

Gender Socialization and Career Choice: The Challenges and Experiences of Student Workers in Accra, Ghana

Ama Bofo – Arthur¹

Abstract

Socialization has been identified as one of the key components that influence decision making in all aspects of our lives including career choice. In Africa, gender-distinctive socialization processes persist which tend to play a significant role in the career choice of the young adults. Individuals' social lives are deeply rooted in culture which tends to affect and shape members of society. Based on one's cultural beliefs, expectations, and practices, individuals are socialized to appreciate, plan, and prepare to consider career options that are appropriate, and or acceptable. Using semi-structured interviews, the author explored how gendered socialization breeds gender stereotypes and impacts the career choice process of young adults in society. Findings indicate that the fear of rejection, parental control, uncertainties, and role modeling contribute immensely to the career choice of young women. The study recommends that education, both formal and informal must be devoid of stereotypical idiosyncrasies as this affects eventual career choices of young women. This is imperative as it is linked with positive as well as psychological and socio-economic inequalities that persists and extends into an individual's adult life.

Keywords: gender socialization, gender inequality, cultural expectation, career choice

Introduction

Evidence abounds that men and women engage in diverse kinds of jobs (Reskin 1993; Jacobs 1995a; Jacobsen 1994), however, explanations as to why sex segregation in paid work persists is *unclear* while the consequences for gender inequality are clear. Cultural gender beliefs are the component of gender stereotypes that contain specific expectations for competence. It is this component, with its specific expectations of competence that presents special problems for gender equality (Ridgeway and Correll 2000). Hudson (2019) in exploring how gender bias affects students highlighted an age-long practice of how little girls dreamed only of becoming nurses or teachers and young boys exclusively aspired to be firefighters or engineers.

For several decades, there has been a fierce battle on gender inequality where individuals previously, could only engage in gender specific professions, chores, or activities (Hodges, 2017; Mukhopadhyay, 2001). At a point in time, schooling was a preserve for males only, and on occasions where one had to choose between the sexes, males had priority in many households because, it was believed that it was better to educate a man than a woman (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Reasons for this emanated from the '*supposed*' fact that women will eventually end up in the homes, and kitchens of their husbands as housewives or at most as subsistence farmers or engage in small informal activities because their primary responsibility was to reproduce and to care for their husbands and children (Hoza, 2013; Subramanian, 2018).

Over time, the essence of education has come to stay and several governments as well as advocacy groups have impressed on families and communities the essence of education, and education for all without discrimination. Notwithstanding advancements in education accompanied by shifts in attitudes (Donnelly et al., 2016), gender stereotypes continue to follow through from persisting segregation in occupation as well as the uneven division of labor and domestic work (Gerson, 2017). Whilst there have been studies in the developed world to show the changing nature of career stereotypes (Blau et al, 2013), in the developing world persistent biases thwart career choices of young women (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Studies conducted in the developing world have entailed deconstructing myths and stereotypes (Albien and Naidoo, 2017), exploring how stereotypes impede women's access to employment (SWAC/OECD, 2018), and the impact of stereotypes on career progression (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021) etc.

¹ School of Continuing and Distance Education, Department of Distance Education University of Ghana, Legon
abofo-arthur@ug.edu.gh; amabofoarthur@gmail.com

Studies in Ghana over the years have looked at shifting gender roles, gender roles and decision making, the future of work and young women etc (Wriggley-Asante, 2011; Dako-Gyeke, 2013). The absence of studies on how stereotypes have been defined thus affecting the nature of careers in the developing world however is nonexistent.

This paper, thus, follows the narrative on gendered career patterns by exploring how gendered socialization influences the choice of careers of females by asking what informs the decision on career choice and secondly, whether their options will change when given the opportunity to choose again. The next section reviews literature covering gender socialization, gender inequality, and career choice. This is followed by the methodology, then the presentation of findings and discussion, and finally the conclusion and implications of the paper.

Review of Literature

Gender Socialization

Gender Socialization refers to the process via which children learn about acceptable social expectations, attitudes and behaviors associated with an individual's gender. As children acquire a sense of their own gender identity (i. e., knowing whether they are a girl or a boy), they pay increased attention to information related to gender, and especially to same-gender models (Barker, 2006). So with gender socialization; children develop, refine and learn to 'do' gender through internalizing gender norms and roles as they interact with key agents of socialization, such as the family, social networks, and other social institutions (Neetu et. al. 2017 p.6). Internalization and acting out of gender norms is a crucial component of the socialization process. During adolescence, attitudes and behaviors peak giving room to new gender roles as well as the manifestation of some negative outcomes.

