

## Influence of Gender and Sex-Role Stereo-Typing on Career Decision Making

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### Abstract

This paper examined the vocational development and aspirations of women since creation. In all human societies across the world, a disparity existed between traditionally male and traditionally female occupations. Women were not encouraged to work outside the home. At various times throughout history, working women were viewed as immoral and unfeminine objects of pity. Some critics accused working women of being negligent mothers. Women employees were not therefore taken seriously by their bosses, colleagues or society. The introduction of western education in to the African continent contributed in liberating the African woman from female-oriented jobs. More and more women continued to enter in to male-dominated jobs, thus abandoning their traditionally approved occupations. Today, the population of women in schools and male oriented employment is almost overtaking their male counterparts. This has made things difficult for the working woman to take care of the family and at the same time carry out her duties in the work place with satisfaction. This has exposed the educated woman to a lot of challenges which range from reduced chances of getting married to child abandonment in pursuit of material things. It is therefore recommended that Vocational Psychologists should assist young Women to enter in to occupations that will give them enough time to take care of their families.

**Keywords:** Vocational Development, Gender, careers, employment, traditional male, occupations, traditionally female occupations, male dominated jobs, working woman, sex-typing of occupations.

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### Introduction

The selection of careers and growth are the views of the whole character, which are based on the balance of the job position and the sort of individual's character. Anne (2007) claimed that generic variables require hierarchies and that the sort of profession chosen is determined by the nature of the house. Anne Roe indicates that it is either the accepting, reflecting, avoiding and mental concentration of the baby that determines the sort of work you select. Theory of Ginzberg, Ginburg, Axerlad and Herma (1951) has been emphasized by Onivehu (2010). Tiedemar and O'Hara (1952) have hypothesized that choices for and growth in careers are an ongoing decision-making method that aims and plans in order to balance objectives within a restricted chance of all the theories for career development.

Ecdes (1994) and Gottfredson (2005) submitted that young adults' awareness of their gender and their social class influences their perceptions of career aspirations. Thus, the son of a monarch may be

worried of the career he chooses eventually. However, initial decisions are flexible and easily changeable at later dates with increased awareness and information. Career aspirations and career choice for men and women were predetermined during the Adamic period. God, in His wisdom, ascribed certain responsibilities to the man and his wife following their disobedience in abstaining from eating the fruit of the tree of life located at the center of the garden. To the woman, she will be subjected to the authority of the husband and must experience great pain in pregnancy, child birth and child training. To the man, he will work hard and sweat all his life in order to feed the family until he finally returns to the dust (Gen.3:16-19)

This paper will therefore be presented under the following sub-sections:

- i. Sex-typing of occupations
- ii. Influence of western education on career choice and preferences
- iii. Understanding the times in career choice

### **The Concept of Gender**

Gender relations refer to a complex system of personal and social relations of domination and power through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to power and material resources or are allocated status within society (International Fund for Agricultural Development - IFAD, 2000). Gender is about men and women. Men and women are not the same: they are not equal nor will they ever be, due to physical and biological conditions. Gender, however, does not refer to the biological differences but to the social and cultural structure that defines what it is to be a “man” and what it means to be a “woman” in a given society and cultural setting (IFAD, 2000).

The definition of these roles, as defined by a given community, results in a division of labour based on gender, i.e., based on differences between men and women with respect to their problems, needs, priorities and proposals for solutions, participation and access to productive resources and opportunities for development (IFAD, 2000). Borgatta and Montgomery (2010) suggested that gender is the division of people into two categories, “men” and “women” and that through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and family roles women and men were socially constructed to be different in behavior, attitudes, and emotions.

Despite the above definitions, gender has often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only. However, as can be seen from the above definition, gender issues focus on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Regarding the influence of gender on management style in the workplace, Wajcman (1996, 1998) cited in Hakim (2006) showed that there were no visible gender differences in styles of management, and that female managers differed from male managers in their personal characteristics and family lives, but not in the way that they did the job.

