

A Review on Gender Stereotypes and Career Preferences Among Students

Dr. Kavita Dahiya¹ & Komal²

¹ Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, SRM University, Delhi-NCR, Sonapat Haryana, India
kavita.s@srmuniversity.ac.in

² Research Scholar, Faculty of Management, SRM University, Delhi-NCR, Sonapat Haryana, India.
komalsinghh987@gmail.com

Corresponding author: komalsinghh987@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Higher education students' career preferences are significantly shaped by gender stereotypes. This review of the literature investigates how students' job choices are impacted by gender stereotypes. The review looks at the presence of gender stereotypes, how they affect job ambitions, and what factors lead to gendered career patterns. It does this by synthesizing the body of existing research and empirical studies. The review's conclusions show how gender stereotypes are pervasive in both society and educational systems, having an impact on how students evaluate their skills, interests, and job prospects. These misconceptions frequently restrict students' options for careers, which lowers their potential and keeps gender disparities in the workforce alive. The review also emphasizes how gender stereotypes impact students' self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to pursue careers, deterring male students from pursuing traditionally female-dominated professions and female students from pursuing traditionally male-dominated ones. It also covers how early career trajectories for students are shaped by media depictions, parental expectations, and school environments that perpetuate these stereotypes. The research highlights the need for focused interventions, such as projects that question established gender norms, gender-neutral job guidance, and updated educational standards. Through the promotion of an inclusive approach to career guidance and support, educational establishments can lessen the negative effects of stereotypes and provide a wider array of employment options for all students. In the end, dispelling these myths is essential to attaining gender parity in professional prospects and fostering a varied and competent labor force.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, Career Preferences, Higher Education, Students, Delhi-NCR

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, an increasing number of students have expressed an interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Male students exceed female students in a variety of STEM fields, including chemistry, biology, medicine, and physics. Many gender variations in subject and profession preference are due to social preconceptions rather than differences in aptitude between men and women. Girls and boys go through different socialisation processes, as shown by gender stereotypes in their contexts. Children may even be exposed to gender stereotyping endorsements through television programmes. The negative impact of the stereotype that females outperform males in STEM on girls' motivation and performance in STEM is supported by stereotype threat research (1).

However, there is no evidence that the stereotype that males outperform females in STEM has a favourable impact on boys' STEM performance.

Gender stereotypes, deeply entrenched societal beliefs about the attributes and roles associated with a particular gender, have long exerted a pervasive influence on individual perceptions and societal norms. This effect also extends to the area of career decisions, where gender stereotypes have greatly influenced the goals and career paths of both men and women (2). The impact of gender stereotypes on job preferences is still a relevant topic, especially in the context of higher education, even though there has been tremendous progress made towards gender equality in education and work. Despite advancements in gender equality, gender stereotypes continue to permeate higher education

settings. These stereotypes stem from a complex interplay of factors, including societal expectations, parental influence, peer pressure, and media portrayals. Internalized by students, these stereotypes lead to self-limiting beliefs about their capabilities and interests in pursuit of certain career paths and have less stress which enhances the wellbeing of the students (3). Furthermore, the educational environment itself may inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes through the selection of course offerings, teaching methods, and career counseling practices.

The pervasive influence of gender stereotypes on career preferences has a profound impact on individual choices and societal outcomes. Extensive research consistently demonstrates that gender stereotypes steer young men and women towards traditional gender-segregated fields (4). Women are more likely than men to seek careers in traditionally feminine fields like teaching, nursing, and social work, while men are more likely to gravitate towards traditionally masculine fields such as engineering, computer science, and business. These gender patterns in career preferences have far-reaching consequences, perpetuating gender disparities in income, occupational prestige, and overall career advancement opportunities. The limitations imposed by gender stereotypes restrict individuals from exploring their full potential and hinder their ability to contribute to a diverse and inclusive workforce. Addressing the issue of gender stereotypes in career preferences among higher education students is crucial for fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. Dismantling these prejudices and supporting multiple professional options enable young people, regardless of gender, to make educated choices that match with their talents, interests, and aspirations.