Gender socialization in practice is reinforced in various cultures by agents of socialization. Socialization according to Ryle (2011) is a lifelong process by which individuals learn the customs and social behaviors expected of them in their societies (Balvin, 2017). This gender awareness, in combination with an early exposure to gender from multiple sources of socialization such as parents, siblings, peers, and school or institutions of learning has immediate consequences on children's attitudes and behaviors toward members of their own and other-gender groups.

Simone de Beauvoir creates a distinction between the anatomical determinants with which one is born, and the product of societal and cultural norms when she wrote, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 1). One can be said to have learnt to act the part of a woman or a man through a process of gender socialization (Butler, 1996). Through socialization the behaviors and beliefs of a given society or social group are learnt or transferred from one generation to the other.

The climax of this process is a separation of the sexes; males are socialized to exude masculine qualities, traits, and tendencies and females equally to exhibit feminine qualities, traits, and tendencies. This is how one adopts gender roles that encompass behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes based on what it means to be one gender relative to the other (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender socialization is known to begin within the context of the family (McHale et al., 2003). This is where a child is introduced to the world and to the required expectations that the gender demands. Parents generally act as the principal socializing agents of a child's gender roles (Block, 1983; Witt, 1997). This is because the home is the first place a child is introduced to and this is facilitated by parents.

Two main schools of thought that are usually associated with socialization are identification theories, and social learning theories. With identification theories, a child's identification with the same-sex parent is emphasized as the most important factor in the development of the child's gender roles (Freud, 1962). Social learning theories, however, stress the role of reinforcement and modeling as foundational in gender roles acquisition. Gender-appropriate behaviors from children are often rewarded by parents and guardians thus demonstrating positive reinforcement that motivates children to repeat the favoured behaviors (Fagot, 1985). Children also learn through modeling and this involves observation and mimicking of behavior (Bussey& Bandura, 1984). Children imitate models they understand to be similar and acceptable to themselves, which usually translates into imitation of a same-sex parent, and the desire to please same (Mischel, 1966).

Participating in a socio-cultural system requires learning and internalizing appropriate behaviors, knowledge, values, and attitudes in order to be accepted as an effective member, that is, both a social and cultural being. Children are born into a world of shared symbols, established patterns, and acknowledged positions all of which are already in existence. Societal norms, values, statuses, and roles are acquired in different ways mainly through social relationships; others wittingly or unwittingly, teach through their guidance, examples, responses, and emotional attachment (Elkin, 1968).

It therefore becomes glaring today, that even though it seems that both males and females have a level field when it comes to opportunities and careers, whether consciously or unconsciously, some seeds are sown in the process of socialization which moves along gender lines to continually perpetuate gendered career patterns.

Gender Equality, Inequality, and Career Options

Males and females are known to be involved in different categories of jobs (Jacobsen, 1994; Jacobs, 1995a; Reskin, 1993). Although explanations for the continuous existence of sex segregation in paid work cannot be exhausted, the consequences for gender inequality are obvious. The inequality that persists in the arena of careers cannot be overlooked as it has a huge effect on how far females will push through to change existing status quo. The gender socialization process occurs in multiple social institutions and the long term effect is what we experience in terms of the outcomes particularly with regards to female career patterns (Sifuna et al, 2006; Stromquist, 2007). In order to conform to the socially constructed gender labels, individuals are compelled to feel obliged to fit into a pre-determined stereotypical model of masculinity and femininity (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

The discussion on inequalities globally, between males and females has drawn concerns over a long period of time. These concerns result from a shared understanding within development circles that development policies and strategies that do not take gender inequality into account and fails to address disparities between the two sexes will have limited effectiveness and grave outcomes (World Bank, 2003). The extent of gender inequality in developing countries is generally of a higher degree and more so, within education, employment, health, personal autonomy etc. (Jayachandran, 2015). The issues surrounding gender inequality cannot be sidelined and overlooked because there is no region of the world, especially in developing countries that women and men are equal (World Bank Gender and Development Group, 2003). Gender inequality is not limited to specific aspects of a society, it is usually rife in populations where culture is held in high esteem. This culture and tradition is basically fed by the socialization processes of society and then used often by males to justify acts that confine women's life chances, choices, and outcomes (Reeves & Baden, 2000).