### **Career Choice**

Cascio (2008) found from his study on career development that the word career can be viewed from a number of different perspectives. From one

perspective a career is a sequence of positions occupied by a person during the course of a lifetime. This is the objective career. From another perspective, though, a career consists of a sense of where a person is going in his or her work life. This is the subjective career, and it is held together by a self-concept that consists of perceived talents and abilities, basic values, and career motives and needs.

Cascio (2008) also found that both of these perspectives, objective and subjective, focus on the individual. Both assume that people have some degree of control over their destinies and that they can manipulate opportunities in order to maximize the success and satisfaction derived from their careers. Pattanayak (2008) says that the concept of career has many meanings and that the popular meaning is probably reflected in the idea of moving upward in one’s chosen line of work - making more money; having more responsibility; and acquiring more status, prestige, and power. Greenhaus (1987) cited in Pattanayak (2008) noted that a career is a pattern of work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s work life.

### **Gender and Career Choice**

Men and women differ considerably in their career choices, and many factors contribute to these differences. Socialization experiences, which refer to the lifelong social learning experiences that people have when interacting with others, play a major role here. Parents, siblings, teachers, school guidance counselors, other adult role models, peers, the media, and many other sources greatly influence how individuals view themselves based on their gender.

From an early age, parents tend to treat boys and girls differently and encourage children to engage in gender-appropriate play (e.g., boys play with trucks; girls play with dolls) and extracurricular activities (e.g., football for boys, dance for girls). Teachers and other adult role models such as guidance counselors, extended family members, and family friends also act differently toward boys and girls and hold different expectations for children based on their gender. Boys are expected to be more rambunctious and physically active, whereas girls are expected to be more sensitive and sociable. Thus, people in children’s social environments reinforce and send consistent

messages as to what is expected of them according to their gender.

Materials used in primary educational settings also contribute to the socialization experience. For instance, textbooks often depict men and women in stereotypical occupations (e.g., men as doctors and women as nurses) and social roles (e.g., working fathers and stay-at-home mothers). Furthermore, children's stories are more likely to use men than women as story characters. The media plays a role in its portrayal of men and women in sex-typed occupational and societal roles, television shows, movies, and advertisements. Peers also exert considerable influence and contribute to the socialization process, particularly during adolescence. Because adolescents want to fit in with their peers, the decision to pursue activities that are not consistent with sex-role expectations is a difficult one. This might include choosing to participate in activities that are gender typed (e.g., a boy choosing to pursue art, a girl choosing to join the wrestling team) or expressing vocational interests that are viewed as less appropriate for one's gender (e.g., a boy interested in nursing, a girl interested in auto repair).

Although such socialization experience influences both genders, it is presumed to have greater negative effects on girls because it tends to limit and restrict their options and achievements more so than boys'. For example, healthy adult men are expected to work, but the decision to enter the labor force is presented as a choice for girls. In this way, gender influences the initial decision of whether or not to pursue paid work outside the home. Likewise, socialization experiences strongly influence vocational interests and career choices. Both adolescent boys and adult men report greater interest in scientific, technical, and mechanical pursuits. Adolescent girls and adult women indicate greater interest in social and artistic endeavors. Thus, it is not surprising that men are generally encouraged to pursue careers in engineering, business, and science, whereas women are encouraged to pursue careers in social and helping occupations. It is also noteworthy that male-typed careers tend to offer higher status and pay than female-typed careers, contributing to the observed gender inequities in pay.

The availability of same-sex role models also influences vocational interests and subsequent career choice. Due to the differential representation of men and women in various occupations, girls are less likely to have female role models in male-dominated occupations, such as engineering, police and detective work, and construction trades. Girls are more likely to have role models in traditionally female occupations, such as education, nursing, and social work. The opposite is true for boys. Parental role modeling also influences occupational preference and career choice, since children tend to identify most with their same-sex parents and working adults are also segregated occupationally to some extent. Maternal employment also relates to career choice. In particular, working mothers can facilitate their daughters' career aspirations by providing female models of career pursuits and by demonstrating how women can successfully integrate work and family roles.