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in addressing gender stereotypes by promoting gender-neutral career guidance, encouraging exploration of diverse fields, and challenging gender-biased assumptions among faculty and staff. Societal awareness campaigns help dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote inclusive language regarding career options. Targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs and specialized workshops, provide tailored support for students seeking to navigate the complexities of gender stereotypes and career planning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender stereotypes, deeply ingrained societal beliefs about the characteristics and behaviors of men and women, continue to exert a pervasive influence on individuals' lives, particularly in the realms of education and career choices. This literature review delves into the far-reaching consequences of gender stereotypes, examining the impact on early childhood development, academic achievement, career aspirations, and societal perceptions.

Early Childhood Influences: Shaping Gender Identities

The pervasive nature of gender stereotypes is evident from early childhood, influencing children's perceptions and behaviors, and shaping their future career aspirations. (5) used a social constructivist approach to gender development to examine the reciprocal relationships between gender identity, gender-typed conduct, and gender ideas and attitudes during childhood and adolescent years. The two pathways model, balanced identity theory, and gender self-socialization model are all guiding theories. Toy and play preferences are highlighted as examples of gender-specific behavior. (6) highlight the persistence of gender stereotypes in STEM fields, where even early-career researchers face gendered outcomes. Similarly, (7) demonstrates that exposure to gender stereotypes in children's television negatively impacts girls' math performance and self-perceptions in math-related domains. These findings align with (8) study, which suggests that gender-stereotyped practices in early preschool environments reinforce gender stereotypes and influence children's gender-based play preferences and career aspirations. (9) further corroborate this, revealing that exposure to gender stereotypes negatively influences girls' self-concept in math and science, leading to lower academic achievement in these subjects.

Further evidence of the influence of gender stereotypes on profession choices (10,11). The findings of the Bossman study show that gender stereotypes play a substantial influence in moulding students' career aspirations, but the findings of the Wilbourn and Kee study show that children have strong stereotypes about which occupations are appropriate for each gender. These early-formed stereotypes lay the foundation for future career preferences and reinforce gender disparities in the workplace. (12) emphasize the complex interplay

between gender stereotypes and career choices, highlighting that traditional gender stereotypes continue to limit individuals' options and perpetuate gender imbalances in various occupations. (13) study further underscores the deep-rooted nature of gender stereotypes, demonstrating that children hold strong beliefs about gender norms and the consequences of violating them. This indicates that gender stereotypes have an early impact on children's self-perception and behaviour. (14) provide further evidence of the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes, revealing that children's television often reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, potentially influencing children's perceptions and behaviors. These findings collectively highlight the pervasive and enduring influence of gender stereotypes, shaping individuals' perceptions, behaviors, and career choices from early childhood onwards.

Academic Achievement: Navigating Gender Expectations

Gender stereotypes continue to exert a profound influence on academic achievement and career aspirations, shaping individuals' perceptions, self-efficacy, and ultimately, their educational and professional outcomes. (15) found upward transfer women report more stigma associated with transfers and difficulties obtaining resources at the destination university than do men. Qualitative research reveals more subtleties in the resilience described by upward transfer students—particularly women—as they negotiate the university campus, face obstacles to navigating it, and interpret different forms of transfer stigma on campus. (16) and (17) delve into the specific effects of gender stereotypes, revealing their negative impact on girls' self-confidence, motivation, and perceived abilities, particularly in STEM fields. (18) underscore the role of teachers and societal expectations in perpetuating gender stereotypes, suggesting that these stereotypes influence teachers' interactions with students and impact students' academic engagement and achievement. (19) additionally emphasize the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes, demonstrating their negative impact on girls' self-concept and science career choice intentions. However, as (20) suggest, social support and positive self-perceptions counter the negative effects of gender stereotypes, encouraging girls to pursue science careers despite societal expectations and biases. Addressing gender stereotypes requires a multi-faceted approach that

includes interventions to combat stereotype threats, efforts to promote gender equality in education and the workplace, and initiatives to challenge gender stereotypes in media and popular culture. By dismantling gender stereotypes, a more equitable and just society where individuals can thrive regardless of their gender was created.

