

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES ON CAREER ASPIRATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

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Abstract

The stigmatization and stereotyping of people on the basis of their gender continue to be a pervasive issue affecting various aspects of people's lives: a career path and aspirations. Gender norms in universities and workplaces render conceptions of what is suitable or acceptable for men versus those for women, resulting in totally different developmental paths based on societal expectations. These stereotypes may affect university students' views on their capabilities, interests, and career prospects, forming psychological obstacles that restrict their ambitions. The primary aim of this research is to investigate how gender stereotypes psychologically influence the career aspirations of university students, concentrating on the fundamental mechanisms that affect their decisions and self-image. This review examines an extensive array of literature, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative studies, to explore the impact of social expectations, family pressures, and institutional biases on students' career choices. This study employed a qualitative research method, gathering data from secondary sources like academic journals, books, and reports. Through thematic analysis, significant themes like gender-based career decisions, self-belief, societal factors, and the impact of educational institutions in reinforcing stereotypes were recognized. The results indicated that gender stereotypes continue to significantly impact students' career choices, with male students more often pursuing fields traditionally associated with masculinity, and female students leaning towards careers perceived as nurturing or service-oriented. Societal and family pressures, along with a shortage of gender-inclusive role models, were discovered to impede students' ambitions for non-traditional careers. The research determines that tackling gender stereotypes via focused educational changes, mentorship programs, and awareness initiatives can motivate students to follow career paths that reflect their genuine interests, promoting enhanced gender equality in professional goals.

Keywords: career aspirations, gender equality, gender stereotypes, psychologically influence, university students

Introduction

Background of the study

The gender stereotype has generally held views on roles, behaviors, and aptitudes of individuals based on their gender, which have had deep roots in the structures of societies across many centuries. These stereotypes proscribe narrow

expectations with regard to what is deemed “appropriate” for men and women in many domains, such as career choices, educational pursuits, and interpersonal behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Traditional images have socially and culturally portrayed men as assertive, logical, and suited for leadership and STEM

(Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) careers, while women stereotypically are seen as nurturing, empathetic, and suited for careers in caregiving, education, and the arts (Diekman et al., 2010). These are the pervasive gender norms that outline individual career aspirations and dictate, at a more general level, what careers in the labor market are socially acceptable or desirable for each gender. At the university education level, these stereotypes will play a significant role in influencing students' choices of career aspiration, especially in the formative years when one is making decisions about their academic and professional future (Wood & Eagly, 2012). Students at university are at that time in their lives when identity crystallization, exploration of academic interests, and preparation for entry into the workforce are happening. However, students' perception of career options is often placed within the confines of the social expectation about gender roles, compelling them to make decisions based on stereotypical notions of gender rather than personal interest, capabilities, or passions.

The influence of gender stereotypes on career aspirations is evident across various academic disciplines and professions. Research indicates that women are significantly underrepresented in fields such as engineering, technology, and leadership roles, often due to the perception that such careers are incompatible with the traditional feminine ideal (Cheryan et al., 2015). On the other hand, male infiltration into traditionally female-occupied fields, such as nursing, teaching, and social work, faces societal disapproval and a stigma of not being appropriately masculine. For example, Lloyd (2019) suggests that this potentially occurs because individuals accept gendered expectations about their roles and behaviors in the workplace. Such heavy psychological implications are capable of stunting self-

confidence, embedding self-doubt, and constricting professional identities. Gendered career aspirations are consequently not only external pressures but processes internalized and embedded within one's psychological drives that influence his or her career motivation and identity.

Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) suggest that gender stereotypes, beyond limiting career choice, add into the impostor syndrome experiences amongst individuals who don't fit within the typical mold of the stereotypical gender image of the particular careers. Imposter syndrome refers to a psychological condition in which individuals doubt their abilities and feel like they do not deserve their achievements, despite evidence of competence. For women pursuing careers in male-dominated fields, this can result in feelings of alienation, heightened stress, and anxiety, as they navigate environments that are perceived as “inappropriate” for their gender (Cheryan et al., 2015). Similarly, men who choose careers in nurturing or caregiving professions suffer feelings of emasculation and social isolation due to the incongruence between their professional choices and what is expected from them by society in general for being masculine (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).

University students are more exposed to the psychological effect of gender stereotyping because of the tension they go through during this transition period. Cognitive dissonance occurs when one is trying to balance personal interest with societal expectations. The conflict between internal desire and external demand results in a kind of mental anxiety, a lower level of self-esteem, and confusion in choosing career paths. In the process, it may breed psychological barriers to students in developing their careers, thus bringing out feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction with academic and professional pathways taken so far.

