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Gender Stereotypes and Career Choice: An Exploration into the Experiences of Ordinary Level Secondary Students in Uganda

By

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of career stereotypes on career choice among ordinary level students in Uganda. Gendered-career stereotypes have remained persistent in the career destiny of students across the globe even in the developed countries with perceived gender parity. In this study, we explored the perceptions and experiences of ordinary level secondary school students on how their career choices are influenced by gender. A qualitative exploratory approach was used and the study involved 36 individual interviews of ordinary secondary school students. The findings reveal that; there exists beliefs that boys are more intelligent than girls, a tendency of conforming to existing gender career biases, influence of culturally prescribed gender roles and gendered influence of significant individuals. The study concludes that despite career guidance interventions and affirmative action, contextual and culturally entrenched gender stereotypes continue to influence the career choice decisions of students in Uganda.

Keywords Career Stereotypes, Career Choice, Ordinary Secondary Education, Gender stereotypes

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Introduction

Students in Uganda like in other parts of the world continue to encounter career choice challenges and misperceptions based on gender. This is most critical at the ordinary secondary level where students are required to make critical career choice decisions for the first time of selecting study subjects which form the mantle of their career trajectory. This career choice challenge is exacerbated by minimal guidance and counselling at 3.1% in Uganda (Otwine et al. 2018). Gender stereotypes which are the opinions and fallacies that society hold about what marks males and females (Ertl et al. 2017) compromise students' ability to make apt career decisions. Literature is replete in Uganda which reinforces the career choice divide between boys and girls (Lubaale, 2020; Kagoda, 2019). The Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) for example, has continuously in its release of UNEB results showed differences in abilities in different subjects based on gender and in general that boys outperform girls (Milepost, 2021). The evident segmented occupations according to gender raise a gendered impression to students during career choice that there are career options for males and others for females. The society in which students live and make their career decisions is awash with beliefs that boys and girls have different academic abilities. Societal interactions shape the career interests, expectations, thoughts, value system, and norms of students during career choice making. Thus students hardly make career decisions based on facts and personal independence but social approval and assessment that is quite often gendered. This is consequential to career decisions which are not in line with students' interests, abilities, and desires but their gender.

Research findings indicate that parents and teachers' expectations, acknowledgements of abilities, the teaching aids and educational materials used in learning, which essentially shape a child's self-evaluation and appraisal are largely gendered (Koech et al. 2016). Often, parents and teachers, underlie stereotypical evaluations which do not correspond to children's actual achievements (Malubay et al. 2015). For instance, through observations and experiences from traditional roles and activities with reinforcements from others, students take it that they are constructed differently along gender which manifests in their career decisions. Incidentally very few or no studies have been conducted in Uganda to investigate the impact of gender stereotypes on students career choice at lower secondary education level. To this end, the extent to which gender stereotypes influence career choice decisions is not fully known to the policy makers, curriculum developers, educationists, teachers, parents, and above all, students themselves. This study therefore attempted to examine gender stereotyped influence on the career choice of ordinary level secondary school students in Uganda.

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Statement of the Problem

The social interaction and environment in which students live and make their career decisions in Uganda is hugely gender stereotyped (Kazibwe, 2019). The social persuasion, social support and approval at home, school, and community have immense gender stereotypes. The gender role socialization in the formal and informal occupations coupled with the media portary biased evidence that can be used by students for career choice decisions. For example, there is 87.4% of female teachers in preprimary education in Uganda (Uganda Education Abstract, 2017). Moreover, girls education has not been a priority which compromises their career destiny (Leach et al. 2014). Similarly, the low completion rates in STEM programs with 12.4% females against 87.6% males in engineering in 2015 was reported at Kyamogo University in Uganda (Lubaale, 2020). Furthermore, the 2018 UCE results reported that boys performed better than girls with 10.2% passing in division one, compared to 6.6% in division one for girls (Milepost, 2021). As students live and interact with such realities they may never escape from the prevailing circumstances and thus, will hardly make independent career choices that are made on informed standpoint.

