

Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Career Choices Among Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of gender stereotypes on the career choices of Senior High School students, focusing on how societal expectations shape their decision-making, self-perception, and confidence. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with students in one private school, the research reveals that many students internalize traditional gender norms, leading them to abandon their genuine career interests due to fear of judgment or failure. Parents often reinforce these stereotypes by pressuring their children to choose careers deemed appropriate for their gender, such as discouraging girls from pursuing roles like soldiers or engineers. As a result, students tend to settle for more socially accepted paths rather than those aligned with their true passions and abilities. The study highlights the need to dismantle these limiting beliefs to allow students the freedom to explore diverse career opportunities. Recommendations include encouraging students to reflect on their own skills and interests, guiding parents to support rather than direct career choices, implementing inclusive career programs in schools, and involving the community in promoting awareness and equality. By addressing these issues, the study aims to foster a more gender-inclusive environment where students are empowered to pursue careers based on personal aspiration rather than societal norms. It also serves as a foundation for future research on the long-term impact of gender stereotypes and the development of more equitable career guidance strategies.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, career choices, Senior High School students, societal expectations, self-perception, parental reinforcement.

I. Introduction

Choosing a career is one of the most critical decisions that Senior High School (SHS) students must face as they prepare for higher education and future employment. However, gender stereotypes often play a significant role in shaping these decisions, restricting students from freely choosing careers aligned with their interests and abilities. Societal norms that dictate what is deemed "appropriate" for each gender often lead students to feel pressured into pursuing traditional career paths rather than those that genuinely match their passions. According to Garcia and Martinez (2020), many students compromise their career choices due to societal expectations, which can lead to lack of motivation, mental health struggles, and limited professional growth. These stereotypes are deeply ingrained and continue to shape the way careers are perceived and pursued by young individuals. Atalay and Doan (2020) highlighted the strong connection between societal gender norms and career decision-making. In many cases, parents and other authority figures further reinforce these gendered expectations, limiting students' freedom to explore diverse career options.

Research has consistently shown that cultural expectations heavily influence career aspirations. In the Philippine context, Manalo (2018) argued that the prevailing patriarchal gender ideology reinforces the sexual division of labor and family roles, thereby restricting women's participation in male-dominated professions. This divide is observable in educational settings, particularly in the Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) curriculum, where Santos and Cruz (2019) found that male students often pursue construction and mechanical courses, while female students are more likely to choose caregiving and beauty-related tracks. Flores and Romero (2021) found similar patterns among senior high school students, suggesting that these preferences are not based purely on personal interest, but are shaped by longstanding societal roles. Likewise, Martinez et al. (2017) emphasized that cultural prejudice continues to guide students into distinct professional sectors. This phenomenon extends beyond the Philippines; Pickles (2021) noted that in many parts of the world, including South Asia and Latin America, women remain underrepresented in technical fields and overrepresented in service-oriented roles. Rocha and Van Praag (2020) asserted that gender plays a central role in how young people form career preferences, often limiting them based on what society deems acceptable.

The influence of gender stereotypes does not only affect choice but also significantly impacts students' self-perception and confidence. Mallari and Navarro (2020) found that although students with high self-efficacy are more likely to choose careers based on interest, gender expectations often discourage female students from pursuing careers in male-dominated fields. Dairo et al. (2022) further supported this by showing how self-perceived competence plays a vital role in forming aspirations, yet female students often doubt their abilities due to societal pressures. Teachers also play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging these biases. Garcia and Turner (2018) discovered that implicit teacher prejudices significantly impact students' academic engagement and career goals. Balagtas et al. (2020) added that teachers who support gender-neutral career exploration help break traditional norms, while Manzanares et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of impartial teacher-student relationships in fostering autonomy. Internationally, Diez et al. (2023) revealed that boys tend to hold stronger stereotypical beliefs than girls, especially in fields like engineering, and that such beliefs become more pronounced over time. Hentschel and Heilman et al. (2019) noted that people often internalize stereotypes based on observed behaviors, linking gender to specific tasks or skills. As Cusack (2013, as cited in Valls & Puy et al., 2018) described, gender stereotypes assign fixed roles based on one's sex, shaping how individuals are expected to behave and what careers they are encouraged to pursue.