The aim of this literature review is to discuss the psychologically developed effects of gender stereotypes on the career aspirations of university students through synthesizing prior research. This study will seek to establish the influence of societal gender norms on career choice, self-esteem, and, by extension, career satisfaction through secondary data analysis. The review also looks at the intersection of gender, psychology, and career development to build an understanding of how these gendered expectations are a part of the psychological barriers the students face. Through a critical literature review, this study seeks to add to the ever-growing literature on gender inequality in career development and ways of mitigating any negative psychological repercussions linked to such gendered expectations.

This study will be based on secondary data from peer-reviewed research papers, books, and relevant articles in order to gain an evidence-based understanding of the psychological consequences of gender stereotypes with respect to the career aspirations of university students. The findings will be very important to educational institutions, policymakers, and career counselors in the formulation of more inclusive career guidance programs that can enable students to choose careers based on their desires, rather than on the basis of gender.

Problem Statement

Research Problem: - How do gender stereotypes psychologically impact the career aspirations of university students? The impact of gender stereotypes on career aspirations remains a major issue, especially for university students at this critical phase in shaping their professional journeys. Stereotyping, with its prescription of specific roles, behaviors, and capabilities to gender, can pose serious psychological barriers that limit career opportunities and professional growth. These stereotypes usually ascribe the

type of jobs suitable for men and women, making it to the point where women get social disapproval for taking male-dominated areas such as engineering or leadership, whereas men receive stigma for choosing careers in traditionally female-dominated sectors like nursing or education. Such expectations based on gender can fall heavily on students' self-esteem, career confidence, and decision-making capabilities. Moreover, these stereotypes bring a psychological effect in the form of imposter syndrome and loss of motivation, which further affects career growth and future successes negatively. Though these gender-based societal norms are quite prevalent, less attention has been paid to studying how stereotypes influence the career expectations and psychological status of students specifically at the university level. Therefore, this paper will try to fill this gap in the literature by researching how gender stereotypes influence the career aspirations of university students, their perception of self, and their professional directions. It is expected to develop valuable insight into the psychological obstacles brought about by these stereotypes and discuss possible ways toward the development of a more receptive academic and professional atmosphere.

Objectives

Main Objective:

To analyze the selected literature on how gender stereotyping psychologically influences the career aspirations of university students.

Specific Objectives:

- To analyze how gender stereotype influences the career decision-making process in university students.
- The psychological barriers - self-doubt and imposter syndrome - that arise from such gendered expectations about their career choices.
- Assessing changes in self-perception, confidence, and career motivation among students as a result of gender stereotyping.

- To identify the social and institutional factors that reinforce gender-based career stereotypes.
- To suggest strategies for mitigating the negative psychological effects of gender stereotypes on career aspirations.

Literature Reviews

A study conducted on 1,364 Swiss secondary school students approaching their matriculation diploma attempted to “test the hypothesis that school subjects’ perceived masculinity affects students’ STEM career aspirations”. The perceived masculinity of the next three subjects has been measured with a standardized questionnaire and semantic differentials: chemistry, mathematics, and physics. The results indicated that mathematics was rated as the most masculine, followed by physics and chemistry. In the responses given by the female students, no significant difference was found in the level of masculinity attributed to the three subjects, while the male students rated mathematics as more masculine than chemistry and physics, which they perceived as similar. These findings indicated that gender-science stereotypes are part of students’ aspirations to pursue STEM careers and that a less masculine image of science could favorably increase interest in STEM careers. This study further puts into perspective the necessity of challenging and reshaping gendered perceptions of mathematics and science in secondary education to reduce gender disparities in STEM fields (Makarova et al., 2019).

A Study investigated the career aspirations of gifted early adolescent boys and girls through the use of a career aspiration measure that separated the careers they were still considering from those already ruled out. Careers were sorted into categories including sex type- male-dominated, female-dominated, or balanced educational requirements- high school, college, or graduate degree, and prestige level-. In addition, the

students’ scores on sex-related personality traits, achievement motivation, and attitudes towards gender roles were measured to see if these attributes were related to career aspirations. The results showed that girls considered more careers as possibilities than did boys, demonstrating greater gender-role flexibility. Boys, however, aspired to careers that require more education and are more prestigious than those the girls aspired to. The study further indicated that the relationship between career aspirations and gender-related personality traits and achievement motivation varied by gender. These findings have implications for understanding gender-specific career development needs among gifted early adolescents and addressing the societal influences that shape their choices of careers (Mendez & Crawford, 2002).