Role of Education in Gender Socialization

Scholars generally have yielded to the assertion that a major avenue by which a society's culture, behaviors, values, and expectations, are transmitted from one generation to another is education (Kangethe et. al, 2014). Education has been seen as a process by which individuals acquire behaviors, attitudes, and cognitive abilities which society deems desirable and satisfactory (Bennaars et. al, 1994). Access to the classroom (from the basic school through to the tertiary level), therefore, serves as an important socializing context within which pupils and students' informal interactions in schools form an influential part of their socialization into restricted gender roles (EACEA, 2012). Today, schooling begins from preschool when wards are virtually babies (from 3 months) so much of what they learn is passed on through school as compared to previously when school started from age six onwards. Children (babies, infants) start preschool with little or nonexistent gendered differences in behavior, but by their first grade, they learn to act and comport themselves in different ways (Martin, 1998,) so children learn to become "boys" and "girls" from school. In an era when expectations are that the school will be an atmosphere for leveling gender inequities, the reality seems to be different in some ways.

At school, teachers are known to treat boys and girls differently, making them major agents spearheading gender stereotypes beginning from the kindergarten, so children's gender practices do not occur in a vacuum (Chen and Rao, 2011). Blaise's (2005) study shows that overall, boys are encouraged to be more dominant and assertive, and to aggressively distant from femininity whenever possible. The study also discovered that boys are socially rewarded for maintaining hegemonic masculinity and for keeping a strict gendered order. Girls, on the other hand, are expected to remain quiet and submissive, less aggressive, and though girls are less negatively judged for engaging in traditionally masculine activities, girls' success in masculine realms often goes unnoticed. Girls could however access social capital by modeling emphasized femininity, by showing themselves as helpless, and in need of support (Blaise, 2005). Swan (2017) observed from classrooms as well as interviews with teachers and concluded that, children and teachers continually practiced traditional gender patterns and roles. Boys were trained to be active and unfeminine while girls were trained to be passive and dependent on others. Though teachers claim to promote equality in the classroom, the teachers under observation, regarded boys and girls as essentially and biologically different along traditional gender lines, and this influenced the treatment of boys and girls in classroom environments, ultimately affirming and reinforcing traditional gender roles (Swan, 2017).

Socialization at the level of the school may be effected in various ways including interaction in class, activities in the classroom, choice of subjects, and participation in physical education (Sifuna et. al, 2006). Schools, therefore, are one of society's most powerful socializing agents that foster and support societal stereotypes for gender behavior (Skelton, 2001).

The school as an institution tends to repeat and establish the cultural labels and values into which individuals have been socialized at the family and community levels. Teachers influence the academic space directly because they have the ability to alter student behavior and develop stronger academic student cultures (Legewie & DiPrete 2012). Stromquist (2007) opines that teachers are influential role models because students or children spend most of their daytime with their instructors.

Teachers, however, may socialize students along gender lines simply because they deliver multiple gendered messages within the school curriculum as well as organizational decisions. Their attitudes can reflect biases toward girls or boys, instilling among the less favoured students, some sense of alienation. Any kind of direct or indirect gender discrimination hinders personal, academic, and professional development for the minority group. Education, thus, plays a significant role in the creation of learners' gender identity through the transmission of the dominant values of society. In the same way, it is via education that desirable changes to stereotypical gender attitudes and resultant deviant behavior can be addressed (Kangethe et. al, 2014).

Gender Socialization in Ghana

There are several aspects of Ghanaian culture that promotes stratification along gender roles and these are reinforced by the passing on of these traditions from one generation to another (Boateng et al., 2006). Households in Ghana are thus shaped by various factors because they are complex, culturally diverse, and upheld by some dynamic institutional arrangements (MOWAC, 2012). Culture plays an essential role in how communities and activities are organized. The exhibited behavior of men is often influenced by their fellow men based on what is expected of a man within the community within which they dwell, and same is expected of women too. So conformity by members of society to certain norms and practices perpetuate masculine tendencies among boys and men (Boateng et al, 2006). Again, to maintain and respect the appropriate gender roles and positions in society, maxims are usually used in daily discussions to explain, and reinforce the expected stereotypes with regards to men and women (Adomako-Ampofo, 2001; Boateng et al, 2006). Families' and societies' influence over the career choice options of its members is often related to some specific factors. Understanding the relationship between socialization, cultural diversity and family influence will enable us understand the inherent difficulties accounting for the variation in the outcomes of career choices.