The persistence of these stereotypes leads to career segregation and unequal representation in various industries. Bosak et al. (2018, as cited by Lambojon, 2024) emphasized that societal pressure diminishes students' confidence to pursue non-traditional career paths. Charchika (2020) argued that gender stereotyping remains a widespread issue, as individuals continue to conform to socially constructed roles. Hedmann (2016, as cited by Liwag & Ramirez et al., 2022) even showed how gender norms are passed down through children's literature, which presents boys and girls with limited, gendered role models. Despite growing movements that aim to challenge gender roles, stereotypes remain a significant barrier in achieving gender equality in education and employment. Fullel (2023) noted a positive trend of increased female interest in technology and entrepreneurship, motivated by exposure to research and professional networks. However, this shift remains limited without strong institutional support. Lim (2022) argued that aligning career tracks with students' genuine interests results in higher satisfaction and performance, but gender expectations still dissuade many from pursuing careers in STEM fields. This study, therefore, seeks to examine how gender stereotypes influence the career choices of Senior High School students in one

private school. It aims to understand how societal expectations shape students' decision-making processes, and how these may hinder them from following their true potential and professional goals.

Furthermore, this study aims to examine the influence of gender stereotypes on the career choices of Senior High School students in one private school. Specifically, it seeks to explore how these gender stereotypes affect students' decision-making processes when choosing their careers. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher will identify the key challenges students face due to gender-based expectations and will propose a seminar-training program designed to empower students to make career decisions based on their true interests and abilities rather than societal stereotypes. By gaining insights into this issue, this study aims to promote gender-inclusive career decision-making and encourage students to pursue careers free from the limitations of gender stereotypes.

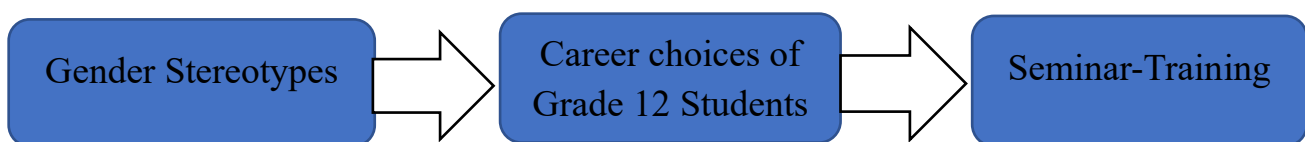
Statement of the Problem

This study examined the influence of gender stereotypes on career choices of Senior High School Students, it answered the following questions:

1. How do gender stereotypes influence the career choices of Senior High School Students?
2. Based on the findings, what seminar-training can be proposed to assist Senior High School students in choosing their career amidst gender stereotyping.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study centered on student gender stereotypes, specifically examining how gender stereotypes influenced the career choices of Grade 12 students. It aimed to understand how gender stereotypes influenced students' decision-making processes regarding career choices and to provide seminar-training programs that could mitigate these influences. This framework offered a structured approach to analyzing the role of gender stereotypes in shaping career aspirations and underscored the importance of targeted interventions to support students in pursuing careers aligned with their capabilities and interests.



Scope and Limitaons of the Study

This study aimed to examined the influence of gender stereotypes on career choices among Senior High School students. This involved selected Senior High School students from various strands: five students from Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand, five students from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and five students from Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), with a total of 15 Senior High School students enrolled during the school year 2024–2025 in one private school.

However, this study did not subject the students enrolled in Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and General Academic Strand (GAS) to investigating the influence of gender stereotypes on their career choices.

Definition of Terms

The researcher ensured clarity about terms used either conceptually or operationally.

Career Choices. This refers to choosing a career based on one's job preferences

Gender Stereotypes. According to United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights, gender stereotypes are rigid perceptions of men's and women's roles, often limiting personal growth and professional opportunities.

Influence. Refers to the effect of gender stereotypes have on career decisions of Senior High School students.

Internal Conflict. It is a struggle within a student's mind or emotions, where their own desires clash with what society considers acceptable.

Seminar and Training- Refers to structured career guidance programs designed to help students make informed career choices based on their passions, abilities, and interests rather than on societal expectations.

Senior High School Students. It pertains to 15 Senior High School students from various academic strands, including HUMSS, STEM, and ABM, who were enrolled in a private school.

Societal Expectation. Refers to the standards that society expects students to follow in order to be accepted or considered normal.

III. Methodology**Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research method aimed at exploring complex social phenomena through non-numerical data such as text, audio, and video. According to Bhandari (2025), qualitative research was particularly valuable for understanding concepts, opinions, and experiences, offering in-depth insights that contributed to problem-solving and the generation of new research questions. Almeida et al. (2016) highlighted that qualitative research was naturalistic, focusing on human behavior within real-life contexts, and uncovering the underlying reasons behind individuals' actions and decisions.