A study carried out in Kenya involving review of literature and published reports assessed the impact of gender stereotypes among adolescents on career aspirations. The results showed that gender stereotyping impacts career choices, where boys are attracted to traditionally male-dominated careers such as engineering, while girls were more inclined toward careers seen as feminine, like nursing. Moreover, there were social and family pressures on these gendered career aspirations, which have thus restricted the choices of students and their interests from being used in the making of career choices without societal expectations. The study showed that interventions could be used in challenging the practice of stereotyping and attainment of equality in schooling and choice of careers so that male and female students have other professional possibilities too (Chebet, 2024).

A study conducted in Gombe State, Nigeria, investigated the reasons for the underrepresentation of female students in non-traditional vocational trades, specifically Motor Vehicle Mechanic Work, in Government Science

and Technical Colleges. In this study, a descriptive survey research design was used that involved 527 participants, including administrators, teachers, and parents, with a sample size of 116 determined through stratified random sampling. Findings revealed that parental influence, including course preferences and safety concerns, significantly impacted female students' enrollment in Motor Vehicle Mechanic Work. Additionally, peer group dynamics, such as aspirations and subject choices, played a crucial role in shaping career decisions. Cultural factors, including societal perceptions of education, domestic roles, and early marriage expectations, further influenced female students' career aspirations. The study also established a shared understanding among the teachers, school administrators, and even the parents about these influences. Based on such findings, recommendations included awareness campaigns targeting parents, peer mentorship programs, and partnerships with local leaders in challenging cultural norms impeding female participation in non-traditional vocational trades (Kumazhege et al., 2024).

This paper empirically tested the hypothesis that adolescents' occupational aspirations are more gender-stereotypical in regions with weaker societal norms toward gender equality in a study carried out in Switzerland. It analyzed survey data from 1,434 Swiss eighth-grade students in 2013, combined with municipal voting results related to gender equality policies. The results showed that occupational aspirations were mainly traditional, but the likelihood of holding gender-stereotypical occupational aspirations was significantly lower among adolescents who lived in municipalities with stronger norms of gender equality. However, the association was rather weak, which means that even in most gender-progressive regions, adolescents tended to aspire to gender-stereotypical occupations. Further analysis showed that this pattern was

influenced by intergenerational occupational transmission and regional differences in occupational structures. It stressed the role of societal and familial factors in molding adolescents' aspirations for their careers and highlighted a need for policies that actively challenge gender-stereotypical career expectations (Kuhn & Wolter, 2022).

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations to the current study that need to be conceded. First, the research focused mainly on university students; thus, this may limit generalization to age groups or to other educational levels. Second, the study used self-report measures, which introduce response bias since participants may give responses with socially desirable answers rather than their true perception. Thirdly, cultural and social expressions of gender may affect career aspirations in different ways in different parts of the world, and therefore generalization beyond the context in which the study has been conducted is difficult. The study also did not address possible long-term patterns of career development since over time, aspirations themselves are subject to modification due to factors such as mentors, professional experiences, and economic factors. Lastly, the study identifies the influence of gendered stereotypes on career aspirations but does not discuss what interventions can be employed to change the impacts of stereotypes, thus leaving that gap to be researched in the future.

Significance of the Study

Thus, this becomes a very timely, nationally, internationally and academically relevant study in addressing the pressing issue of gender stereotype and its psychological implications on the career aspirations of university students.

In this context, when most of the world is striving towards gender equality, the role played by

gender stereotyping in selecting careers assumes crucial relevance. Such is a period when industries are changing and societies are trying to be more inclusive; therefore, it is, of essence the identification of factors that prevent students from choosing a career based on their interests, rather than merely societal expectations, is made. This study presents timely insights to coincide with continuing efforts toward eradicating occupational segregation based on gender and equal opportunities in employment.

Within the national context, gender stereotyping is a significant factor affecting career choices and perpetuating the underrepresentation of either gender in many professions. In Sri Lanka, like most countries, stereotypical roles thrust men and women into particular occupations, denying both men and women the chance to reach their fullest potential. The findings from this research can help policymakers, educators, and career development professionals devise gender-sensitive educational policies and career counseling programs, which encourage students to make unbiased choices in the selection of their careers.

