



When Girls Hesitate to Contemplate a Career in The ICT Sector

Perienen Appavoo¹, Prretamsingh Dookhun², Rubeena Doomun³, Yudhansingh Boodhun⁴, Takesh Luckho⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Open University of Mauritius, Mauritius

ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 5 advocates for increased initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality. According to the UN Women Statement (2017) issued on International Girls in ICT Day, women are at risk of losing out on tomorrow's best ICT job opportunities, especially in STEM related fields. In Mauritius, girls outperform boys in Computer Science at secondary school level, and yet the ICT sector is largely male-dominated. This study aims at identifying factors hindering women opting for an ICT-related career. It also proposes a theoretical framework to guide policy formulation to encourage more girls and women join the ICT sector. A quantitative approach using structured questionnaires was adopted, and 111 women, from private and public organizations, not working in the ICT sector, participated in the survey. An Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed five factors hindering them from working in that sector and they are gender biasness, job characteristics, social influence, awareness and support, and computer science. Women also felt that they were both culturally and academically barred from this profession, not receiving adequate support and encouragement from school and home to do so. There was an overall perception that ICT jobs are male-oriented. However, a significant number of respondents were willing to reconsider their position in this matter and shift to an ICT-job if given the necessary support and training.

Keywords: Women; ICT sector; Computer job; Students; Computer Studies