

# The Influence of Gender Stereotype on Women Career Development

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## Abstract:

As gender stereotypes influence people's impressions and ways of making decisions about others, their career development might also be affected. These preconceived notions often lead to biases in how we evaluate and interact with people in various aspects of life, including the professional realm. As a result, these stereotypes can have a profound impact on an individual's career trajectory and overall career development. This study will investigate the negative effects of gender stereotypes on women's career development. Previous studies have proven that women's self-evaluation and others' comments on them will both be affected. Common examples include women caring more about families than work, women having weaker abilities in logical reasoning and calculation, and doing management work. Influenced by such stereotypes, their opportunities being recruited, being promoted and their confidence will be negatively affected. This study uses secondary research to summarise previous literature, experiments, and primary investigations to prove the impact. Since these negative impacts may limit women's career development and affect their mental status, realizing the effects brought by gender stereotypes is important, as it helps women to get better opportunities at work.

**Keywords:** Gender stereotype; gender bias; social psychology; women career development.

## 1. Introduction

Gender stereotype refers to beliefs about the behaviours and characteristics of each sex [1]. It brings people certain beliefs, such as women are emotional and caring, while men are considered rational and athletic. Obviously, such descriptions do not apply to the whole gender group, so they are perceived to be gender stereotypes. However, gender stereotypes

still strongly influence some individual's personal choices and social gender expectations. For example, children's interests and high school students' academic performance in mathematics are both affected by gender stereotypes [2, 3]. Gender stereotype also has a social impact on people's careers. For instance, women are usually recognised as caring for the family and doing household chores, while men are expected to be responsible for work and earn money

[4]. Furthermore, studies have shown that in gender stereotypes, women may be thought to be more suitable to become nurses, teachers, or secretaries, and men are considered to be appropriate to work in mathematics, physics or engineering [4]. Also, individuals' self-evaluation and confidence might be affected by stereotypes, too [5]. Therefore, women's career development might be influenced by such kind of stereotype. This study will mainly focus on the negative influence of gender stereotypes on women's career development. While continue to search for evidence of some common stereotypes about women's jobs, this study will also explore the influence these stereotypes about jobs have on women themselves and their decisions, such as their confidence and their choice when looking for jobs.

## 2. Methodology

The main research method used in this review is secondary literature reading. Google Scholar and CNKI are used as databases. While books, journals, and dissertations are all considered as available support for this study, books and journals are preferred as they provide more reliable information. New studies are preferred over older studies since their theories are more up-to-date and suitable for current conditions. However, previous studies are considered if they are from reliable sources or have been cited or proved by later researchers to gain their reliability. The typical keywords are set as "gender stereotype," "women career," and "women job," to ensure the relevance of the material selected.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Gender Stereotype

Stereotypes are defined as a set of beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of a group [6]. According to Del Boca, gender stereotypes can be defined as beliefs about the behaviours and characteristics of each sex, which is supported by Martin et al. [1, 7]. To be conclusive, gender stereotypes are common beliefs in society about the behaviour and features of women and men, girls and boys. A typical example of such a stereotype is appearance, saying that women should wear make-up and dress and have long hair, and men should cut short hair and wear trousers. As Banaji and Greenwald pointed out, gender stereotypes rarely consider fact or individual differences [8]. Therefore, gender stereotypes can be regarded as inaccurate since it is only a fixed opinion about gender roles.

### 3.2 Gender Stereotypes about Women's Career

There have been studies proving that science subjects such as mathematics, engineering, chemistry, and physics are study fields or occupations more suitable to men rather than women, and this kind of belief is called mathematics-gender stereotype [9]. Besides, some male managers or workers believe males are more likely to succeed in work management as they have some necessary characteristics [10]. Martin et al. gave a possible reason for this situation, which means that more features and attributes like nurturance and relationship orientation are typically considered as women's characteristics, while they usually have no direct or obvious relationship to leadership or management ability [7]. To sum up, a lot of studies have proved that women are believed to have a weaker ability to deal with mathematical problems and do management work.