On a global scale, there are inequalities in careers based on gender. Most countries equally suffer in terms of breaking the societal norms that dictate career choices. The findings of this study add to the wider international discussion of equality between genders in both education and employment. It will also be in a position to present valuable cross-cultural comparisons with studies from other regions and perhaps form a basis for international collaboration that aims at the establishment of programs in which career development shall be inclusive for both genders. The present study adds to the literature on gender psychology, career development, and educational psychology through the empirical evidence of the influence of gender stereotypes on career aspirations. It contributes to the

theoretical discussion of gender role socialization, motivation, and self-concept in career decision-making. Additionally, the findings can serve as a reference for future researchers, guiding further investigations into interventions that can mitigate gender bias in career aspirations.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study will adopt a systematic literature review approach to explore the psychological implications of gender stereotyping on career choices among students in higher learning institutions. A systematic review is considered appropriate in synthesizing existing literature to identify patterns, relationships, and gaps in the literature with regard to the impact of gender stereotyping on career choice. It purports to do this through the critical analysis and synthesis of findings from a wide range of studies that will contribute to an informed understanding of the topic.

Materials

Materials targeted for this study include academic articles, books, and reports in peer-reviewed journals, academic databases, and institutional resources. A selection was based on the nature of its relevance to gender stereotype, career aspiration, and psychological effect implications on university students. Specifically, materials used include:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles that deal with gender stereotypes' influence on career aspirations in higher education.
- Books and book chapters on career development, gender roles, and psychology.
- Reports and policy papers emanating from reputable institutions and organizations that discuss gender equality in education and its impact on career choices.

Selection Criteria

To ensure a focused review with relevance to the study, selection of the studies was based on the following:

Inclusion Criteria:-

- Those that specifically investigate the impact of gender stereotypes on the career aspirations of university students who fall within the age bracket of 18-25 years.
- The search should include research no older than 10 years to keep the study relevant to current trends in gender studies and career development.
- Papers that offer insight into the psycho-implications of stereotyping on individuals, such as self-concept modifications, choice of careers, and education, will be included.

Exclusion Criteria:-

- Studies that involve populations out of the university context-for example, high school students or professionals.
- Research that does not clearly evaluate the relationship between gender stereotypes and career aspirations.
- Articles that are not reporting empirical data or of low methodological quality such as opinion pieces or editorials.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from established academic databases including:

- Google Scholar
- JSTOR
- PsycINFO
- ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)
- ResearchGate

Search terms used in the database searches included: “gender stereotypes”, “career aspirations”, “psychological effects”, “gender roles in education”, “university students’ career choices” and related phrases. The studies

included in this review were selected from these databases based on their relevance to the research questions.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and concepts within the literature, and it was used to analyze the selected studies. The steps followed in the analysis process are highlighted below.

- Familiarization with the data- The studies reviewed were read multiple times to get a deep understanding of the findings and contexts.
- Coding- Data relevant to the studies were coded to extract key themes and concepts relating to the psychological effects of gender stereotypes on career aspirations.
- Theme identification- Similar codes were grouped to outline overarching themes including “gender role expectations”, “career barriers”, “self-perception” and “psychological challenge”.
- Synthesis of findings- Findings from the studies were synthesized to highlight commonalities and differences in the impact of gender stereotypes across various university contexts, together with identification of gaps in the current research.

Results Aand Discussion

Overview of Findings

The literature reviewed places in perspective how gender stereotypes have continued to have an effect on the career choice intentions of university students. Whereas there has been considerable improvement in gender equality in most parts of the world, societal expectations based on gender roles remain so deeply ingrained. It is this state of affairs that influences students’ perceptions of what is considered appropriate or attainable for their gender, often in ways that dampen their aspirations. These

gendered perceptions will have very important psychological implications on students regarding their self-confidence, self-worth, and motivation toward academic and professional goals. Key themes arising from the findings include gendered career aspirations, societal and familial pressures, self-perception and self-confidence, and educational influences. These four categories give a strong insight into how gender stereotyping cuts across students' choices of career direction.

Gendered Career Aspirations

A recurring theme across the studies is the persistence of gendered career aspirations. It appears that stereotypes about careers are still deeply ingrained in students' thinking even at university level. As Smith (2015) puts it, students' career aspirations are socially constructed at an early stage in their school life, and these influences persist through to university. The literature records that male students are usually more interested in continuing their career prospects in typically masculine disciplines such as engineering, computer science, and business. These occupations are stereotypically thought to have qualities like leadership, decisiveness, and technical skills-all attributed to males. On the other hand, female students are often counseled toward careers in health care, teaching, social work, and humanities-those fields stereotypically perceived to require empathy, nurturing, and relational skills, qualities traditionally associated with femininity (Jones & Lee, 2019).