Teacher Impact: Nurturing Equitable Learning Environments

Teachers have a significant impact on students' learning experiences and academic performance. However, research has shown that teachers' gender biases and stereotypes contribute to gender disparities in education. (21) discovered that the direct effects of important socioeconomic and individual variables on educational output varied from the indirect effects of ambitions. The students' academic performance had no direct or indirect relationship with their household's economic position. Teachers' gender stereotypes have a negative impact on students' academic performance and career choices (22,23). These studies underscore the need for teacher training and interventions to address unconscious biases and promote equitable learning environments. (24) further explore the complex interplay between teacher gender, student gender, and academic achievement. Their findings suggest that teacher-student gender pairings influence student performance, with male teachers potentially more effective for boys and female teachers for girls. This emphasizes the importance of considering teacher-student dynamics in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments.

(25) delve into the intersection of gender stereotypes, socio-economic factors, and student achievement. Their studies demonstrate that gender stereotypes interact with socio-economic background to shape individuals' academic preferences and outcomes. This highlights the need for educational interventions that address gender disparities while considering the influence of socio-economic factors. (26) study provides a unique perspective on gender stereotypes and discrimination in education. Using a natural experiment, Lavy found that male students faced discrimination from teachers, contrary to expectations. This underscores the importance of examining gender biases from multiple angles and considering the potential for both girls and boys to be disadvantaged by gender stereotypes. (27) study on social evaluation concerns and gender-typing

further highlights the influence of social pressures in reinforcing gender stereotypes. Their findings suggest that boys are more susceptible to conforming to gender stereotypes when concerned about social evaluation. This emphasizes the need to address gender stereotypes not only in educational settings but also in broader social contexts.

Evolving Perceptions: Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Traditional gender stereotypes about women's capabilities and roles in society are gradually shifting, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future. (28) discovered a negative bias among male respondents towards the beneficial traits that females can bring to the boardroom. This bias may influence future decisions to choose female directors. (29) study suggests that societal perceptions of women in leadership are evolving, with a growing recognition of their potential to excel in traditionally male-dominated domains. However, as (30) demonstrate, gender stereotypes emerge as early as childhood, influencing children's interests and academic pursuits. This is particularly evident in STEM fields, where girls often report lower self-perceptions of ability than boys, perpetuating gender disparities in these fields.

Gender stereotypes have an underlying yet ubiquitous effect on hiring decisions (31). Their findings suggest that evaluators' own gender and gender stereotypes influence their evaluations of job applicants, potentially disadvantaging women in the job market. These findings underscore the need for interventions to address unconscious bias and promote gender equality in the workplace. Despite these challenges, there is evidence of positive change. Efforts to combat gender stereotypes from a young age and advance gender parity in the classroom and the workplace contribute to a more just future for everyone.

Gender Stereotypes in Education

Gender stereotypes permeate various aspects of education, influencing students' academic pursuits, career aspirations, and overall development. Gender conscious relational pedagogy is found to be highly effective in re-engaging boys in education by enhancing their participation, confidence, emotional support, behavioral management, critical thinking, and reflexivity. This effect extends beyond formal and informal education (32). (33) further corroborate the prevalence of gender stereotypes in

higher education, with men and women expressing different preferences for various academic disciplines.

(34) discovered that in-service teachers in India had negative opinions towards gender discrimination, indicating that instructors also contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. This suggests that teachers may inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes in their classrooms, potentially hindering students' learning, and development. To address these challenges, (35) advocate for targeted educational interventions to combat gender stereotypes and promote positive gender attitudes. Although additional research is required to identify the most effective methods, their results show that such interventions improve women's professional achievement. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes extends beyond the classroom, as (36) found that young children consistently categorize toys based on gender stereotypes, even when the toys are not explicitly gendered. This suggests that gender stereotypes are ingrained early in life and influence children's play behavior and self-perceptions.

Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace

Gender stereotypes continue to have a substantial impact on professional experiences and outcomes of individuals. According to (37), female librarians believe that librarianship necessitates ongoing learning, in contrast to their male counterparts. Additionally, male staff members prefer to maintain these processes in self-directed and heutagogical approaches, and they are more open to receiving in-service training in the areas of actuality and personal development than female staff members, who are more willing to receive training on professional and technological innovations. (38) study suggests that gender stereotypes may be exacerbated by social inequalities, with girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being particularly disadvantaged.

(39) exploration of stereotype threat highlights the potential for these stereotypes to directly impact individuals' performance. Their findings suggest that women may underperform in math and science fields when their gender is salient, demonstrating the negative consequences of stereotype threat. This is consistent with the findings of which discovered that when boys fear negative judgement, they are more likely to conform to gender norms. This suggests that the pressure to conform to societal expectations

leads to individuals suppressing their authentic selves, potentially hindering their career aspirations. (40) study underscores the strong connection between gender stereotypes and occupational segregation. Their findings show a strong link between popular conceptions of gender-appropriate occupations and the actual gender distribution in various fields. This suggests that gender stereotypes perpetuate traditional gender roles in the workplace, limiting individuals' opportunities based on their gender.

Gender Stereotypes in Society

Gender stereotypes are widespread and have a substantial impact on people's lives. A study discovered that, in comparison to masculine, feminine, and undifferentiated GRO individuals, androgynous people—men and women alike—display the most positive opinions regarding entrepreneurship and, hence, a higher EI. The importance of gender stereotypes in contributing to gender discrepancies in leadership roles is highlighted by (41). (42) suggest that gender stereotypes influence career decisions, with certain professions being perceived as more feminine or lower status. (43) found that sexual prejudice and gender stereotypes contribute to the negative perceptions of gay leaders. (44) suggest that gender stereotypes are reinforced through various aspects of schooling, influencing students' perceptions and aspirations. (45) found that women may underestimate their abilities in traditionally masculine occupations due to the influence of gender stereotypes.

Career Aspirations: Constrained by Gender Norms

Gender stereotypes continue to exert a profound influence on career aspirations, shaping individuals' choices and limiting their opportunities. (46) highlight the importance of supportive educational environments in fostering women's career aspirations, as they found that perceived faculty support positively impacts career choice confidence, particularly for female students. However, (47) suggests that parental expectations perpetuate gender stereotypes, with parents often holding different expectations for their daughters' and sons' careers. This contributes to career indecisiveness among female students, as they may struggle to reconcile their own aspirations with parental expectations.

Gender stereotypes are pervasive in various domains, including education, the workplace, and society at large, as (48) found in their study. (49) found that gender inequality and job precarity significantly impacted the career choices of Chinese journalism students, lending credence to its pervasiveness. Their findings reveal that gender stereotypes and the perceived lack of opportunities in the journalism industry contribute to a shortage of women pursuing journalism careers. Likewise, (50) investigated the views on careers, self-efficacy, and VUCA abilities of female students from Generation Z majoring in hospitality and tourism. Their findings reveal that gender stereotypes influence career choices, with women gravitating towards traditionally feminine fields.

Gender stereotypes remain even in historically female-dominated industries, discovered in their research of male and female nursing students' perspectives on gender and nursing as a career in Turkey. Both male and female students associated nursing with traditional feminine traits, suggesting that gender stereotypes continue to influence career preferences even in fields where women are well-represented. This aligns with (51) study on whether interest assessments perpetuate gender differences in occupational choices. Their findings suggest that interest assessments may reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, potentially influencing individuals' career decisions.

(52) examined the effects of traditional gender stereotypes on the career decision-making abilities and adaptability of college-aged women. The results showed that being exposed to gender stereotypes had a detrimental effect on women's self-efficacy. However, this effect is moderated by individual factors such as self-esteem and resilience. (53) suggest that participation in science activities and positive role models foster STEM identification and encourage girls to pursue STEM careers, despite the presence of gender stereotypes.

