

Gender Stereotyping of Occupations among Secondary School Teachers

Constance Chifamba (PhD Education)

Constance Chifamba is a full time lecturer in the Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Solusi University (Zimbabwe)

Abstract:- A descriptive survey was carried out to find out the perceptions of Secondary School teachers studying with Solusi University on gender stereotyping of occupations. A questionnaire was distributed to 118 purposively sampled participants comprising of 56.8% males and 43.2% females. Data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings of this study indicated that both male and female secondary school teachers adults hold relatively similar beliefs about classifying occupations as “male”, “female” or “unisex”. The reason cited by the majority of the respondents for categorizing occupations as masculine, feminine or unisex is the physiological differences between male and females while some of the respondents classified occupations based on gender equality, and some classified occupations according to societal and cultural expectations. Few respondents cited other reasons of little significance. The study recommends that secondary school teachers be encouraged to use this information in providing career guidance to secondary school students so they can make informed decisions about subject selection and career decision.

Keywords:-

- *Gender*: sexual category or characteristics related to masculinity or femininity.
- *Occupation*:- Job, work or profession. What one occupies themselves with for a wage, salary or a living.
- *Stereotype*: grouping or categorizing items or individuals together and making a judgment about them without knowing them.
- *Unisex career*: career which is generally considered suitable for either males or females

I. INTRODUCTION

Many young people fail to train for the career of their interest and aspirations because of the strong influence of gender stereotyping of careers by the adults who serve as their role models, mentors or career guidance counsellors. Several studies indicate that a lot of young people end up in certain occupations not because that is what they like but because society feels that is the norm. Studies have indicated that stereotyping of careers, influences the preferences toward educational and career pathways deemed more appropriate to the male and/or female gender (Ramaci, Pellerone, Ledda Ramaci, Pellerone, Ledda, Presti, Squatrito, Rapisarda, 2017)

Struthers (2015) asserts that many females have to endure the effects of gender stereotyping of careers. A

female student captured the impact of gender stereotypes by saying:

“I don’t think they [girls] are doing what they want. They are more doing what society needs them to do, or suggests to them. Society is telling them [...] boys do this, girls do that.” (Struthers, 2015)

Although globalization has exposed many young females to a variety of careers yet because of the impact of socialisation there are still certain careers that are culturally and traditionally labelled “Male career” and “Female-career”. With the wave to promote gender equality or reduce or eliminate gender disparity, and equal opportunities for all, this dichotomization has been neutralized and another category has been added, that is “Unisex career”. Bombarded by the conflicting views, the young female adolescent may not really feel comfortable to go against the current and venture into a commonly labeled traditional male career. Conversely, a young male may shun a career of their passion for fear of being considered radical or a non-conformist. Are there valid reasons for any youth to hold on to these gender stereotypes of careers?

Although there has been cultural stereotyping of careers, commonly branded as traditionally male careers, or traditionally female careers, there has been a noticeable paradigm shift from career exclusiveness to career inclusiveness. The current trend seems to be reducing or eliminating gender biases. The traditionally male careers include engineering, air plane piloting, taxicab and truck-driving, farming and army officer, engineer. The traditionally labelled female careers are nursing, housekeeping, midwifery and gynecologist (Gibson and Mitchell, 1981, Mapfumo et al, 2002). With the advent of technology, the assumption is that our culture continues to become amalgamated and homogenized; (Golden, 2011). With the cultural globalisation the once male dominated careers are becoming open to both sexes. As Gibson and Mitchell, (1981) put it, the phrases “for men only” or “for women only” no longer apply. These once “safe career havens” for males and some for females (like nursing, midwifery etc), have been effectively challenged not only in courts, but more importantly in the world of work. The researcher seeks to analyse the root cause of these career stereotypes and the possible justifications for discarding or holding on to them.

According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory; as children grow they are socialized by parents, friends, teachers at school, and other people in the community.