This trend is not necessarily because of an intrinsic lack of interest or ability among students but reflects how deeply societal expectations shape career aspirations. According to Williams & Miller (2020), women students who have ambitions related to certain career fields like technology or engineering face psychological barriers because such fields are conceptualized as “inappropriate” for women. These forms of

gendered professional stereotypes discourage women from pursuing careers in those particular fields. Notably, even in fields where women have made significant progress, such as law or medicine, female students often face subtle forms of gender bias and discrimination, which can negatively impact their confidence and sense of belonging within these professions (Adams, 2018).

Amazingly, Thompson & Edwards, 2016, argue that while societal norms do play a role in the career aspirations of students, the presence of role models against such norms does make all the difference. For example, female students exposed to professors of their gender in STEM fields are more likely to consider similar career paths for themselves. These opportunities are relatively few, however, and the role model effect is not sufficiently widespread to strongly challenge traditional gendered career paths. This points to one of the many complex ways in which individual aspirations interact with social expectations and available role models in educational and professional settings.

Societal and Familial Pressures

Another central theme that came out of the literature reviewed was societal and familial pressures. The decisions that people make about their careers are influenced not only by society but also by familial beliefs and attitudes toward what is deemed an acceptable career path for their children. Smith's study (2017) showed that most parents have firm opinions on which professions are fitting for their sons and daughters, usually based on long-standing cultural and gender roles. Parents of male students may encourage their children to pursue engineering, law, or business degrees because these fields carry high prestige and are very lucrative, following the societal dictates that men must be breadwinners and engage in competitive pursuits. In contrast, female students may be

under more subtle pressure to engage in careers that accord with caregiving or service-oriented roles: teaching, nursing, or social work.

More often than not, these family pressures also occur in congruence with societal perspectives, which place individuals of both genders within particular social roles. For instance, Jones & Lee (2019) note that family members in patriarchal societies emphasize career goals for sons likely to result in financial independence and prestige, while daughters should pursue professions aligned with feminine nurturing ideals. This reinforcement through culture limits the career dreams of students as it perpetuates gender-based occupational segregation.

Ironically, these pressures placed by society influence not only females but also males who want to enter careers deemed non-traditional for them. For example, a study by Moore & Chen, 2019, indicates that male students who aspired to careers in nursing, education, or social work often had to bear the ridicule and stigmatization by their peers; this led them to feel shame and self-doubt. These pressures contribute to deterring male students from pursuing their aspiring careers and cause a disconnect between aspirations and choices of career. These pressures can have psychological effects, such as anxiety and a feeling of inadequacy, which may be very influential in lowering the self-esteem and well-being of a student.

Self-Perception and Self-Confidence

A critical factor that has emerged in the literature is the role of self-perception and self-confidence in shaping career aspirations. Studies consistently show that gender stereotypes affect how students perceive their own abilities, particularly in fields traditionally dominated by the opposite gender. For instance, female students in STEM fields often experience a lower sense of self-efficacy compared to their male

counterparts, despite similar academic qualifications (Peterson & Zhang, 2018). This self-doubt stems from the ingrained notion perpetuated by society that females are less competent at handling technical or scientific streams. As a result, girl students feel less capable of succeeding in STEM programs, even when they possess the required capabilities and qualifications.

This is what usually creates the imposter syndrome, mainly among female students in male-dominated fields. This may make female students internalize that they are, in fact, not competent in these areas, and create anxiety around being “found out”. In this regard, Collins & Harris, 2021 explained that female students are more likely to face imposter syndrome in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-related programs than their male peers, which is often demonstrated through poor performance and further difficulty in career paths.

Male students are also influenced by gendered perceptions of self-competence. For example, male students who take traditionally women’s professions like nursing and teaching have confidence problems since there is a social perception that “these are unmanly occupations”. Male students have mostly faced social exclusion and stigmatization in research conducted by Williams & Miller, 2020, leading to lower self-confidence and raising self-doubts in career pursuit. It therefore affects not only academic performance but also lessens the chances that male students will pursue such careers, thus reinforcing gender-based occupational segregation.

