

Gender Socialization and Its Impact on Educational Choices

Yuhan Deng*

Education, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author: Yuhana_Dyh@hotmail.com

Abstract:

From birth to adulthood, individuals are socialised into a particular gender and this paper explores how gender socialisation influences educational choices and analyses the roles of the family, school and society. It is found that family, school and society play an important role in shaping an individual's gender socialisation, and that families can break down gender bias by changing their own traditional behaviours, breaking down gender stereotypes, not interfering with their children's interests, and encouraging and allowing their children to make free choices about their education. Teachers in schools can avoid the impact of gender socialisation on educational choices by providing equal and inclusive educational opportunities and learning resources, and teachers should guide their students in shaping a value system that is free from gender bias and offer more diverse curricula. Gender equality should be promoted on social media to break down traditional gender stereotypes and minimise the impact of gender socialisation on educational choices.

Keywords: Gender socialization, educational choices, gender stereotype.

1. Introduction

Gender socialisation refers to the process of assigning specific social perceptions, gender roles and gender behaviours to individuals from birth through to adulthood when they are growing up in society and the social institutions such as family, school, social media and so on have different expectations of gender roles [1]. In gender socialisation, individuals will gradually grow up according to the prevailing social perceptions of gender roles, such as stereotypical impressions and requirements of men and women in terms of their behaviour, personality, interests and hobbies; men should be firm and outgoing, and women should be docile and well-behaved, and thus individuals will grow up identifying with these perceptions and change themselves subconsciously, and begin to grow up in the direction of the social expectations. According to Bem, people are born into a process where they must accept how they are perceived by society's home school [2]. In the process of gender socialisation, the presence of stereotypes or perceptions of gender roles may affect a child's life, especially in terms of educational choices. Gender socialisation has a profound impact on educational choices, where there is a clear difference between the roles played by males and females in education, for example, in terms of subjects' future careers. In society, it is believed that males should study science, such as math, physics, chemistry, and other areas of study. In contrast, females study more suitable liberal arts, nursing, languages, writ-

ing, and so on. Favara's study shows that differences in educational choices are largely influenced by gender stereotypes [3]. Therefore, there are many reasons why gender roles differ in educational choices, and this paper will describe and argue in detail how gender socialisation impacts educational decisions and some suggestions.

2. Influencing Factors

2.1 Family Factors

People grow up with gender socialisation, which affects children from home to school to society. Family factors greatly influence the choice of education, and parents have been with their children since birth and are, therefore, their first teachers [4]. Firstly, children's education choice is influenced by family economic factors and family ideology. Because the income of the parents of each family is different, the economic level of each family is also different, resulting in some of the rich and poor gap being too large. Families with good economic conditions can choose education and send their children to private schools, resources and facilities of better schools and even send their children abroad to study for further education. A professional education needs to spend money to get a better education. Then, the economic conditions of the average family can only be read in ordinary public schools; the resources and facilities of the school are not so advanced, and they can not choose their own education. According to Pimpa, research shows that family financial

influence and family expectations are the most important influences that affect children's choice of education; Thai undergraduate students are more likely to be influenced by family financial influence because the tuition fees of good university schools and good majors are not cheap, and four years of university is a lot of money. However, Thai PhD students are more likely to be influenced by family expectations [5]. Family's educational expectations also influence children's educational choices to a certain extent because parents' expectations of their children may be influenced by gender socialisation. According to Dryler's study, children are most influenced by their families during adolescence and childhood because many children imitate their parents by taking their parents' role models; boys imitate their fathers, and girls imitate their mothers [6]. Suppose traditional gender roles influence the occupations of mothers and fathers. In that case, these children will also imitate them, and to a certain extent, the children's educational choices will also be influenced by traditional gender roles. For example, men should work harder to earn money to support the family and take responsibility for supporting the family. At the same time, women need to stay at home to raise their children and take care of the family. Their careers depend on the men, and over time, the children may think that this is the correct allocation of social roles. The parents' stereotypical and prejudiced views of gender roles will also lead to the children's educational choices. According to Blakemore research, women's toys are more gentle and also related to domestic skills, such as toys from childhood are over the house cooking toys, medical equipment as a petite nurse to play give others lancets or dress up Barbie dolls dress up, etc., in their minds these seem to be in line with women's careers, and therefore in the future will be affected by the educational choices, and the boys' toys are considered to be stimulating and dangerous, such as knives, guns, dinosaurs, etc.[7]. In this society, there are many gender stereotypes that boys should choose to like the colour blue from childhood, like guns and police officers, and for educational choices, males must choose science; girls should like pink from childhood, like Barbie dolls, and for educational choices females should choose liberal arts and graduate as teachers and nurses later on. According to Javed's study, parental perceptions of education affect their children's educational choices. Parents' conception of education affects their children's choices. Parents usually help their children choose subjects based on their perception of gender roles, and they never consider which subjects and majors their children are interested in [8].