These immediate environments contribute a lot to the socialising of the individual. Teachers, parents and relatives have a profound influence on the process of career decision making. The attitudes of these key influential forces towards gender stereotyping of careers can determine the career decisions made by the adolescents. Although there are other forces like the media, and peers that may influence career decisions, the society, the home and the school have the strongest of all the influences on gender stereotyping of careers. Bussey and Bandura, (2012) observed that parents play an active role in setting the course of their children's gender development by structuring, channeling, modeling, labeling and reacting evaluatively to gender-linked conduct.

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the perceptions of adults, (Teachers, health workers and industry workers) on gender stereotyping careers. The researcher also seeks to find out the major reasons for or against gender stereotyping careers.

B. Problem Statement

Gender stereotyping careers has a strong influence on many young people at the stage of career decision making. Consequently, some feel confused as to which career to pursue because of the gender-based views they get from those who give them career guidance, mainly the adults such as, teachers, parents, relatives or mentors and “the significant others”. The researcher aims to raise the awareness of the adolescents concerning the implications of these opinions, attitudes and beliefs about gender-stereotyping occupations and how this impacts their career path thus they can make informed career decisions.

C. Research Questions

The key research questions that guide this research are;

1. What are the perceptions of male and female secondary school teachers on classifying occupations as; Masculine, feminine, or Unisex?
2. What are the commonly cited reasons for such classification of occupations?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Throughout history people in every culture have always had distinct roles for males, females and even in some cultures, roles related to children. This was an effective way of having division of labour according to suitability. However, with the improvements in technology some jobs that used to be associated with lots of muscular strength are now tackled easily by machinery, just by pressing a switch. Other developments in economy and cultural globalization have instigated changes in the old, traditional mindset. Culture is dynamic. There has been a paradigm shift. As a result of cultural globalism some of the beliefs and practices are abandoned, and others have been amalgamated or have been replaced by modern practices. Among these practices are the shifting roles of men and women. This includes the drift from gender-

stereotyped careers to non-gender-stereotyped careers, from the traditionally male or traditionally female roles to roles that are less gender-biased. Will this paradigm shift completely eliminate the traditional dichotomization of careers? Many researchers have come up with different opinions on the perceptions of people about gender biased career stereotypes and some of the findings of such researches are reviewed in this chapter.

Gender biased career stereotypes are influenced by the natural, anatomical and physiological differences between men and women, cultural roles (Mendez and Crawford, 2012). Though some gender differences are biologically founded, most of the stereotypic attributes and roles linked to gender arise more from cultural design than from biological endowment (Beall & Steinberg, 1993; Epstein, 1997). Difference in degree of brain lateralization is assumed to produce gender differences in cognitive processing. Although girls generally do better on verbal tasks, and boys do better on some types of mathematical tasks, the differences are small (Mendez and Crawford, 2012). There are several factors that inform people's attitudes about gender biased career stereotyping, these include: Society and cultural norms, Family values and expectations, the educational system and the economic status.

A. Society and Cultural Norms

Society dictates the norms through gender role socialization occupations are also sex-role stereotyped. It may begin with stereotyping home duties as feminine and masculine and stretches to classifying the types of occupations one decides to undertake as a career. Anyone who may dare not conform is usually looked down on or stigmatised. It becomes very difficult to go against the current. O'Bryant et al, (1978) observed that if society has prejudices against males and females adopting non-traditional male and female roles consequently there is likely going to be less respect for a female mechanic, woman plumber, female driver or woman electrician. Hence any other services women workers provided would be of less value in the community. Conversely, male nurses and male secretaries would receive lower ratings too. This may have psychological implications.

Stereotypic gender occupational orientations are very much in evidence and closely linked to the structure of efficacy beliefs. Girls perceived occupational efficacy centers on service, clerical, caretaking, and teaching pursuits, whereas boys judge themselves more efficacious for careers in science, technology, computer systems, and physically active pursuits. (Bussey and Bandura. 2012). Research by Mapfumo, Chireshe and Peresuh, (2002) in Zimbabwe indicated that; “the boys and girls respondents tended to choose stereotypical jobs. Male respondents expected to do the male jobs, while female respondents expected to do female jobs”. Studies by Ji et al (2004) confirmed that females seem to express greater levels of self-efficacy for artistic and social professions, while males do so for realistic professions such as engineering, building and other mechanical professions.