To gain a deeper understanding the influence of gender stereotypes to career choices among Senior High School Students, this study specifically adopted a phenomenological research design. According to Prime (2024), phenomenological research design was a qualitative methodology that examined and described individuals' lived experiences related to a particular phenomenon. This approach aimed to uncover the core essence of these experiences by analyzing participants' perceptions, emotions, and interpretations. Grounded in philosophical principles, phenomenology sought to minimize preconceptions and biases, allowing for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the perspectives of those who had personally encountered it.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in one private school in Brgy. Comon, Infanta, Quezon. Researchers selected this school because there were Senior High School Students enrolled in various strands, HUMSS, STEM, and ABM, who were affected by gender stereotypes in terms of their career choices. The researchers sought to describe the challenges faced by senior high school students and how their career choices were influenced by these stereotypes. Brgy. Comon was located at approximately 14.7371, 121.6428 on the island of Luzon, with an elevation of about 7.0 meters (23.0 feet) above mean sea level.

Brgy. Comon, Infanta, Quezon was home to this private school that offered Senior High School courses. Many students chose to study in this private school to further their education and pursue their careers.

However, many of them felt pressured to make specific career choices due to the strong influence of gender stereotypes. Researchers selected this area because it provided an opportunity to describe how senior high school students adjusted their decision-making in response to these pressures. The participants in this study were capable of providing valuable and accurate information that enhanced the research. This location was chosen because it was nearby and allowed the study to be conducted within the required timeframe.

Research Participants

The researchers selected fifteen (15) students from various strands as participants in this study through a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was a non-probability method for obtaining a sample where researchers used their expertise to choose specific participants that would help the study meet its goals. These subjects had particular characteristics that the researchers needed to evaluate the research question (Frost, 2023). According to Nikolopoulou (2023, June 22), purposive sampling referred to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units were selected because they had characteristics needed in the sample. In other words, units were selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling.

To ensure that Participants meet the necessary criteria, the following qualifications were established:

- The participant must be a Senior High School Student enrolled in one of the three strands (STEM, HUMSS, and ABM) in one private school.
- The participant must be a Grade 12 Senior High School student.
- The student must be willing to participate in the study.
- Students are often influenced by gender stereotypes when choosing a career.

The table below illustrated the breakdown of participants according to strand.

Strand	Number of Population	Number of Participants
STEM	66	5
HUMSS	66	5
ABM	26	5
Total	158	15

Research Instruments

The researchers used an interview guide to collect the necessary data for the study, which included open-ended questions designed to explore the influence of gender stereotypes faced by Senior High School Students from different strands. The interview guide focused on participants' understanding of gender stereotypes, their personal experiences with these stereotypes in choosing a career, the challenges they encountered, the ways they overcame them, and any support mechanisms that helped. It also sought their suggestions for addressing gender stereotypes in career decision-making among students. The interview guide was structured but easy to follow, and flexible enough to accommodate additional questions based on participants' responses. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in a private and comfortable setting, scheduled at times that were convenient for the participants to avoid disrupting their academic activities. Additionally, the researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by safeguarding their information and not disclosing their identities without prior consent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first sought permission from the Bachelor of Secondary Education Department Head to

conduct the study. Upon receiving approval, the researchers conducted interviews with the participants, who were senior high school students. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the participants' experiences were transcribed into verbal descriptions. If necessary, the transcriptions were translated from Tagalog to English.

After the transcription, the influence of gender stereotypes on career choices among senior high school students underwent theme analysis and thematic reflection. These processes captured the essence of the participants' experiences. Finally, a creative synthesis of the findings was formulated, along with seminar and training programs based on the essence of the experiences.

Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis to explore the experiences of senior high school students as they navigated the influence of gender stereotypes on their career choices. By examining their experiences, the research aimed to uncover key themes that shaped their understanding and decision-making processes regarding future careers. The analysis focused on several key areas, including students' experiences and perceptions of career choices in relation to gender norms within their educational and social environments. Through this in-depth exploration, the study sought to provide valuable insights into how gender stereotypes influenced students' career aspirations and the broader societal structures that shaped their decision-making processes.

Specialist Informants

The researchers had chosen a Master Teacher I at Quezon National High School, to validate the research theme. Mr. Baysa had been in public service for nine years and held a Master of Arts in Education, major in Social Science, from Sacred Heart College, Lucena City. He was pursuing a Doctor of Education in Educational Management at Manuel S. Enverga University. Recognized for his expertise in qualitative research, Mr. Baysa provided valuable insights and recommendations that guided the researchers in finalizing a research theme that was both meaningful and academically sound. To ensure the academic relevance, clarity, and researchability of the study, the researchers sought his expertise in the field of education. The validation process helped establish a strong foundation for the study by ensuring that the theme was significant, focused, and aligned with the objectives of the research.