2.2 School Factors

Gender socialisation is also influenced by the school and

the teacher, both of which play an essential role. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's research, when children reach a certain age, they leave their parents and enter school; at this time, children's ideas and perceptions are still in a state of ignorance, and at school, the teacher will transmit cultural values and the choice of subjects, so, to a certain extent, the words and actions of the school and the teacher will affect children's gender perceptions, gender roles and other concepts [9]. In schools, teachers may have stereotypical views of gender roles and do not care what courses students prefer or want to take but only emphasise the traditional gender role assignments in choosing subjects. According to Miller et al., research surveys show that Physics, Engineering, and Maths are usually rated as subjects that boys should study, and Languages, Politics and English are usually considered to be subjects for girls; as people get older, there is less and fewer stereotyping, this is mainly female data, females are less and less stereotyped about subjects and think that all these jobs can be done and not only males can do them [10]. Many children grow up with only males and females in their minds about jobs, but nowadays, many females are strong in maths and science. A study by Song et al. showed that gender stereotypes have an impact on the performance of female high school students in maths; a student who dislikes maths has a high probability of not being able to learn it because in his subjectivity he himself is not suited to learn the subject and therefore loses his confidence, then the subject is doomed to failure [11]. Because of the lack of emotional solidity, behavioural factors towards mathematics affect female students' self-confidence and interest in the subject, which ultimately affects the student's performance in mathematics. If a person does not like the subject, does not like him from the bottom of his heart to dislike he is doomed not to learn a good course, so if there is a gender bias in the subject, it will, to a certain extent, affect the children's life choices and development, miss all aspects of talent. In addition, school teachers may differ in their approach to the curriculum and teaching methods. According to the Shafina study, gender expectations for men are higher than for women. Men are expected to enter lucrative professions, and boys seem to be born better bosses than girls [12]. Therefore, schools will recommend boys choose science subjects because the salary of graduates from science subjects is higher than that of arts subjects, and some school teachers will use male teaching methods for subjects suitable for males, ignoring whether female students can keep up with the pace of learning. Thus, gender socialisation of students by schools and teachers may result in students not being able to choose their education accurately and being vulnerable to social interference.

2.3 Aspects of Socialisation

Finally, the impact of gender socialisation on educational choices may also be influenced by aspects of socialisation. According to Eagly, many factors contribute to gender differences. Although certain biological factors influence gender differences, they are not the only factor; gender differences are caused by the process of socialisation [13]. Social concepts, social structure, social institutions, etc., may influence it. The media is one of the most important ways to influence gender socialisation, as it presents views on gender perception through television, newspapers, and radio. According to Goodall's study, American society rejects the stereotypes cultivated by the media, and the outside world can easily influence people to change their view of the world around them [14]. Because a person's gender socialisation is received from an early age, according to Witt's research, television is the media that most easily influences children's socialisation; preschool children watch television in addition to sleep, an average of thirty hours a week, and by the time the children are sixteen years old, they have watched television for longer than they go to school. By reaching adulthood, they have already seen thousands of advertisements [15]. Studies have shown that television significantly influences children's attitudes towards gender and educational choices [16]. Media advertisements often show stereotypical gender roles; for example, many teachers and nurses on TV are played by women, thus leading children to grow up with the idea that teaching and nursing are women's professions and that males cannot take on the job, and that males are perceived to have technical engineering talents that females cannot achieve. Many TV dramas show women quitting their jobs to stay home as homemakers to care for the children and the family, while men need to earn money to support the family. Therefore, children watching TV already have this gender conception in their minds, and therefore, the media will affect the individual's views and attitudes towards educational choices.