Ghana has been committed to conventions and laws that seek to ensure gender equality by ratifying them and making provisions in the law to meet the required standards set by international conventions. Ghana endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on people's rights (Ardayio-Schandorf, 2005). Gender inequality, irrespective of the efforts and provisions persists in Ghana, and one area that the inequality manifests is in the choice of careers young ladies particularly choose or end up with. Women at all levels of Ghanaian society, are usually held to a higher level of cultural, or expected compliance than men because many forms of discrimination against women are practiced in the name of culture, and individuals are socialized to accept the expected modes of behavior and roles (Women's Manifesto for Ghana, 2004). Such acts perpetuate gender inequality which derails efforts to achieve national goals, as well as the development aspirations of the nation. Gender inequality is known to often deny girls and women equal opportunities and choices and limits their ability to realize their desired potentials.

In Ghana as is the case in several other countries particularly in Africa, women have less opportunities to enhance their economic, educational and health conditions as well as access services like their male counterparts (Zuckerman, 2002). Socialization at the level of the school can help children's future outcomes in diverse ways including interaction in the classroom, activities in the classroom, choice of subject combinations, and active participation in physical education (Sifuna et. al, 2006). This opportunity is available to all who pass through the educational system yet we have careers still toeing the gendered line. There likely is something fundamentally wrong with the educational process, (both formal and informal) which causes young women (especially) to look out for some comfort zones in one way or the other. It is 'whatever' is holding young people back that gives room for gender inequalities' to continue to fester and gain permanence in society.

The choice of a career is an important issue in the life of young adults because it is known to be associated with both positive as well as harmful psychological, physical, and socio-economic inequalities that goes beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life (Robertson, 2014; Bubić and Ivanišević, 2016). An individual's decision with regards to careers is based on several things, besides the person being strong willed and determined to pursue her heartfelt agenda, decisions will be taken considering how acceptable their choices are, how their families appreciate their choices, and their prospects expected from the choices or options taken. All these intervening factors influence the decisions that young women eventually subscribe to. Subsequent sections will focus on the experiences of young people with regards to their choice of careers and challenges that confronted them in the process.

Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach to aid in understanding the social life and subjective views of the research participants (Neuman, 2007). The Interpretive phenomenological approach (Smith et al, 2009) was adopted because it captures details of personal lived experiences thus giving a personal account in the terms of those involved and not an outsider perspective of issues.

This study was undertaken in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Accra is a cosmopolitan hub and as such home to citizens from all over Ghana. The study targeted women between the ages of 25 to 45 years. Respondents fall within the category of individuals who have gone through various stages of education and currently working either for themselves or in organizations. The premise of the study primarily is to explore the gendered career paths of individuals' particularly young females and the processes that go into their career choices. This is based on the recognition and realization that young ladies still toed a particular line when it comes to their career choices and options available to them irrespective of the opportunities and options they are exposed to. The study participants are women undertaking studies at the University of Ghana.

The researcher interacted with respondents and they were briefed on the study so as to solicit their consent and their willingness to participate in the study. Willing participants were chosen and given further insight into the study and its relevance. They were assured of anonymity and again reminded of the voluntary nature of the study, while emphasizing that the study was purely for academic purposes and to help direct policy with no intention to harm anybody.

Sampling and data collection

Study respondents were purposively sampled in order to identify and select respondents and attain responses from across various occupations. This requires the identification and selection of individuals or groups that are knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). In this case respondents ought to have gone through school up to the tertiary level, must be working students, and ought to be female. Additionally, availability, and willingness to participate and share experiences as well as opinions is key (Bernard, 2002). Twenty women in total were sampled from four occupational brackets and of these 5 were nurses, 5 lecturers, 5 were self-employed, and 5 were teachers. Dworkin (2012) suggests that for qualitative research anywhere from 5 to 50 respondents is adequate.