Ethical Consideration

In conducting the study, the researcher carefully considered various ethical concerns. The foremost ethical principle observed was respect for the participants, acknowledging their vital role in upholding ethical standards. This respect ensured that participants were recognized as individuals with rights, rather than simply as sources of data. Another important ethical aspect was the assurance of voluntary participation. Before engaging in interviews, participants were required to sign a consent form that clearly explained the study's objectives and their role in it. This form also informed them about the researcher's plan to record the interviews and assured them of their right to determine their level of involvement. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, contributing to the accuracy and credibility of the study. The researcher fully honored each individual's choice regarding their participation. Furthermore, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were crucial ethical considerations throughout the study. All data gathered from the participants were kept private and anonymized to protect their identities. After the data collection process, all documents and recordings were securely disposed of. The researcher ensured the privacy of the participants by burning all physical copies of the data, thereby preventing any possible breach of confidentiality. These measures emphasized the commitment to ethical standards and contributed to a secure and trustworthy research process.

IV. Results and Discussion

The study explored how gender stereotypes influence the career decision-making of Senior High School students. The analysis of participant responses revealed three major themes: (1) Internal Conflict and Uncertainty in Career Decision-Making, (2) Unpreparedness for College Transition Amplifying Stereotype Pressure, and (3) Conflict Between Personal Desire and Societal Appropriateness. Each theme captures the psychological and social dimensions of how gender expectations shape students' perceptions, aspirations, and confidence in choosing their future careers.

1. Internal Conflict and Uncertainty in Career Decision-Making

The findings revealed that gender stereotypes significantly contributed to students' internal struggles and uncertainty in making career choices. Many participants experienced self-doubt and hesitation when their desired careers did not align with societal norms or gender expectations. Internalized stereotypes made them question their capabilities and suitability for specific professions traditionally associated with the opposite gender.

This supports the findings of Ramalingam (2006, as cited in Gicana & Dadaradar, 2023), who emphasized that internalized gender bias shapes individuals' self-perception and creates emotional barriers in decision-making. Students who internalized these stereotypes often prioritized conforming to social expectations rather than pursuing careers aligned with their genuine interests. The results imply that gender-based norms continue to limit the perceived options available to both male and female students, reinforcing occupational segregation from an early stage of career planning.

2. Unpreparedness for College Transition Amplifying Stereotype Pressure

Another significant finding highlighted the emotional strain students experienced as they transitioned to college. Many reported feeling unprepared to make career decisions, which intensified their tendency to conform to gendered expectations. The uncertainty of college life amplified their reliance on traditional gender roles, making them more vulnerable to external pressures from parents, peers, and society.

This finding aligns with the research of Amoah and Agyemang (2020), which revealed that lack of career preparedness and confidence often leads students to choose gender-conforming paths rather than explore unconventional options. The current study supports this claim by demonstrating how anxiety over college readiness magnifies the impact of stereotypes, discouraging students from making independent, interest-driven choices. As a result, the interplay between unpreparedness and gender expectations contributes to limited career exploration and reduced self-efficacy among students.

3. Conflict Between Personal Desire and Societal Appropriateness

The final theme revealed that participants often struggled to balance personal aspirations with what society considers "appropriate" for their gender. Many expressed awareness of the disparity between what they truly wanted to pursue and what was socially acceptable. This internal conflict created confusion and frustration, leading some students to compromise their true interests to avoid criticism or rejection.

This finding echoes the conclusions of Cheryan et al. (2017), who noted that societal norms perpetuate the idea of gender-appropriate professions, influencing young individuals' perceptions of career suitability. The results of this study confirm that societal expectations remain a major determinant in career choices, reinforcing traditional divisions between "male" and "female" professions. Consequently, even when students recognize their potential to succeed in non-traditional fields, social disapproval often deters them from pursuing such careers.

Overall, the results indicate that gender stereotypes exert a profound influence on students' career decision-making by shaping their self-concept, motivation, and perception of acceptable career options.

Internalized biases, lack of preparedness, and societal pressure collectively create emotional and psychological barriers that hinder autonomous decision-making. These findings highlight the need for schools to implement gender-sensitive career guidance programs that promote awareness, empower students to challenge stereotypes, and encourage them to pursue careers based on interest and competence rather than gender norms.