Review of Related Literature

The existing literature shows that boys and girls choose their subjects differently based on gender considerations (Makarova et al. 2019). There is innate belief that there are subjects suitable for males and females (Schuster & Martiny, 2017; Simiyu, 2015). In Uganda, this perception is reinforced by facts where UNEB severally in its publication of Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results shows that boys perform better in sciences while girls do better in arts. Similarly, more boys than girls aspirations in STEM related fields after ordinary level has a gendered influence on consequent career choice decisions. In the same vein, studies across the globe have found persistent segmentation of gender along courses and career fields (European Commission, 2015; FSO, 2019). Gender stereotypes continue to develop in response to the reflection of females and males in dissimilar social roles and in role-linked activities connected to their education and career pathways (Ministry of Education & Sports [MOES], 2017). In the same line, Igbo et al. (2015) found similar misperceived beliefs among students patterned to gender in Nigeria. This paints a picture that is absorbed by students while making their career choices especially in situations where career guidance support is not strong enough to focus students on established performance record.

Studies by Hand et al. (2017) and Schuster and Martiny (2017), report that girls themselves report low efficacy in certain STEM related subjects. The low female numbers in STEM fields builds a culture among students that is translated into career choice behavior. This culture motivates more males to opt for sciences and more girls for arts. This kind of gender stereotyping has an influence on students self confidence and assurance towards certain careers (Igbo et al. 2015). This indicates that some students by rot will claim to belong to certain career fields and tow that line without firm established facts. This kind of gender stereotyped thinking has resulted into claissification of subjects along gender. As evidenced by Mutekwe et al. (2011) who found a distinction between Zimbabwean male and female students in the choice of subjects. Relatedly, Makarova et al. (2016) in Switzerland found that the perception of female students were labelled as being soft, dreamy, lenient or frail, whereas mathematics and physics

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were seen as being hard, sober, strict or robust. This research discovered that young women were strongly challenged in relating the masculine image of science to themselves. This image of science not only endangers young women's identification with science related domains, but in the long term it negatively affects their interest in science, their academic self-concept in the science subjects, and also their decision to choose a career in science-related fields.

Gender stereotypes still remain strong in the field of academics and career choice. Even in the developed world with perceived excellent gender parity, stereotypes still exist. The European Commission (2015) found that in most European countries, the percentage of females selecting STEM careers was disturbingly small. This was more evident in technology and engineering fields. In a related study, Bieri Buschor et al. (2014) indicated that the proportion of female students in STEM fields had remained constant at approximately 25% in the European Union Countries, and even lower in Germany with approximately 18%. Kurtz-Costes et al. (2014), reported that gender segregation was found to be persistent and conspicuous in the STEM fields. Moreover, in the educational surveys at the universities of applied science, it was established that only 21% of women registered and studied in STEM courses in the academic year 2017/2018. More surveys realized that, some STEM fields were more stalwartly gender segregated than others.

Additionally, Kurtz-Costes et al. (2014), reported that the least number of women was found in areas of information (10%) and technology (8.5%), while in the areas of chemistry and life-sciences, the women proportion was reasonably bigger (43%). Lubaale (2020) found that the completion rate of females in sciences was small compared to boys at Kyambogo University in Uganda. Such information is available to students in the media and literature which has serious impact on the way students package their decisions when it comes to career choice making.