A semi-structured interview guide was generated and consisted of a set of questions to help unravel the rationale behind the career choices of women. Questions focused on respondents' career aspirations, their socialization, expectations, and final career decision making. Majority of the interviews were conducted on phone because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce contact with others. Those that were conducted face-to-face saw the strict observation of the protocols. Each interview lasted between 35 minutes and 50 minutes. Interviews were conducted in English. Four emanating themes from the interviews were the *fear of rejection, parental control, uncertainties, and role modeling*. These are factors that were identified as setting the pace for the options that respondents relied on (these are discussed in detail in the next section).

Of the twenty respondents twelve (60%) were married, five (25%) were single, while three (15%) women were divorced. Ages of respondents ranged from 25 years to 45 years, and of these five were between 25 – 30 years, two were 31 – 35, and another five fell between 36 – 40, while eight were 41 – 45 years. With the exception of five respondents who were in a Doctoral class, all other respondents were pursuing their first degrees. The nurses were also diploma holders studying for their first degree.

Factors Affecting Career Choice of Women

Career choice and specialization is a process that every young woman will go through in order to achieve aspired prospects and to gain fulfillment in occupational roles in our society, nationally, and ultimately globally. This study sought to explore how gendered socialization engenders stereotypes which influence the career choices of women. Research highlights some distinct phases pertaining to gendered career experiences: these include the formation of self-perceptions and career aspirations, workplace entry, workplace obstacles, and advancement (Streets & Major, 2014). Findings from this study revealed a similar pattern; however, the experiences of respondents differed. Four themes ran through the study; the fear of rejection, parental control, uncertainties envisaged by respondents themselves, and role modeling. These have over the years constrained some women into staying within traditionally gendered careers.

Fear of Rejection

Correll (2001) concluded that some socio-cultural beliefs about gender are components of gender stereotypes that hold definitive expectations for competence. This component, with its required expectations, delivers special problems for gender equality (Ridgeway and Correll 2000). Gender beliefs have also been identified as cultural schemas for understanding or making meanings of the social world. For this reason, they stand for what most people may believe or interpret as true about the categories of men and women (Conway et al, 1996). Though these comments were made decades ago, they still are identified as relevant as study participants' responses to questions asked indicates that the general fear of being rejected if they choose to follow a certain path clearly stood out. When asked why they opted out of preferred careers earlier desired, respondents mentioned that the fear of not being accepted, or needed made them reconsider and choose their current jobs.

Akyaa, a 43 year old teacher regrets not pursuing her passion of becoming an engineer and she says

"I was made to believe that if I go for a masculine profession such as engineering I will not be accepted making it difficult to get a job. Much more worrying was the understanding that both family and leaders that I look up to impressed upon me to reconsider otherwise I will not get anyone to marry me. I needed to get a more feminine job so that I will be appealing and I can get suitors. I was advised to go to the training college. (43 year old teacher)

Nancy, a 45 year old nurse shared a similar story

"Throughout my childhood it was made clear to me that I have to opt for teaching or nursing, an acceptable feminine career. Any other option was out so before I got to the tertiary level I already knew that journalism which I was so interested in or business was not an option because of the options already made known to me. I preferred nursing to teaching and that explains where I am today". (45 year old nurse)

Some respondents were also of the opinion that they feared being denied by their families if they did not adhere to the career suggestions and options they were introduced to. Peach, a 25 year old bluntly stated that

"I cannot risk being rejected by my family so I did what I was asked to do. Sometimes you have no control over what is happening around you but life must go on so you make do with what is available to you and forget what could have been".

The fear of losing out, seen as doing something unacceptable, or being rejected is dear to young people such that they're pushed to take decisions that will give them a level ground. No one wants to be regarded as inadequate especially by our family and friends, and again, based on the cultural expectations especially in African societies where marriage is an expected end, it is difficult to overlook the daunting challenge that the fear of not getting husbands create in young ladies. For such individuals, the easier way out is a better option than losing out on something that is held dear.

Parental Control

The situation in some homes is that the career paths of children are chosen by parents or guardians. Geisler (2009) reported that household activities are heavily gendered in homes while Adya and Kaiser (2005), stressed that parents play an influential role in the career choices of children. They noted that children of non-stereotypical parents have higher self-esteem, higher levels of identity achievement. However, girls whose mothers were career-oriented usually have higher educational aspirations and hold non-traditional vocational goals and typically engaged in masculine activities. Gender socialization compels parents to prefer careers that conform to the cultural stereotypes of female occupations (Thorne, 1993). Thus depending on the influence and power that guardians have on their children, career options available to children in households will follow a certain pattern because children will be forced to do that which parents require of them.