Boys and girls are deterred from pursuing nursing careers by gender stereotypes, such as the perception that nursing is a feminine and low-status profession, according to a study by (54) on the influence of perceptions and stereotypes of the nursing role on career choice among secondary students in Australia. In the same way, (55) examined early childhood reasoning and evaluations

regarding exclusion from counter-stereotypical STEM career paths. Their findings suggest that children may hold a gender stereotype that leads to exclusionary behaviors towards those who pursue non-traditional career paths.

Gender stereotypes continue to influence career decisions, with women being underrepresented in engineering fields, as (56) found in their study on the career choices of undergraduate engineering students. (57) examined the 'choices' and 'constraints' faced by female students in the complex interplay of gender, topic choice, and higher education in India. Her findings reveal that gender stereotypes and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping women's educational trajectories, limiting their options and perpetuating gender disparities in various academic disciplines. In Western countries, (58) investigated gender disparities in the education of the second generation. They found that gender stereotypes continue to shape educational experiences and outcomes, with boys favoring traditionally masculine fields like STEM, while girls gravitate towards traditionally feminine fields like humanities and social sciences.

(59) investigated the selection of gender-specific activities by preschool-aged children in various social settings. Their findings suggest that social expectations and gender stereotypes influence children's toy and activity preferences, with boys gravitating towards activities and objects that are stereotypically masculine and girls towards those that are stereotypically feminine. The effect of gender stereotypes on explicit and implicit career preferences (60). The results of their research indicate that career decisions are impacted by explicit and implicit gender stereotypes. Both men and women exhibit a preference for professions that conform to conventional gender norms.

(61) investigated gender stereotype domain accessibility in the context of infant development and gender differences. Their findings suggest that children's access to gender stereotype domains varies by age and gender, potentially influencing their understanding of gender roles and occupational choices. (62) investigated the significance of gender self-schema, which refers to an individual's structured understanding of their own gender, in elucidating the variances in managerial career satisfaction preferences between both genders. Their findings suggest that women with more

traditional gender self-schemas tend to prefer managerial roles that align with stereotypical feminine traits, such as work-life balance and people-oriented work. (63) examine the impact of college on sex-atypical career choices of men and women. Their findings suggest that college attendance increase women's interest in pursuing careers in traditionally male-dominated fields, but that gender stereotypes and societal expectations continue to hinder women's progress in these fields.

Gender stereotypes continue to have an impact on professional preferences, affecting people's choices and limiting their chances. Despite tremendous progress in gender equality, women continue to be underrepresented in certain industries, notably those traditionally thought to be male. This underrepresentation is caused by a complex interplay of factors such as societal expectations, parental influence, educational experiences, and gender stereotype exposure. This review paper gives a thorough assessment of existing studies on gender stereotypes and student job preferences. The findings emphasize the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and their negative impact on people's job aspirations, particularly for women. The report also outlines promising treatments for reducing the effects of gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in profession choices. Further research into the complexity of gender stereotypes and their influence on employment decisions is warranted. This entails conducting research on the influence of gender stereotypes in various cultural settings, analyzing their effects on professional domains, and exploring the interplay between gender stereotypes and other determinants of career selection, including self-efficacy, interests, and social support.

Key Findings

- Gender stereotypes continue to shape career choices, with women gravitating towards traditionally feminine fields and men gravitating towards traditionally masculine fields.
- Parents, teachers, and peers can all play a role in perpetuating gender stereotypes.
- Exposure to gender stereotypes in the media can also influence career choices.
- Interventions that can help to mitigate the effects of gender stereotypes include:
 - ✓ Providing students with role models in traditionally non-conforming fields.

- ✓ Challenging gender stereotypes in the media.
- ✓ Providing students with opportunities to explore their interests and skills in traditionally non-conforming fields.
- ✓ Encouraging parents and teachers to have open and supportive conversations about gender and career choices.

This review paper provides valuable insights into the ongoing challenges and promising solutions in addressing gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in career choices among students. The findings can inform policy makers, educators, and parents in developing effective strategies to challenge gender stereotypes and empower students to pursue their career aspirations regardless of gender.

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