### 3.3 Influence of Gender Stereotype on Women Career Development

Since women are believed to have a weaker ability to deal with scientific problems than men, they lose some career opportunities [11]. In an investigation carried out by MacNell et al., it was discovered that when teachers use male names instead of female names, the comments to the teacher of online courses will become nearly a full percentage point higher than when the teacher used a female name [12]. The stereotype also works on women's self-evaluation. Studies have found that females feel less confident than males even if they get more positive feedback than males when they are asked to complete tests about Science, arithmetic reasoning, mathematical knowledge, mechanical understanding, and assembling objects [13]. Hence, it can be concluded that gender stereotypes not only affect others' feedback towards women's careers but also influence women's self-evaluation.

As gender stereotypes have been spread in society and believed by lots of people, it might become a kind of common sense in someone's mind. Once these beliefs are fixed in people's impressions, they might become part of their subconsciousness and affect their inner thinking and external decisions, even if they do not realize stereotypes impact them. Hence, people's evaluation of female workers will be influenced by both employers and clients. They might choose, employ, or rate the workers according to the standard in their mind, and stereotypes might have shaped this standard. For example, when employers are recruiting computer programmers or other jobs involving mathematics or physics, gender stereotypes might have some impact on their way of making decisions, leading to the result that male workers are preferred, and female

workers might lose their potential job opportunities even if they have strong ability. Also, their promotion chance will decrease, as gender stereotypes will have some implicit effects on managers' judgment. For example, in an investigation studying a British company, when deciding about workers' bonuses, male executives were taken into account while female executives seemed to be forgotten [14].

Moreover, their self-evaluation might also be affected. Since gender stereotypes have been spread in society and gradually become a wrong common sense, they may internalize into workers' subconsciousness and affect their confidence and decisions. For instance, some women might be unconfident when competing with men for higher management work. They may tend to think they have weaker working abilities than men, as their standard of evaluating themselves and others might be affected by gender stereotypes. Hence, their confidence is lost, leading to a loss of their passion for competing, and even someone will abandon the opportunity as they think they cannot overcome the challenge and defeat their male competitors.

The stereotypes have some negative impacts on women's mental health and further job development. Studies show that women need to work harder to offset the negative stereotypes their leaders make about them. Furthermore, managers' stereotypes in their minds may lead to women's dissatisfaction, and some may leave the company and create some extra cost, both to the enterprise and to women themselves [15]. To sum up, gender stereotypes will have abundant negative impacts on women's job development by limiting their opportunities to be recruited and get promotions and decreasing their confidence.

## 4. Implications

Existing literature gave some practical examples of gender stereotypes in female careers and also several reasons why these stereotypes are generated and can become commonly agreed upon in society. It has been proven that such kinds of stereotypes have some negative impacts on women's career development. They might become less confident to work and pursue higher promotion since their ability in mathematics or management might be reckoned as weak widely in their company and the whole society. However, some women have problems that are more serious, such as mental disorders. Further study can be about psychological disorders like depression or anxiety. Once emotional problems remain and develop into mental disorders, it could be much more painful for these patients and lead to more impacts on female career development. Also, this study is done by secondary research, so the primary investigation could be expected in further studies since it

provides more reliable sources. Further research could be carried out by questionnaire surveys, interviews, and secondary literature reading. In addition, the idea of studying the positive effects of gender stereotypes can be carried out in the future as the double-sided argument makes the comment on stereotypes become more dialectical and reasonable.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, gender stereotype is considered to be too one-sided. In the stereotypes, women are usually regarded as lacking the ability to solve mathematics or science problems and the ability to lead and manage others at work. They are usually believed to be more likely to do caring jobs such as nurse or teacher and even stay at home as a housewife doing chores without a job in society. These stereotypes lead to a lot of problems, such as reducing women's confidence when applying for competing for recruitment or promotions. Furthermore, these women may experience a diminished sense of motivation to engage in their professional endeavors, as their skills and capabilities are frequently met with skepticism and mistrust from their managers or colleagues. The pervasive nature of gender stereotypes serves to generate a multitude of negative impacts on women's career development, hindering their progress and opportunities for advancement.

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