Whilst the society may frown at a woman who ventures into careers considered as “traditionally male” like mining and building, the same society may be more tolerant to a man venturing into a traditionally considered female career like nursing or secretariat. In their research, O’ Bryant et al (1978) observed that girls are more liberal than boys in the sense of being willing to see occupations as open to both sexes. They also noted that children tend to be more opposed to women adopting male roles than they are to men adopting women’s roles. Similar observations were also made by Mendez and Crawford, (2012) where females seem to show greater gender-role flexibility in their career aspirations than males.

Golden (2011) asserts that of late most females are no longer inhibited by these career stereotypes, instead, they appear to feel comfortable pursuing male, female, or unisex careers. On the other hand, some male students appear hesitant to pursuing female dominated or unisex careers. In other words, categories of occupations commonly viewed by society as unisex are considered acceptable occupations by female students while male students appear to be uncomfortable pursuing these occupations. Shepard and Hess’s findings, cited by O’ Bryant et al, (0000) also confirm this observation; 15% of boys and 44% of girls thought that either sex could fix a car, (a traditionally masculine profession) yet 18% of the boys and 56 % of the girls thought that either sex could be a secretary- a traditionally feminine occupation. This is contrary to an observation by Lent 1994, in Bussey and Bandura, (2012), that women tend to gravitate toward female-dominant occupations and shun male-dominated ones (Lent et al., 1994)

Studies in Zimbabwe and in other countries seem to indicate there still remains some professions that are deemed by the society as exclusively for males and others that are not considered within the norms as suitable for females. Mapfumo, Chireshe and Peresuh, (2002) contends that “evidence shows that there is a strong agreement between female and male perceptions about the jobs that should be done by females. Students indicated catering, health, secretarial and designing as jobs for females. O’ Bryant et al (1978) also made similar observations in USA, “Whilst being a doctor, pilot and lawyer was acceptable for females, being a soldier, fireman, auto mechanic, plumber or truck driver was not acceptable for females.”

However, other studies indicate that collectivist societies tend have a stronger influence on the choice of a career by young people based on social expectations than individualistic societies. Abbasi and Sarwat (2014) assert that in countries which are high on masculinity and collectivist dimension females tend to be more prone to social influences; hence family and teachers strongly influence their career decisions

B. Family Values and Expectations

The family has a very profound influence in socializing the growing individual (Bussey and Bandura, 2012; Mapfumo et al, 2005). Gender stereotyping of careers can begin as early as during infancy, when parents buy toys for their little ones. A message is communicated by the type of toys we buy for our babies; this might lay a foundation for the choice of a career. For example, building blocks are usually bought for boys and dollies for girls. Campenni, 1999 in Bussey and Bandura, (2012) noted that parents view feminine toys and activities as more gender stereotypical than masculine toys and activities, which also contributes to their greater acceptance of cross-gender conduct by girls than by boys. Struthers, (2014) also concurs with that as she states that in most toy shops the range of boys toys is almost always far larger than the range of girl toys. Hence, in addition to dolls, most parents buy the so called masculine toys for their girl children. This lenience in favour of girls will instill a desire in older females to venture more into unisex or the so called masculine careers.

In longitudinal studies, Eccles (1989) found that parents generally subscribe to the cultural stereotype that boys are more naturally endowed than girls for quantitative activities, despite equivalent achievement in mathematics. The more parents stereotype mathematics as a naturally male domain, the more they underestimate their daughters' math abilities, overestimate the difficulty of the subject for them, attribute their successes to dint of hard work, and discourage them from computer and mathematical activities (Bussey and Bandura, 2012). Parents may exert their influence as guardians, role models, teachers, as well as counsellors. Modeling can either promote or demote gender biased career stereotypes. Bandura and Bussey, (2012) contends that if both parents and teachers would shun stereotypic modeling of occupations, then children’s career aspirations will not be influenced by gender biased stereotypes.