Students tend to maintain the status quo based on communication feedback and assessment from parents, teachers, peers and significant others (MOES, 2017; Schuster & Martiny, 2017). This is because students tend to trust in evaluations and prejudices obtained from the social interactions which consequently impair their personal independence in career choice (Dagang & de Mesa, 2017). Children differences in activities and play objects related with each gender are later imposed as norms in programming academics (Ehigbor & Akinlosotu, 2016) and enforced by culture in the school life creating a distinction along sex, and the choice of certain subjects (Igbo et al. 2015; Mishkin et al. 2016). But on the contrary, Mtemeri (2017) reported that some students in Zimbabwe did not agree that gender influenced their choice of careers. Similarly, Kimaro and Lawuo (2016) in Tanzania found no significant association between beliefs on gender stereotyping and career path among secondary school students. This implies that gender stereotypes do not necessarily influence career pathways of some students. Students disputed that there were separate careers for males and females. This contradiction shows how some females base their career decisions on abilities and facts. To those who succumb to stereotypes, it is not clear whether careers are separate or whether the socialization aspects have unconsciously been internalized to a point where the academic gender differences seem normal in school.

A study by Makarova and Herzog (2015) reported that right from kindergarten in Switzerland students have misconceptions of academic fields and perceive scientists to be male. Makarova et al. (2019) found similar perceptions among students from kindergarten through fifth

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grade in USA to associate science with male figures. Miller et al. (2018) further noted that as women penetrate the science domain progressively, children still observe more male than female scientists in their social environments. In the same instance, Archer et al. (2012) reported that young children who lack explanations about their performance in science subjects can only associate it with masculinity traits. Yet more, a study by Cvencek et al. (2015) in America found that as early as second grade, children have a belief that math is a male domain. This shows that as students reach the level of making career choice decisions, they already have biases related to gender which ultimately might be incorporated in their career choices negating their own established abilities.

According to the existing literature, the use of gender in assessment of abilities and career choice is replete. Females and males have been found to make different choices because of their socialization experiences and the social forces that structure their expectations (Makarova et al. 2019). This is consistent with Favara (2012) and Kagoda, (2019) who argue that boys and girls who perform equally in the same subjects may choose different career paths because of their gendered realization. A study by Simiyu (2015) further pointed out that teachers tend to reinforce gender stereotypes in mathematics and other science subjects. Similar findings were reported by Morales and colleagues (2016) in the Philippines, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) in South Africa, Durosaro and Adebanye (2012) in Nigeria, Mishkin and colleagues (2016), and Mutekwe and colleagues (2011) in Zimbabwe. All these studies are consistent that gender has a significant influence on students' choice of study subjects and courses. In the same line, Mtemeri (2017) found that in Zimbabwe, female role models influence female students, career behavior and consequent career choice.

Gender stereotypes stem from the origins of both formal and informal education. Informal education in Uganda was structured in a way that boys learnt from their fathers and girls from their mothers. In the same vein, the western education that was introduced in Uganda was patriarchy in nature and a privilege to which girls were restricted (Kisitu & Ssebunya 2016). The beginning of formal education in the western world reveals that only boys were schooled. Even as girls were brought on board when education transformed, for instance the Greco-Roman Education system did not favor many girls beyond the elementary level (Riley, 2011). Most girls did not go beyond their middle teens for marriage (Lines, 2009). Even Plato, a renowned philosopher who favored compulsory education for boys and girls, still segregated students by gender, a practice still evident today (Lines, 2009). These historical traditions still take a toll in the education system today. Gender segregation still persists and no wonder, we still have programs labelled for the girl-child with little being said on the boy-child.

Methods

Study Design

The study used a qualitative interpretivist approach which was rooted in the exploratory inquiry, using in-depth interviews. This approach was adopted to attain deep insights and experiences of students as regards to the influence of gender stereotypes on their career choice at the ordinary secondary level in Uganda.

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Study Participants

The study took a sample of 36 ordinary level secondary students purposively selected from secondary schools in the Eastern and Northern Uganda in 2019. A total of six schools, three from each region were selected. This was based on the criteria that the schools were mixed-sex schools and with the highest student population in the regions. Students were included if they were of sound psychological state of mind, in their final year of ordinary level secondary (senior four), and willing to participate in an interview. The participants included 18 girls and 18 boys respectively.

