accumulation of knowledge in humanities and society. Third, strengthen the communication among teacher teams. According to the analysis of the mechanism of the Halo effect, the lack of information will lead to the structural imbalance of the individual's general model, making single information become the main factor. Therefore, teachers should increase the chances of exchanging information, and form various sharing channels between teachers in different courses and different grades, to avoid bad results [28].

### **5. Conclusions**

In this study, the negative impact of the Halo effect on teachers and students was studied first. The original hypothesis was that the Halo effect had a greater impact on teachers and less negative impact on students. Through the study of the literature, it is found that the Halo effect will have a serious impact on both sides, which makes the educational evaluation biased.

In terms of the negative influence of the Halo effect on different dimensions of teaching evaluation, this paper mainly summarizes three dimensions: the negative impact varies depending on the evaluation subject, including gender and age; the evaluation system is based on differences in student situations and teacher situations; students' evaluations are based on students' feelings toward the course and the instructor.

Generally speaking, there are three ways to reduce the negative effects of the Halo effect. First, pay attention to first impression management. Second, understand in detail and view from a developmental perspective. Third, Improve professional quality.

When discussing the negative impact of the Halo effect on teaching evaluation, most of the current literature only considers the Halo effect existing in the teacher-student relationship from a single angle. However, teaching evaluation involves a lot of related content, so it is also necessary to consider the impact of the Halo effect on other roles and solutions. For example, how to improve the work of a class teacher; will leaders have an impact on teacher evaluation; whether students' parents are affected by the Halo effect, thus causing negative problems, etc. Nowadays, there is relatively little literature that summarizes these aspects from multiple perspectives, and it is worth further research in the future.

## Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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