Another reason for male-female differences in career choice relates to career-related self-efficacy perceptions, or beliefs in one's ability to be successful in a wide range of career pursuits. Women have less access to the types of experience necessary for developing strong beliefs in their abilities to master career-related tasks, particularly tasks in male-dominated occupations and majors (e.g., math, science). Individuals develop career-related self-efficacy through vicarious experience (role models), verbal persuasion (encouragement from others), and actual experience (having opportunities to master tasks). Women tend to have less opportunity for these experiences and therefore tend to report lower career-related self-efficacy than men. These lower self-expectations can lead to further occupational sex segregation, as individuals are less likely to pursue certain jobs and/or careers if they believe that they will not be successful. Interestingly, there are few consistent differences in actual ability between men and women, and when differences are found, they tend to be small in magnitude. Moreover, there is greater within-gender than between-gender variability in abilities such as overall intelligence, verbal ability, mathematical ability, and visual-spatial ability.

### **Sex-typing of occupations**

This divine sex-typing of occupations where jobs were categorized as female and male were promoted in all traditional communities across the world. Domestic responsibilities such as house cleaning, cooking, child training and other female related domestic duties were the exclusive preserve of women while family duties outside the home such as hunting, farming, fishing and other male related duties were assigned to man. Socialization of children was also done along gender lines. While the mother ensured that the girl-child acquired all the values and norms of the community, the boy-child was tutored by the father in the acquisition of relevant male-oriented occupational skills. Traditional societies did not therefore encourage women to work outside the home since a woman's place was in her home, caring for her husband and children (Brown and Barbosa,2001)

### **Influence of Western education on career choice and preference**

The introduction of western education in to the continent of Africa gradually destroyed the sex-typing of occupations and preference given to the education of the boy-child. Hitherto, top priority was given to the education of the male-child at the expense of the girl-child. It was believed that educated women make bad wives and are not respectful to their husbands. (Nievia and Gutek,2011) According to them, they are irreligious, morally bankrupt, promiscuous, disobedient and bossy. Sending them to school therefore is a waste of resources because when they graduate and marry, only the husband's family benefits. (Sababa and Jumai,2009) It should however be noted that today, this myth is being broken because the population of female children in our primary, secondary and tertiary institutions is witnessing an astronomical increase. Female students are now gradually becoming the majority of the undergraduate populations. Many female students are now offering science, mathematics, engineering and technological courses and going in to occupations that were previously male-dominated. Depending on the level of educational attainment, women, across Nigeria are now employed in low and high paid jobs as bank managers, managing Directors of companies, automobile, aircraft, civil and mechanical engineers

etc. In educational institutions, they are not left out. The first female Vice-chancellor in Nigeria, Prof. Grace Alele Williams was appointed in 1985. Appointment of more female Vice-chancellors is being witnessed across the state, federal and private universities in Nigeria. The Nigerian political landscape is also witnessing the emergence of more women as Members of parliament and state legislators. In Rwanda for instance, there are more female MPS than men as a result of the death of hundreds of thousands of men during the Rwandan genocide. With the rapid increase in the population of women in the labour market, there will be more female in the workforce than men. There are however certain barriers and role conflicts that make career progress difficult for women. Albert and Luzzo (2009), Brown & Barbosa (2001),Luzo & McWarter (2001) such factors as sex-typing of occupations and sex discriminations, inadequate occupational skills, poor academic achievement and poor transportation which explain why women have failed to succeed in the workforce.

