

Gender Stereotyping in Educational Materials and Its Impact on Students' Career Aspirations in Nigeria

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Abstract

Educational materials play a critical role in shaping young people's perceptions of society and their place within it. However, many school textbooks and instructional resources continue to reproduce gender stereotypes that portray men and women in narrowly defined social and occupational roles. Drawing on insights from Gender Studies and Sociology of Education, this paper examines how gendered representations in educational materials influence students' career aspirations and self-perception. Through a critical analysis of selected primary and secondary school textbooks, the study explores patterns in the depiction of male and female characters, including the types of professions they occupy, the activities they perform, and the roles they are assigned within family and community contexts. Preliminary findings suggest that male characters are frequently portrayed in leadership, scientific, and technical roles, while female characters are more often associated with domestic responsibilities, caregiving, or supportive occupations. These representations subtly reinforce societal expectations about "appropriate" career paths for boys and girls. Such portrayals contribute to the internalization of gender norms at an early stage of socialization, potentially limiting students' ambitions and discouraging girls from pursuing fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The paper argues that educational materials function as part of a "hidden curriculum" that reproduces gender inequalities in the labour market. The study concludes by recommending gender-responsive curriculum reforms, inclusive textbook design, and teacher training initiatives aimed at promoting equitable representations that expand students' career possibilities regardless of gender.

Keywords: Gender stereotyping, Educational Materials, Career Aspiration