This gender dichotomization and asymmetry is stronger for fathers than mothers in giving career guidance. Fathers are more active in differentiating gender attributes and roles and more demanding of male orientations in their sons (Bussey and Bandura, 2012). This paternal influence tends to persist throughout childhood although it may wane with age. As role models, most parents, relatives and significant others, assume that their children will take after their occupation. This was a noted observation in the researches done by Mutekwe et al., (2012) that from most girls’ responses, parental occupations and those of their relatives or older siblings have a tremendous influence on their ultimate career choices as the stated by a female student who plans to become an apprentice as an electrical engineer since her dad works in ZESA (Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority) as an electrician.

Schuette, (2012) also confirms that there is a significant relationship between boys' career aspirations and the occupations of the working male adults in their

homes. Generally, where more adult males had stereotypically masculine jobs, the children followed suit.

C. Influence of the Educational System (Textbooks, Curriculum and Schools)

The educational system plays a significant role in socializing children. The influence of the educational system in promoting gender stereotyping of careers come in several ways like; illustrations in textbooks, the school curriculum (subjects offered), extracurricular activities. Teachers also exert their influence as role models or as counselors. Recent research in Zimbabwe as in elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, is conforming that schools play a major role in socializing children into gender roles they will carry out both in the family and the economy. Boys are taught to be “masculine” and girls “feminine”, according to the norms of their society (Gordon, 1998). The self-beliefs and competencies acquired during this formative period of schooling, carry especially heavy weight because they shape the course of career choices and development. (Bussey and Bandura, 2012 p. 175). The textbooks used in schools also exert a profound influence on socializing children into gender stereotyped careers. As early as primary school the typical picture of a miner, builder or carpenter is a male figure and a nurse, secretary or hairdresser is represented by a female figure. This is reinforced in the classroom and at play as children begin to imagine what they want to become for a career. Bussey and Bandura, (2012), observed that; pertaining to gender stereotyping of careers, teachers have been reported to criticize children for engaging in play activities considered inappropriate for their gender.

In Zimbabwean History textbooks such as *People Making History* certain illustrations and grammatical contexts make a statement about gender stereotyping of careers. Studies indicate that; pictures of women at the kitchen sink, women cultivating and harvesting crops, women gathering firewood or making baskets and fetching water were typical illustrations of gender stereotyping of careers, with context stated as follows *she is a nurse, she is a dressmaker, she is a gardener, he is a painter, and he is a doctor...* (Mutekwe and Modiba, 2012; Chawafambira, 2010), Most men in the textbooks are portrayed as doctors, school heads, drivers while females are depicted as home makers etc. Such stereotypes affect career decisions by the girls. The subjects offered at secondary schools have a strong decisive bearing in the subjects chosen at A' level and the ultimate career choice at tertiary level. Generally “Boys High Schools” may not offer Fashion and fabrics, as a subject, neither will “Girls” schools offer Building or Woodwork. This means the choices will only be made from the subjects offered.

Teachers also influence career decisions as advisors or counselors. Most teachers tend to categorize academic subjects as either feminine or masculine. Studies by Mutekwe et al, (2012) indicated that “participants concurred that for them subjects like Mathematics and pure sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) should fall in the masculine category, while the feminine category should

include those such as Home Economics, Humanities and Typing. As the students are ready to choose practical subjects at O'level, the general counsel they are given is if you are a female student it is wise to select subjects that lead you to a feminine career pathway and the same is true for male students.

The ratios of female: male teachers teaching Mathematics, Physics, Building and female: male teachers teaching Biology, Languages, Fashion and fabrics, Food and Nutrition says a lot about teachers as role models. Generally more male teachers dominate the teaching of science subjects and technical subjects. As a result most girls may hesitate to attempt a career of their passion due to lack role models.

Whatever attitudes and philosophies the teachers learned or adopted in college these are subsequently passed on to their students. Research in Southern Africa revealed that through the gender typing of subjects, schools channel learners into dichotomized occupational trajectories. Some of the research participants indicated that teachers, (both males and females) labeled subjects as feminine or masculine. Hence, subjects such as Home economics, Biology and Tourism were classified as feminine, ideal for girls; and technical Graphics, Physics and Mathematics as masculine hence suitable for boys as they believed boys should aspire to do challenging occupations (Mutekwe & Modiba, 2012).