### **Understanding the times in career choice**

In the light of the foregoing, the educated woman has come of age. Barriers to female education and participation in the work force are being broken gradually. Today, a critical population of women is found in both female-oriented and male-dominated jobs. Employment outside the home is no longer seen as secondary to their domestic responsibilities. Women's liberation from traditionally female occupations and their participation in traditionally male jobs has exposed the educated woman to a lot of challenges:

- i. **Inability to provide good care for husband and children:** The woman who works outside the home is still expected to perform duties as wives and mothers. This makes things difficult for the working woman to be good housewife and a productive employee.
- ii. **Child abandonment:** The working-class mother, necessitated by the economic hardship, is forced to reject the vocation recommended by God and has instead taken up traditionally male-oriented jobs. Consequently, the home and the children are

abandoned because the demands of the jobs will not allow them to stay at home to provide moral and spiritual training for the children. In most situations, mothers handover their children to Day care Centres and employ care givers who, in most cases, lack basic parenting skills to equip the child with cherished societal values. The adage, 'like father like son' or like mother like daughter' no longer holds because parents are hardly seen spending hours interacting with their family members. That is why the population of Nigerian children and adolescents are made up of child robots that are reared without sound moral and spiritual foundation.

- iii. **Moral and spiritual Degeneration:** Mothers' absence at home has also led to increased cases of cultism, lesbianism, homosexuality, irresponsible sexual behaviour, indecent dressing, disobedience to parents, spiritual bankruptcy, and other societal ills that characterize the Christian family environment and the neighborhood. These abnormal behaviours are strong signals that the family has failed in its duty to train the young to be disciplined and productive members of the community.
- iv. **Reduced chances of getting married:** Engaging in traditionally male-oriented occupations by the educated woman constitute serious barriers to getting married. Many marriageable young men and women have remained chronic bachelors and spinsters due to the nature of their jobs. This is because many promising suitors run away from young girls who engage in certain occupations since both of them are in the same work environment that does not allow them to train their children in accordance with their family principles and beliefs. Our young girls are also warned to be aware of marrying men that are employed in jobs that are full of occupational hazards so that they do not become widows as soon as they put on the wedding ring

### **Gender and Career Experiences**

Gender also influences individuals' career experiences. Women face unique barriers in the workplace, which, in turn, shapes their work and organizational experiences. One barrier consists of practices that intentionally or unintentionally exclude women from jobs and developmental experiences based on gender. This includes overt sex discrimination in hiring, being overlooked for high-visibility or high-stakes job assignments, and not being targeted for domestic or international relocation opportunities. Gender differences are also found in developmental assignments after individuals are hired by organizations. Women are more likely to be hired into staff positions and have less access to line experience, which is often a steppingstone to higher-level management positions. Women tend to report that their initial job assignments are less challenging than men's assignments. In addition, unlike jobs that tend to be held by women, jobs held by men tend to exist in job ladders that lead to positions of greater power and influence. Gender also influences access to information within organizations. Men tend to be more politically connected and have access to more powerful organizational members than do women. This is important since managers develop impressions about an individual's career potential through both formal and informal interactions. There is also some evidence that men receive more favorable performance feedback than do women and that the quality of such feedback provided varies by gender (e.g., more specific and developmental feedback tends to be provided to men). All of these factors can influence the availability and quality of career opportunities in an organization.

Career has become an intrinsic factor in global economic developments. However, a decision on the choice of a particular career suit to one's interest is complex and poorly understood (AlMiskry, Bakar, and Mohamed, 2009). People often select a job on the basis of experiences or exposures to the world of work. However, studies have shown that gender plays an important role in career choices. Male and female career choices are normally different because of the difference in their self-concepts (AlMiskry et al. 2009).

## Conclusion

Women's career aspirations have evolved steadily during the twentieth century, resulting in their increased workforce participation rate. This paper concludes by calling on all young women to, while preparing for eternity, take up jobs that would give the opportunity to provide care for children and family. They should also ensure that the choice is based on one's personal values and principles and the quality of increasing one's chances of getting married. Teaching, administration, catering, nursing, clerical duties and other feminine jobs that give married women enough time to care for the family members are recommended by this paper.

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