Output of the Study: Empowering Seminar-Training for Senior High School Students on Making Gender Inclusive Career Choices

Based on the findings, the researchers propose the implementation of a **career guidance seminar and training** aimed at helping students make informed career choices beyond traditional gender norms. This program seeks to raise awareness about how gender stereotypes influence career decision-making and to empower students to pursue professions aligned with their passions, interests, and skills rather than societal expectations.

The proposed seminar will be conducted in one private school and facilitated by the **Guidance and Counseling Office**, ensuring that students receive professional support and advice in exploring various career options. The activity will also include interactive discussions and self-assessment sessions to help students reflect on their personal interests and strengths.

Invited **guest speakers** will consist of successful professionals working in non-traditional or gender-atypical careers. They will share their personal journeys, challenges, and strategies for overcoming gender barriers in their respective fields. This exposure aims to inspire students to pursue their desired careers confidently, regardless of gender norms.

Teachers will serve as key facilitators throughout the seminar, guiding students in identifying their capabilities and motivating them to pursue fields that align with their true interests. Their role is crucial in fostering a gender-sensitive learning environment that supports equity and inclusivity in career development.

Additionally, **parents** will be invited to attend awareness sessions that address how unconscious gender biases can affect their children's career decisions. The seminar will encourage parents to support their children's aspirations and to value competence and passion over stereotypes.

To further strengthen community involvement, **Barangay captains and SK chairpersons** will also participate in promoting gender inclusive career advocacy. Their engagement will help spread awareness and promote community-wide acceptance of diverse career choices.

Overall, this **Empowering Seminar Training** aims to create a holistic support system composed of schools, families, and communities that nurtures students' confidence and freedom to pursue their authentic career paths without fear of social disapproval.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was evident that gender stereotypes strongly influenced the career decisions of Senior High School students by shaping their self-perception and undermining their confidence. Many students faced internal conflicts and uncertainty, struggling to choose between their personal interests and societal expectations. Family pressures further reinforced these limiting norms, discouraging students from pursuing careers outside traditional gender roles. Additionally, a lack of preparedness for college increased students' vulnerability to conforming to these stereotypes. Consequently, fear of judgment and failure often drove students to abandon their true aspirations and choose careers deemed socially acceptable for their gender. To empower students to make authentic career choices, it was crucial to

challenge these ingrained gender biases and create supportive environments that prioritized students' abilities, interests, and passions over societal expectations.

To address these issues, the researchers will propose a career guidance seminar and training program as a practical output of the study. This initiative aims to empower students to make informed and authentic career choices free from the influence of gender stereotypes. The seminar will raise awareness, build self-confidence, and promote the pursuit of careers based on individual passion and skills rather than societal expectations.

Recommendations

Senior High Students

Students should reflect on their passions, skills, and career goals, breaking free from traditional gender expectations. It is essential for students to explore a wide range of career opportunities. Establishing connections with peers who share similar career aspirations can help them to foster a supportive and motivating environment conducive to personal and professional growth.

Parents

Parents should not hinder their children's career decisions. Instead, they should seek to understand and support them. It is important for children to feel that their parents trust their abilities and choices. Rather than imposing their own desires, parents should serve as guides by offering advice while respecting their child's dreams and interests. Additionally, parents should be aware of how gender stereotypes can influence career choices, and they should encourage their children to pursue paths based on passion and potential, not societal expectations.

School Management

School Management should take an active role in dismantling gender stereotypes by implementing awareness programs through the Guidance Counseling Office. They should conduct seminar and training for students, teachers, and parents to address how gender stereotypes influence career choices. Schools should provide inclusive career guidance, invite professionals from diverse fields, and integrate role models into the curriculum. They should also involve parents in discussions on gender bias and equip teachers with training and resources to foster a supportive, inclusive learning environment.

Community

Community Stakeholders should play a significant role in supporting students by collaborating with school organizations to provide valuable resources and mentorship. They should offer programs that give students practical experiences and opportunities to observe professionals working in various fields. These initiatives can help broaden students' understanding of career options beyond traditional gender roles. Furthermore, communities should conduct awareness campaigns to address and reduce gender stereotypes, encouraging students to explore diverse career paths. It is also important that barangay officials, including Barangay Captains and SK Chairpersons, be invited to participate in these activities to raise their awareness of the influence of gender stereotypes on career choices and to strengthen their support for equal opportunities within the community.

Future researchers

Future Researchers can make substantial contributions by undertaking long-term studies to assess the lasting effects of gender stereotypes on career decisions and results. Additionally, they can conduct comparative analyses across various schools, regions, or cultures to pinpoint effective strategies and areas needing enhancement in advancing gender equality.

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