Bussey and Bandura, (2012) noted that most school counselors tend encourage and support the interest of boys in scientific fields; on the other hand, many counselors down play girls' aspirations by steering them off from mathematical, scientific and technical fields of study. Instead they are encouraged to follow vocational paths below their levels of ability. Once the crucial subjects are dropped in early secondary school, (Form Three), this will screen out certain careers that require Mathematics and other scientific subjects. Inadequate foundational preparation filters out most females from entering a career of their interest. “Females enroll in significantly fewer higher level mathematics, science and computer courses; have less interest in these subjects; and view them as less useful to their lives than do their male counterparts. The channeling of interests into different academic domains has a profound impact on career paths. Inadequate preparation in mathematics is an especially serious barrier because it filters out a large number of career options requiring this competency” (Bussey and Bandura, 2012). Therefore, if ever changes have to take place they have to begin at tertiary level like at Teachers' Training Colleges, convincing the teachers to give appropriate counseling in subject selection.

According to studies gathered across 50 countries, Struthers, 2014 contends that as a result of the gender stereotyping of occupations, by the time they are in high school, fewer girls pursue mathematics and science subjects than boys. Ultimately, the girl who does not have mathematics and sciences is eliminated from pursuing the

male dominated careers such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM)

D. Economic Status of the Country

Besides these socializing influences the economic status of the country also contributes to promoting or demoting gender stereotyping of careers. From earliest history, in most cultures, the woman’s place is the home and the men would be expected to go out as breadwinners. Occasionally women would be forced to do the masculine jobs in the case of widowhood or single-parenting. Marked changes were observed during war times when most men had been recruited into war. Consequently there was a shortage of manpower in industries. Some homes were left without the father, (breadwinner) as a result the women needed to work as breadwinners. The rise in the standard of living has also contributed to forcing the women to join the workforce as professionals. This way they can earn some money and supplement the husband’s income. Generally in countries where the economy does not allow families to thrive on one salary, more women opt to join the workforce. The greater challenge then will be which profession to train for if there is the dichotomization of professions as male and female.

Through gender role socialization girls and boys tend to acquire early beliefs about their social roles and this has been found to exert significant influences on their education and career aspirations and choices.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a descriptive survey research design.

A. Population of Study

Solusi University offers a bachelor of Education degree program for diploma holding teachers. The enrolment is about 450 students; about 50% of these are secondary school teachers. It is from this population of 200 teachers that the researcher drew a sample.

B. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researcher purposively sampled secondary school teachers. From this group of secondary school teachers 118 participants were randomly sampled; 67 were males and 51 were females. This group of trained secondary school teachers have at least two years of teaching and are usually considered as role models and mentors by the adolescents in secondary schools. Since teachers represent parents (*in loco parentis*) they are usually consulted in subject selection and career decisions. Most of these teachers also teach guidance and counseling at their schools. Children at the career decision making stage are socialized mainly by the home, the school and significant others. Therefore, whatever values, attitudes or opinions the teachers hold about gender stereotyping of careers may act as a force of influence on the growing adolescents. Thus it was considered necessary to purposively select the sample from this group.

C. Instruments

A self-made closed form questionnaire, consisting of two sections was used. Section A consisted of a list of 30 common occupations, in a column. The respondent was requested to give their opinion as to the suitability of each listed profession for male, for females or for both (Unisex). Section B of the questionnaire requested the participant to state the reason(s) for the way they classified the professions. One Hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed and 118 were returned.

D. Data Collection

The primary sources of data were adults, both male and female secondary school teachers. Secondary sources include library and internet sources.

E. Data Analysis

The results of this survey were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences, (SPSS 20.0) and they are summarized in Frequency tables below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	67	56.8	56.8	56.8
	female	51	43.2	43.2	100.0
	Total	118	100.0	100.0	

Table 1:- Gender distribution (N= 118)

The respondents comprised of 56.8 % males and 43.2% females. This is quite representative of typical secondary school composition. Usually there are relatively more male teachers in secondary schools and relatively more female teachers in primary schools.