Data Collection Procedure

In each of the selected schools, the Head teachers were approached and the purpose of the study explained. On consenting, we were introduced and referred to the teacher in charge of career guidance who after the explanation of the study, was requested to identify six students to participate in the interviews. Following the verbal consent, an in depth interview was conducted with each of the participants in a private room at the school. To avoid interrupting in-class activities, interviews were organized during extra-curricular time and English was the official language used. Interviews followed a pre-designed and pre-tested interview guide. The questions in the interview guide were informed by the literature review conducted on the topic. The interviews lasted for averagely 45 minutes and they were audio recorded with the consent from the participants. In addition to the audio recorder, a notebook was used to record non-verbal characteristics of participants such as, sex as well as new issues and themes emerging during the interviews.

Data Management and Analysis

The data was transcribed verbatim. Preliminary analysis started during data collection by note taking and reflections on the data collected to establish the point of saturation. Thematic analysis was employed following the procedures described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Familiarization with data while earmarking critical points to get fully immersed with information was done. Along the revision of the scripts, codes were developed and themes. The codes were arranged into main themes that were derived deductively. Main themes were created in an iterative manner by grouping codes to create a coherent flow of information. Finally, associations between themes in a thematic network were defined for a systematic write up. In the final analysis, some codes were automatically developed into themes while some of the themes were merged and yet others dropped. Verbatim quotations were identified and used in the narrative to add voice to the data.

Ethics

We followed ethical guidelines in the conduct of the study. Permission was sought from all school administration before the data collection. All participants provided verbal informed consent and participation was voluntary. The school administration and career guidance teachers were asked to give further and additional explanation to obtain consent for some students below 18 years of age. The purpose of the study was explained to the students. We anonymized all the audio files and transcripts by use of pseudonyms alongside the age, sex and location of

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participants. For instance, one transcript was labeled as R1, 17-year-old female student, Eastern school.

Findings

The findings generated four overarching interrelated themes in which participants reported the influence of gender stereotypes on their career choices decisions. The overarching themes were: the beliefs that boys are more intelligent than girls, conforming to existing and historical gender biases in career, influence of culturally prescribed gender roles, and the influence of significant individuals. Table 1 shows the results as derived from the analysis.

Table 1: Themes and Overarching Themes Derived from Thematic Analysis

Themes	Overarching Themes
Myths that Arts careers are for girls Myths that sciences are hard and arts are simple to pass Beliefs that boys and girls have different intellectual abilities Myths that science-related careers are for boys	Beliefs that boys are more intelligent than girls
Girls perform better in arts and boys in sciences Choose what other people of similar sex have always done Teachers exhibit stereotyped thinking	
Girls are for marriage Boys uphold the family honor and esteem Female roles as caregivers and home managers	Influence of culturally prescribed gender roles
Parents and relatives as role-models Peer influence along gender Influence of electronic media personalities	Gendered influence of significant individuals

Source: Field Survey Data; 2019

The Belief that Boys are More Intelligent than Girls

The results in Table 1 showed that there are inherent beliefs among students that there is a difference in intellectual abilities between boys and girls. Mostly boys 14/18 stated that boys are more intelligent than girls and as such boys tend to choose more intellectually challenging science-related career paths while girls often opt for arts-related careers which were perceived to be less challenging. On the contrary 8/18 female students felt that there was no difference in natural abilities of boys and girls. The quote below illustrates this scenario:

I feel that science-related subject combinations are fit for boys because they require a lot of time, thinking and hard work. It is the boys that can perform well in them [Student 1, 17-year-old female].

The narrative implies that sciences were branded hard and masculine while arts were labeled feminine. The girls seemed to prefer what they perceived was easy to pass and these were mainly arts-based careers. On the other hand, boys felt that they could rise to the challenge that science-

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based careers imposed their perceived masculine abilities. This shows that some boys may impose themselves on sciences even when their abilities are lacking. Similarly, girls may decline sciences when actually they have the capacity to excel in them. These sentiments are illustrated as thus;

I will choose sciences because I know I am a man, I have to struggle, to work harder than the girls. You know sciences require determination which most boys have but few girls exhibit [Student 2, 18-year-old male].