Nania recounts her experience growing up where her mum insisted that she must be a nurse at all costs. She says *"I hated nursing with a passion that I cannot even describe. I cannot imagine myself attending to sick people, I don't like the sight of blood, I cannot stand the smell of hospitals, but at the same time I could remember the "hell" my big brother went through when he refused to go to the teacher training college. He eventually had to go just to please our mother and have his peace of mind, however, he never used his skills because he was just not interested".*

"I was saved from being sent to nursing training college by my mother because I failed relevant courses like Mathematics and Science. She made me re-sit but I'm certain my failure to make it has to do with the fact that I did not want to go to the training college. My mum eventually gave up when I got some part time work moved out of home with proximity to work as an excuse. I eventually found my feet after some struggles and currently I'm proud of whom I have become. The degree I'm pursuing is just to satisfy myself that I can do this, I honestly do not need it in my line of work, and I'm just trying to prove a point". (35 year old property manager)

"I cannot disobey my parents, especially my father...boi²...that will be an abomination because you are constantly reminded that you cannot decide on what you want to be so long as he pays your fees and you are under his roof. There was pretty much nothing my mum could do...my father is the controlling kind, you cannot just do anything besides what he says...especially when you failed to pass all your courses at a go...so here I am...I hope to study to upgrade myself so that I can get some fulfillment". (28 year old teacher)

Other participants belonged to homes where parents dictated what ought to be done at every point in time and doing otherwise is not an option. As another lady indicated, her father's word is law at home so no one dared to even challenge, decisions taken were final. Parental control and influence thus goes a long way to determine the career outcomes of individuals, particularly young ladies in society. Because of perhaps the desire to ensure that their children come out 'right' in their view, several young ladies have been forced into careers that they had no desire for, thus breeding discontent, and for some, provoking anger at parents because of their lack of support.

Uncertainties

Some women find themselves in their current careers because of some uncertainties with regards to life. Some women find themselves in circumstances that leave them unable to pursue what they originally set out to achieve, they are also unable to meet the expectations of their parents, and opt for other activities in order not to become a liability. Literature suggests that models of career development cause women and girls to be disproportionately affected by obstacles and uncertainties encountered along the educational and career pathways (Major and Morganson 2008).

Kuukua is 43 years, a beautician and aspired to be a flight attendant but her parents saw it as too risky for a lady

"Unfortunately for me I did not ace my examinations and my dad sent me to a commercial school. I also did not help myself, got involved in a relationship and got pregnant in the process. After delivery, I just told myself that the earlier I learnt some trade, the better it will be for myself because if I just stay at home, firstly, I'll be a liability, my school is on hold, and gradually will turn into something else so I chose to be a beautician. I'm not excessively rich but by God's grace I'm still ploughing on, this is my story".

Similarly, Sankoa recounts that her decision to read law changed when it was changed to postgraduate, though she had no issue with her parents but society played with her brains that doing law postgraduate was too much time since she wanted to get married and to have children early.

"Trust me, I love my finally opted for career but I do have regrets for not pursuing the law when I had every opportunity to do so. The uncertainties were and are still a lot around me. I don't think I'm fulfilled and happy as I ought to be. I believe it could have been better than this...".Sankoa, 41 years

This woman was very emotional and had several regrets with regards to the decisions she ended up with regarding her career and her life. Her reasons for not following her dreams did not stand the test of time but amidst her uncertainties she stood her ground to take the route she's on now and that's commendable.

Role Modeling

Role models serve as motivators to individuals to perform novel behaviors and also to inspire others to set ambitious goals (Morgenroth et al, 2015). Children look up to their parents and try to be like them in every way from behavior, attitudes, and careers. It is not unusual for children or young adults to also want to be like some achievers that they have encountered in their life time. Some respondents basically modeled their careers around that of their parents.