3. Suggestion

Nowadays, changes in the ideology and culture of the family, society and school have successfully affected men's and women's views on gender roles and their choice of education, and this situation can be improved in the following ways.

3.1 Family

Firstly, in the family, parents should set up correct role perception and correct values from childhood, and should not impose their subjective ideas on their children, but should let their children have their own goals from child-

hood to pursue their dreams forever. Parents can change their behaviour so that their children are not influenced by stereotypical gender roles; for example, fathers can take care of their children at home, mothers can spend more time at work, etc., which will help their children establish a concept of gender equality.

3.2 Schools

As for schools, they should open up diversified curricula to achieve an inclusive and accessible school, allowing children to choose the subjects they are interested in and good at, instead of school teachers dictating that males have to take science subjects and females have to study arts subjects. Schools should adopt a series of measures to target problems such as gender discrimination and should not isolate and discriminate against others just because its gender roles are gender-neutral, so that children can grow up in a loving environment and so that their choices of education will not be biased. However, instead, they can choose what they are genuinely passionate about.

3.3 Society

On the social front, society should endeavour to eliminate gender stereotypes by formulating a series of policies and laws to eliminate gender stereotypes and discrimination. Advertisements and media easily influence people, so the media should strengthen the promotion of equal gender roles and convey a message that rejects traditional gender stereotypes and discrimination.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, through the in-depth study of this paper, gender socialisation has a significant impact on the choice of education. In the process of gender socialisation, children are subject to many external interferences and influences, and the three aspects of family, school and society not only influence children's behaviours and thoughts but also, to a certain extent, influence children's choices and judgments about their future education. At the family level, parents' stereotypical perceptions of gender and the family's economic environment are important influences. The education provided to children at school and the teachers' self-perception of the subject matter will also influence the students' judgement of their future educational choices. Gender stereotypes at the societal level also influence the perception of education in the country. Therefore, it is essential that all three parties work together to achieve gender equality and equal access to education by not being bound by old gender stereotypes and by allowing children to make their own choices about their education, minimising the negative impact of gender socialisation on educational choices.

References

- [1] Marsh, I. et al. *Classic and contemporary readings in sociology*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- [2] Bem, S. L. *The lenses of gender transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. Access and Diversity, Crane Library, University of British Columbia, 2015.
- [3] Favara, M. *The cost of acting "girly": Gender stereotypes and educational choices*. Bonn: University of Essex, 2012.
- [4] Crespi, I. *Socialization and gender roles within the family: A study on adolescents and their parents in Great Britain*. *MCFA Annals*, 2004, 3(2), 1-8.
- [5] Pimpa, N. *The influence of family on Thai students' choices of International Education*. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 2003, 17(5), 211–219.
- [6] Dryler, H. *Parental role models, gender and educational choice*. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1998, 49(3), 375.
- [7] Blakemore, J.E. and Centers, R.E. 'Characteristics of boys' and girls' toys', *Sex Roles*, 2005, 53(9–10), pp. 619–633.
- [8] Javed, M. *Investigating factors affecting students' subject selection at secondary school level*. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 2018, 18(11), 815–820.
- [9] UNESCO. *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring access to education for all*. UNESCO, 2005.
- [10] Miller, L. and Budd, J. 'The development of Occupational Sex-role stereotypes, occupational preferences and academic subject preferences in children at ages 8, 12 and 16', *Educational Psychology*, 1999, 19(1), pp. 17–35.
- [11] Song, J., Zuo, B. and Yan, L. 'Effects of gender stereotypes on performance in mathematics: A serial multivariable mediation model', *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 2016, 44(6), pp. 943–952.
- [12] Shafina, A. *Exploring the gender differences in selection of subjects at Higher Education Levels*, *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*. Available at: <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/IEJ/article/view/14633> (Accessed: 19 March 2024).
- [13] Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. *The nature–nurture debates. Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2013, 8(3), 340–357.
- [14] Goodall, H. 'Media's influence on gender stereotypes', *Media Asia*, 2012, 39(3), pp. 160–163.
- [15] Witt, S. D. *Review of research: The influence of television on children's gender role socialization*. *Childhood Education*, 2000, 76(5), 322–324.
- [16] Liebert, R. M., & Sprafkin, J. *The early window: Effects of television on children and youth* (3rd ed.). New York Pergamon Press., 1988.