On the contrary, 12/36 participants majorly females noted that their academic abilities in the different career domains of science or arts-based were a major determinant for their career choices rather than their gender.

Conforming to the Existing Gender Biases in Careers

According to Table 1 results, the participants revealed that historical gender issues influenced their career choices. The findings from 22/36 participants concurred to conform to the observable contexts of men and women in different occupations. This implies that education occupations contribute definitively to the blowout of gender-stereotypic philosophies about a usual fit of male and female careers. The study results especially from female students showed that they had fear to move contrary to the established gender trends of career choice. This shows that more girls than boys are likely to remain tied to the gendered career choice norms. Moreover, the findings revealed that men were more in technical domains while females were in human centered fields. For instance, more girls than boys expressed fear that choosing a career that is not well aligned to their gender would be taking a big risk and experimenting with parents' meager resources in form of tuition fees. This is illustrated in the quote below;

At our school, female teachers mostly teach arts subjects which are 'weak' and the men teach the hard science subjects. Now if you are a girl and you take on sciences and you even know that your mother is struggling to get school fees for you, it might turn out to be an unsuccessful attempt and therefore wastage of the mother's meagre resources [Student 3, 16-year-old female].

However, some of the participants mentioned that they considered personal abilities other than gender during the subject selection. Some 7/18 female students mentioned that they consider performance grade points other than observations of the society in choice making. This shows that some students trust and refer to their abilities in career choice considerations. This explains how females have penetrated the male dominated career world of fields in STEM. In the same thinking, most boys reported that choosing arts-based careers that were considered fit for girls would raise questions regarding their masculinity.

The influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

The results in Table 1 reveal that the cultural perspective related to gender roles of what men and women can do influence career choice. The results indicated that in some instances parents

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advised girls to choose vocational courses after ordinary level of education so that the parents do not have to spend a lot on their education since taking a vocational course is a shorter career path. It was reported that investing a lot of money in the career path of girls benefited only the family in which the girl would get married and as such, parents were reluctant to take on such investments. This shows that girls as compared to boys have a short career destiny regardless of abilities. And this may explain why often there are more girls in hands-on education courses than boys who maintain the elitist careers. This is articulated as thus;

Some parents have a feeling that educating girls is doing a lot of work for their future husbands. That money can be saved if girls go for vocational studies after O-level [Student 4, 18-year-old male].

The findings further indicated that parents are usually willing to meet the protracted tuition requirements of boys. To this end, boys often choose to pursue longer term career paths ending with university degrees and diplomas and usually on the elitist formal employments. The results revealed that cultural roles of females as caregivers and managers of home affairs related to their choices of particular careers. Girls were reported to mainly choose careers aligned to their cultural roles. For instance, many girls were reported to choose careers such as Home Management, Catering, Home Economics, Food and Nutrition, and Tailoring. The boys were mainly reported to yearn for subjects with a potential for Sciences, Entrepreneurship, and Mathematics. This finding was more articulated by boys than girls. This is well reflected as thus;

Subjects such as literature are majorly designed for girls because of the drama and its nature. Still subjects such as food and nutrition, clothing and textiles are particularly for women because they deal with house chores. Such subjects are specifically for women while subjects such as metal work, woodwork, power and energy, are designed for men because of the nature that involves the use of strength [Student 5, 17-year-old male].

This narrative show how the conservative cultural mentality penetrate the school environment from society and the home to program students decision making in career choice. This implies that unless with a concerted gender specific career support, students might continue to succumb to the prevailing culturally prescribed mentality surrounding specific careers.

The Gendered influence of Significant Individuals

The study findings in table 1 revealed that social and cultural values were illuminated by gender perceptions. Significant individuals in the lives of participants were found to be major sources of gender stereotypes in career choice. The findings indicated that some boys were intending to select careers to emulate male role models like fathers, uncles, and male teachers. On the other hand, some girls also reported being attracted to female role models such as their mothers, female relatives, and female teachers. This shows that significant others and role models established on gender influence the students' career choice decisions. This also implies that since

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there are scarce female role models in STEM careers, fewer girls are likely to aspire for the same.