Occupation	Frequency	%
Accountant	88	74.6
Actor	95	80.5
Artist	98	83.1
Doctor	83	70.3

Journalist	87	73.7
Lawyer	77	65.3
Musician	98	83.1
Nurse	58	49.2
Pharmacist	84	71.2
Police Officer	77	65.3
Teacher	89	75.4

Table 2:- Occupations commonly considered suitable for both sexes (unisex)

It is interesting to note that certain occupations traditionally considered as masculine, such as accountancy, medical doctor and police officer are now considered as suitable for either males or females. On the other hand, other occupations traditionally associated with females have now been invaded by males. This is confirmed among the male respondents where 36/67 (53.7%) of the males indicated that nursing is suitable for both and 30/67 (44.8%) indicated that it is suitable for females only; while on the other hand, 22/51 (43.1 %) indicated nursing is suitable for both, while 26/51 (51%) of the females indicated that it is suitable for females only, see Table 3.. This is contrary to the results of studies by (Golden, 2011) which indicated that most males seem hesitant to venture into female dominated occupations.

Count				
		gender		Total
		male	female	
Nurse	Male	1	3	4
	Female	30	26	56
	Both	36	22	57
Total		67	51	118

Table 3:- Nurse * gender Cross tabulation

	Frequency	%
Builder	92	78.0
Driver	77	65.3
Electrician	69	58.5
Engineer	74	62.7
Mechanics	83	70.3
Miner	91	77.1
Pastor	70	59.3
Plumber	91	77.1
Security officer	79	66.9

Table 4:- Occupations respondents indicate are typical masculine

It appears there are still some occupations considered predominantly masculine. This is supported by the mostly cited reason for classifying occupations as the physiological differences between males and females.

Occupation	Frequency	%
Baby minder/ nanny	95	80.5
Hairdresser	73	61.9
Secretary	74	62.7

Table 5:- Occupations considered typical feminine

Apparently there are few occupations that are considered strictly suitable for females, as reflected in Table 5. This seems to agree with.

Reason for classifying * gender Cross tabulation					
Count					
		gender		Total	Percentage
		male	female		
Reason	Physiology	30	28	58	49.2
	gender balance	14	12	26	22.0
	Culture	12	8	20	16.9
	Other	11	3	14	11.9
Total		67	51	118	

Table 6:- Reasons for classifying occupations

Almost 50% of the respondents cited physiological differences between male and female and while 22% cited gender equality as reason for classifying the occupations. A very small number (less than 20%) indicated that cultural background influenced them in classifying occupations as masculine, feminine or unisex. This seems to be in agreement with earlier studies that indicated that some gender differences are biologically founded (Beall & Steinberg, 1993; Epstein, 1997). However, other studies posit that difference in degree of brain lateralization is assumed to produce gender differences in cognitive processing. Although girls generally do better on verbal tasks, and boys do better on some types of mathematical tasks, the differences are small (Mendez and Crawford, 2012).

Most professions were considered to be non-gender-stereotyped or unisex. The professions cited by most participants as gender stereotypical included such

professions like baby-minder/ nanny, builder, miner, plumber, hairdresser etc. The following occupations; Driver (66.7%) Mechanic (64.1%) and Engineering, (56.4%) were classified by most participants as male dominated occupations and these (Secretarial, 57.5%) and Nursing (47.5%) as more suitable for females but on the over-all suitable for both.

On comparing the opinions of both males and females about the normally labeled MALE or FEMALE occupations the results indicated that both males and females seemed to maintain these distinct categories. It seems females are more reserved in classifying the traditionally male or traditionally female occupations as UNISEX. Most of the percentages of females are lower than the male percentages. Unlike in the western world, most females seem keen to venture into the male dominated professions, as observed by Bussey and Bandura (2012)

	Occupation	% of male respondents		% of female respondents	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Engineer	9	60%	8	30%
2	Nurse	8	53%	12	50%
3	Builder	3	20%	5	20.8%
4	Plumber	3	20%	5	20.8%
5	Miner	5	33.3%	4	16.7%
6	Mechanic	6	40%	9	37.5%
7	Electrician	10	66.7%	8	33.3%
8	Hairdresser	6	40%	8	33.3%
9	Secretary	5	33.3%	8	33.3%
10	Babyminder	2	13.3%	4	16.7%

Table 7:- Comparison of male and female opinions about classification of certain occupations as suitable for both or as “UNISEX“ occupations

The majority of the professions were considered as suitable for either sex. This included such occupations like teacher, medical doctor, artist, musician, police officer, pastor.