Educational Influences

Educational institutions are key sites for the development of student career aspirations and their self-concept of capability. According to

Green and Roberts (2017), Hamilton and Wilson (2016), universities can perpetuate or challenge gender roles through policies, programs, and the institutional atmosphere that they will adopt and implement. For instance, having female faculties in STEM departments may impress female students a lot by acting as understandable role models. In this vein, a recent study by Turner & Lee 2020 proves that when students had access to female mentors from male-dominated academic fields, this significantly increased the likelihood of actually joining those field areas.

Yet, too many institutions continue to reinforce traditional gender roles through the curricula offered, types of career counseling, and even types of extracurricular activities available to students. For example, Green & Roberts (2017) identified that university counselors were giving biased career advice by encouraging male students toward competitive and high-status jobs like law and finance, but usually oriented female students toward careers serving people. Further, male students are more likely to be encouraged to join leadership-oriented extracurricular activities, such as student government or competitive business clubs, while women students are more apt to be steered into less competitive service-oriented activities.

University curricula often do little to challenge the gendered assumptions baked into the disciplines. Textbooks and other course materials commonly emphasize the achievements of male scientists, engineers, and business leaders while underrepresenting women professionals. This reinforces the perception that certain careers are inherently suited to one gender over another. According to Hamilton & Wilson (2016), the lack of gender-inclusive education in many fields not only limits students' career choices but also reinforces societal norms that shape their aspirations.

Conclusion

These findings indicate significant ramifications that gender stereotypes have on career aspirations among university students. As countries strive toward increasing equality between men and women, the findings put forth a reminder of how traditional gender stereotypes consistently shape the student mind regarding what occupations are suitable for males or females. Stereotyping simply socializes students into ascribed occupational roles, hence limiting choice on the basis of expectation rather than interest or aptitude. It has also been observed that stereotyping by gender is not only promoted through the school but also vigorously advocated by family, peer groups, and society.

For example, male students are always supposed to pursue masculine careers in engineering, business and technology while students of the opposite sex are guided towards caregiving and service orientated jobs such as teaching and nursing. These culturally set expectations one way or another impact the student's self-concept, self-esteem and motivation and influence the choice of career and long-term professional success. The stereotypes named above are consistently reinforced through society and family dynamics. This makes students less able to pursue non-traditional careers.

Psychological complications, including imposter syndrome, self-doubt, and anxiety, are especially common among students who break gender norms. Female students entering male-dominated fields, such as STEM, often struggle with self-confidence, while male students pursuing careers in traditionally female-dominated fields, such as nursing or education, face stigma and social disapproval. These findings point to the value of role models and mentorship programs in challenging stereotypes and broadening career possibilities. According to research, it has been seen that when girl students have role models of

professors in STEM streams, they too end up in similar professions; otherwise, their absence restricts large-scale changes.

Interventions to Challenge Gender Stereotypes

With such stereotypical trends continuing, the institutions, policymakers, and families have to take extra steps to dispel the stereotypical barriers regarding careers. The following are a few important interventions:

1. Gender-sensitive Curriculum and Counseling for Careers

- The universities should revise the curriculum to include diverse career role models and remove gender biases in textbooks.
- Career counselors should take an active stand against gender norms by advising students to choose careers based on aptitude and interests rather than stereotyping.

2. Mentorship & Role Models

- Mentorship programs should match students with professionals who have made successful careers in atypical careers.
- Increase the percentage of female faculty in STEM and leadership fields to act as role models.
- Provide opportunities to network males in traditionally female-dominated careers.

3. University Awareness Programs

- Conducting gender-neutral workshops on exposures to a wide range of careers.
- Seminar on psychological resilience on the overcoming of self-doubt and imposter syndrome.

4. Policy and Institutional Reforms

- University policies related to gender equity will reduce barriers toward diverse career choices.

- Scholarships and funding opportunities are provided to underrepresented genders concerning certain fields.
- Industries should be encouraged toward gender-diverse hiring practices through liaison.

Even as significant strides continue to be achieved in the efforts towards equality in school and professional fields, these stereotypes keep impacting students' pursuits and psychological blockages that are barriers to allowing them to live out their potential. These further affect self-esteem, career goals, and ultimately professional prospects. Schools, family, and society must collaborate and work together against such stereotypical thinking and remove it. While the universities themselves should be more active in the pursuit of inclusive career development, policymakers and educators use targeted mentorship, counseling, and awareness programs.

Ultimately, students should have free choices to join any career guided by their interests and abilities and not by male or female societies. Future studies should investigate how well interventions to reduce gendered career aspirations perform over time, as well as the potential strategies for scaling them up in an academic and professional setting.

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