The influence of peer connectedness was reported to propagate career stereotypes in schools. The girls, noted that in a bid to maintain closeness with their friends throughout their academic journey, they intended to choose similar career paths. They felt and feared that if they took a different path, they would experience a disutility and eventually would end up as loners. This implies that friendship lines and networks cemented along the same sex peers contributes to gender stereotypes in career choice. Nevertheless, some students who were inclined towards self-abilities were opposed to such environmental influences. This implies that some students were ready to make informed and independent career choice as long as the environment was levelled. The results showed that electronic media personalities evidently had influences on students' career choice making. It was pointed out that the world media perceives and portray males and females differently. This implies that students follow gendered influences presented in the media. This was clearly demonstrated as thus:

The information about classification of subjects for boys and girls is largely obtained from the media, friends, teachers, relatives and parents. The way community assess girls and boys in community roles, home roles and schools roles and teaching, or during different functions indicate that there is a difference between boys and girls which equally influences their career choices [Student 6, 19-year-old male].

This narrative shows that most students in their daily experiences and observations receive gendered knowledge and reminders which they might use in making career choice decisions. Such gendered occurrences in the literature and some available instructional materials reinforce gender stereotypes in the young minds of students.

Discussion

The Beliefs that Boys are More Intelligent than Girls

The findings revealed that there were widely held beliefs that boys were more intelligent than girls. This gendered perception is used to describe the intellectual abilities of boys and girls. The students believed that boys are more favored than girls and thus endowed to take on more challenging and hard subjects and later on study courses. This indicates that boys and girls will choose different career pathways following such beliefs which are constructed along gender lines. These findings agree with Makarova et al. (2019) and Schuster & Martiny (2017) who found that students have innate beliefs that there are subjects suitable for males and females. This is rooted in the belief that students have different abilities and consequently a perception that they should make different career choices. These findings are further supported by Kisutu and Ssebunya (2016) who alludes that the different classification of intellectual abilities are deep rooted in the history of formal western education which still prevails in our education system today.

The study findings showed that the belief in the difference of intellectual abilities made boys aspire to choose science subjects which are perceived to be hard while girls got more interested in arts subjects. This gendered belief led to a myth and a construction that there are

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traditional subjects meant for boys and girls. This fallacy has sustained a minimal number of girls choosing subjects in STEM domains. The findings support Addison et al. (2014) who reported that the assessments that are subjective and lacking objectivity tend to impair students' career decisions. The findings further concur with Malubay et al. (2015) who found that parents reinforce dysfunctional credit patterns in the social world. Yet more the findings agree with Hand et al. (2017) and Schuster and Martiny (2017) who indicated that girls themselves report low efficiency in certain subject. Given the low females numbers in STEM fields builds a culture among students which is translated into career choice.

It was however, established from the findings that some students felt that it was their performance and grades that will determine their career choice. This implies that some students evaluate their career decisions basing on performance abilities and scores in subjects. This explains how some females have penetrated the traditionally STEM male domains. These findings are in line with Mtemeri (2017) who reported some students in Zimbabwe that did not agree to gender influence in their choice of careers. Similarly, the findings also agree with Kimaro and Lawuo (2016) in Tanzania who found no significant association between beliefs on gender stereotyping and career path of secondary school students.

Conforming to the Existing Gender Biases in Careers

The study findings indicated that students conformed to historical gender stereotypic trends. The findings indicated that students were not willing to act contrary to the status quo and they had fear to venture into the unknown. This irradiates that stereotypes have imposed a threat that hinder students from undertaking career exploration to discover where they fit. This implies that career stereotypes have obstructed students to draw from their experiences, interests and knowledge to plan their career decisions. These findings are in agreement with Makarova and Herzog (2015) who reported that right from kindergarten in Switzerland students have misconceptions of academic fields and perceive scientists to be male. The findings are consistent with Makarova et al. (2019) who found perceptions among students from kindergarten through fifth grade in USA were associating science with men. Therefore, even as women penetrate the science domain progressively, children still observe more male than female scientists in their social environments. To this end, some students do not want to do contrary to the established norm. Thus some students might end into careers they are not suited for due to the prevailing gender stereotypes and conformity.

The influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

The study findings showed that there were culturally prescribed gender roles that impacted on students' career choices. It was revealed that the education system does not favor the career destiny of girls since they are arranged for marriage any time. This necessitates them to branch to vocational inferior institutions since higher education would benefit their future suitors. This has to do with the social norms that prescribe education to be for men as bread winners and the mantle of the family and nation. Some of the traditions have moved on with the history of education right from its inception in the west. These findings rhythm with Riley (2011) who reported that the system of Greco-Roman Education did not favor many girls beyond the elementary level.

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The findings further indicated that the cultural distribution of roles according to gender impairs students' career choice orientation. It was revealed that girls choose careers related to their cultural roles. This implies that female students are not able to internalize the different experiences to establish where they fit in the world of work and what they would like to do. The culturally imposed traditions usually compromise the occupations that interest the girl child. This shows that the choices of girls are impaired by traditional beliefs about the contribution of girls towards the socio-economic development. These findings are cognizant with Kagoda, (2019) and Makarova et al. (2019) who allude that female and male students make different choices because of their socialization experiences and the social forces that structure their expectations.

The Gendered influence of Significant Individuals

The study findings indicated that gendered influence from significant people close to the students were a source of gender stereotypes. Girls followed female role models as boys also followed the male role models. This influence was absorbed during career support, observations and experiences. This implies the social values in the social setting of students provide gendered experience that end up influencing their career choice decisions. Through their social interaction the influence is vehement enough to convince the students to fall in certain careers regardless of their interests and proven abilities. This shows that students don't crystallize their learning experiences because of gender. These findings are in agreement with Pizzorno et al. (2014) who found that family members and peers influence students' choice of the major courses of study. The findings further concur with Mtemeri (2017), who found that in Zimbabwe, female role models influenced female students' career choice decisions along the feminine lines.

The findings show that education system through electronic media was awash with gendered information that influence students' career choice. This shows that some students do not attempt to understand themselves and find their right place in the career world. Through observation and actions, students follow the gendered career selection. This shows that there is a mental construction for students to take for granted what they have been advised to pursue in life. Thus students end up in careers chosen for them by others regardless of their interests, abilities and life goals. These findings are in agreement with Cvencek et al. (2015) who found that in America as early as second grade, children have a belief that math is a male domain. The findings are also in line with Malubay et al. (2015) who noted that observations and experiences from traditional roles and activities together with reinforcements from others influence gendered career choices. With empirical observations in the environment, students take it for granted that they are constructed differently along gender which manifests in career decisions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that despite career guidance interventions and affirmative actions, contextual socio-culturally entrenched gender stereotypes continue to influence career choices of students at the ordinary level of secondary education in Uganda. Specific interventions for teachers and staff in learning institutions is urgently needed in career choice sensitization as a way of providing an enabling environment for students' career support services. The Ministry of Education and Sports and curriculum developers should take deliberate effort to put in place

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mechanisms that will eliminate stereotyped tendencies in the teaching and learning environments, both at home, school, and society especially in the teaching content and learning materials that perpetuate gender stereotypes among teachers and students. This is because what young people get exposed to is what takes the day no matter how good or bad such influences might be.

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study used a qualitative research design which gives an in depth interrogation of the subject matter. The students had a wide latitude to discuss and explain the gendered experiences without limit. On the hand, the study is limited in content scope in that it considered one transitional level of education in Uganda. It may therefore not be generalized to other transitional levels. This study therefore suggests a longitudinal study to collate gender stereotypes on the processes and levels students go through in career choice making in school.

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