"Although I'm a lady I so wanted to be like my father who was a lecturer and whom I witnessed rising through the ranks to be a professor. I got every encouragement that I needed as a child and that is what has landed me where I am today. It is not a solely masculine career but it is challenging for women nonetheless. Males have a greater opportunity of rising than women because of the obvious obstacles that women are usually plagued with, I have no regrets and I intend to beat the odds and make it to the very top in academia. Some have done it, others are still doing it so I believe it is achievable". Nyarkoa, 42 year old lecturer

This is also in line with what identification theorists describe as an important facet in the development of a child's gender roles (Freud, 1962). In a similar vein, social learning theorists have emphasized that modeling is foundational to the acquisition of gender roles.

"My mum was a nurse, midwife to be precise and I always admired her so imitated some of her actions too. Growing up everyone who knew me always said I'll be an awesome nurse so even when I could have taken some papers to get degree nursing after

² A Ghanaian expression which in this context means no one dared

my Senior high school my mum sent me to the training college to start community health nursing. You can imagine how winding that has been.

I then proceeded after that to top up to get a diploma. I'm now pursuing my degree but if my mum had been patient and more understanding I would have been done with this stage long ago. That's my only regret because everyone made me very confident that I will be a good nurse and I know that myself because I genuinely cared and enjoyed caring for all". Nyamekye, 38 year old nurse

It is not unusual that some children may choose to model their lives in line with the occupations of their parents. So boys may observe and follow suit what their fathers do and same for girls and their mothers. This is especially so when throughout childhood you are labeled and socialized that you will become a good nurse or teacher or cook just like your mother. Modeling and mimicking is not unusual, especially in homes where this is reinforced by parents who reward gender appropriate behavior (Fagot, 1985; Bussey & Bandura, 1984).

The account of the challenges faced by several young women regarding their career decisions and wellbeing indicates that socialization and education ought to be balanced and should be continuous, particularly at the level of the community and homes to ensure that the essence is not pushed into a state of oblivion.

Discussion and Conclusion

The choice of a career has been identified as a significant issue in the lives of young people since it is said to be closely linked with both positive and negative or harmful psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities that persist beyond the youthful age into adulthood (Robertson, 2014; Bubić and Ivanišević, 2016). Several models have been used to explain the process of career development and they all interplay with ethnicity, culture, gender and socio-economic status (Lent et al., 2000; Blanco, 2011). These emphasize the complexity between personal aspirations, career choices and decision-making, as well as the external influence that individuals are exposed to in their socialization.

This paper explored the role of socialization in the persistence of gendered career outcomes. Four revealing themes are observed amidst the seeming inequalities that have lingered over time. Irrespective of the roles played by the various interacting factors, socialization exposes individuals to expected outcomes which eventually propels or spurs them into their final careers. From the study, the fear of *rejection* is one stereotypical outcome that catapults individuals especially females into their career choices. The fear of being overlooked by males or struggle to get life partners after getting into competitive careers is one stumbling block which has caused some people to settle down with their current careers. Secondly, *Parental control* over children's choices often leads young women to settle with occupations that are not their personal choice of careers. Again, this control often keeps children on a particular path with no room for personal choice. The third factor directing career selection is the *uncertainties* associated with the unknown. Some people choose careers that seem readily available as a way of dealing with unanticipated consequences. Being uncertain about life in general is a huge burden that sometimes choosing what can be is obviously a better option to nothing. Finally, *role modeling* is shown by this paper to be influential in the final decision of young people as to their career options. The constant reminders that push people into some areas with the explanation that many females cannot be located in that area so there will be a struggle to first go through and succeed, and where you push through, there will be a challenge to get desired jobs often stifle young ladies especially into traditionally accepted female jobs.

These findings contribute to the literature and discussion on gender socialization and career choice, as well as education and gender socialization. It reveals the points of departure from the generally accepted notion that education opens doors which will eliminate the inequality challenges that have existed over time. It throws more light on the subtle passed on challenges that still channel individuals along a gendered path which continues to process inequality amongst females. Again, it is instructive that policy makers need to take note of the socialization cycles especially the roles schools play and ensure that curriculum and activities at school are devoid of stereotypical tendencies that derail young people off the paths they choose to tread.

As Streets and Major (2006) reiterate, every leak in the pipeline of careers ought to be amended to help deal with the increasing under-representation of women across the banks of career development, progressive interventions must be considered. Educational policy it is recommended must see to it that children in school are not pushed to follow the traditional paths that individuals are socialized into. It is important that children have the room within which to choose what career paths they prefer.

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