F. Reasons for Classification

The reasons for classification of occupations as suitable for males, female or unisex commonly cited by most participants were grouped into 4 different categories listed below;

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
1. Natural endowments (Physical strength, patience,)	18	52.9
2. Gender equality	7	20.6
3. Societal or cultural expectations	4	11.8
4. Other reasons	4	11.8
Total	34	

Table 8:- Reasons for classification of occupations into different categories

The reason cited by the majority (52.9%) of the respondents for distinguishing between male, female or unisex occupations was the natural endowments like physiological anatomical and emotional differences between male and females. These cannot be easily modified like attitudes about gender disparity, cultural expectations or even the working condition. Childbearing physiology demands that females maintain and preserve their health by avoiding physically strenuous occupations. They are also described as natural homemakers therefore they need more time with the family and they cannot also work away from home for too long.

Second among the reasons cited, was “gender equality” (20.9%). This was raised by both males and females, although relatively more females voiced it. This is expected from the background of females feeling under-represented in most occupations; hence most young women have not been very ambitious due to lack of role models. The most repeated statement was “provide equal opportunity” for both males and females.

Third (20%) most important reason, were cultural and societal expectations. Since society dictates the norms, O’Byrant, et al (1978 p. 298) observed that ” if children and adults do have prejudices against males and females

adopting non-traditional roles...presumably there would be less respect for a woman auto-mechanic or woman plumber and the services of these women workers provided would be of less value in the community. Conversely, male nurses and male secretaries would receive lower ratings too.”

The other reasons were; “most women may not do well in leadership positions because most of them easily become emotional or will personalize issues.” From a cultural perspective, men are accepted as leaders, since they easily win the respect of most people.

This concurs with findings from studies by Mapfumo, Chireshe and Peresuh, (2002) that indicated that although there is so much talk about gender equality and efforts to promote opportunities for both sexes are made, our society is not yet as lenient with females venturing into the so-called masculine occupations as in the Western Countries where males can venture freely into the traditionally labeled feminine professions. Zimbabwe being more or less collectivist community, with a strong social fabric, promotes strong societal influence on career decisions; unlike individualistic communities whereby each young person can freely make personal decisions about careers. This is contrary to what Gibson & Mitchell, (1985) say about the Western Countries where males can venture

freely into the female dominated professions and vice versa. In our society, if a male ventures into female dominated occupations it is considered degrading whereas when a female ventures into male dominated professions they are considered as tough (willing to go against the current) because usually they suffer a lot of resistance and may lack social support.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the fore going discussion, the following points were noted;

1. There are still some occupations that the society considers more suitable for males than for females and others that are more suitable for females than for males for the reasons mentioned above. This is similar to findings by Miller and Budd, (2006) and Mendez and Crawford. (2012), Bussey Bandura, (2012). Mapfumo, Chireshe & Peresuh, (2002).
2. Majority of the common occupations cannot be considered exclusively for males or exclusively for females, but rather can be termed unisex.
3. The common basis for classifying occupations as “Male” or “Female” or “unisex” is consideration for natural physiological, anatomical and emotional differences between males and females, although there are some females that are more emasculated than other females and some males that are more feministic than the general male. Females are generally believed to do much better than most males in occupations generally ear-marked as feminine (Like nursing, baby minding, Nanny).
4. The attitudes and opinions the career guidance counselors hold about different careers influences the counselees.

Therefore, it is important for career guidance counselors, to expose all the students to all the available career opportunities, provide unbiased information and invite guests, typical role models from different occupations to address them as they make career decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study give a general overview of the opinions some secondary school teachers on gender stereotyping of occupations. The researcher recommends that secondary school teachers involved in career guidance provide adequate career information to the students so that they make informed career decisions. Since this study was carried out at Solusi University, the sample was drawn from a relatively small population; hence the conclusions may not be generalized to all populations. It is recommended that a more extensive study be carried out involving adults from different settings, like from the rural areas or from urban areas.

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