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# **Perceived Influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in Career Choice of Debre Berhan University Students**

**By: Dasash Getnet Alemu**

**Advisor: Moges Ayele (PhD)**

**MA in Counseling Psychology**

**December, 2024**

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE AND RESISTANCE TO GENDER STEREOTYPING IN CAREER CHOICE  
AMONG STUDENTS

**Perceived Influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in Career Choice  
among Debre Berhan University Students**

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Psychology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Counseling Psychology**

**By:**

**Dasash Getnet Alemu**

**December, 2024**

**Addis Ababa University**

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**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**

**School of Psychology**

**By**

**Dasash Getnet**

**Approval of the Board of Examiner:**

Dr. Moges Ayele (PhD)

Advisor

Signature

Date

Internal Examiner

Signature

Date

External Examiner

Signature

Date

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**Declaration**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Dasash Getnet Alemu entitled "**Perceived influence and Resistance to Gender stereotyping in career choice at Debre Berhan University Students**" complies with the rule and regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respected to originality and quality. Therefore, I hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institutions for the award of any degree or diploma.

Declared by: Dasash Getnet

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as advisor

Dr. Moges Ayele (PhD.)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Abstract**

*This phenomenological study explores the influence of gender stereotypes on career choice among students. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 9 participants and group discussions with 8 participants who are third-year students at Debre Berhan University. Being guided by thematic analysis methodology, the study identified key themes from interviews and FGD regarding the lived experiences of the participants concerning gender stereotypes. The findings reveal that gender stereotypes significantly influence students' career paths, shaping their perceptions and internalization of societal expectations. Additionally, cultural norms and family pressures are crucial in guiding career decisions. The findings underscore the imperative for enhanced career counseling and support services to mitigate these stereotypes, there by fostering an inclusive environment that empowers all students to pursue their career goals. This research offers valuable insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and community stakeholders, contributing to the existing literature on gender and career choice within the Ethiopian higher education context.*

*Keywords: Career choice, Influence, Gender stereotype, Undergraduate student*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

A student's career is a succession of attitudes and actions that they exhibit when engaging in a variety of jobs and work-related activities throughout their lifetime. The term "career" refers to a person's numerous activities during their lifetime (Omeje, 2007). It includes a series of similar occupations, vocations, and job positions that students pursue from birth to death or from one educational level to the next all across his life (Omeje, 2007). According to Maxwell and Okwulehie (2019), a career is a lifetime pursuit of accomplishment that includes the significant roles that a person holds during their life.

Career choice is one of several important decisions that students will make in shaping their plans, and this decision will affect them for the rest of their lives (Michael, 2002). Because everyone has a unique personality and characteristics, matures at a different pace, and lives in a specific environment, career decision-making becomes an individual life journey (Hewitt, 2010). Career choice is one of the most important decisions that students make to determine their plans, and this decision will have an impact on them for their future life (Basavage, 2007). Michael (2002) defines career choice as an ongoing process that allows for the exploration of vocational, academic, and sociological endeavors to meet individual financial and educational goals. Career choice contains the choice of optional subjects, courses of specialization, and subsequent careers (Kazi&Akhlq, 2017).

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Career choice is influenced by several factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, role model, social support, and available resources (Kerka, 2000). The environmental elements that affect students' professional choices are one of the major factors in choosing a vocation. Students frequently select careers that are closely related to their immediate area and make every effort to address any problems that may exist there (Splaver, 2011). In addition, someone in the Student's life has had a significant impact or impression, leading to a particular career choice (Hewitt, 2010). The educational background of the student's parents may also influence their decision to continue their education and the student may see some prominent media personalities on television that may have influenced them to either make or alter a related career choice to those personalities, or parents may have demanded that their career choice factors assume a family business (Splaver, 2011). A student's career path is influenced by a variety of environmental factors (Stebbleton, 2007).

According to Bandura et al. (2001), each person's decision-making process for a career is influenced by several variables, such as their social network, educational background, and living environment. Among them include one's racial or ethnic background, the number of years spent in school, one's academic performance, one's preference for science topics, one's attitude, and the variations between one's job characteristics (McQuaid & Bond, 2004).

Also, Culture and gender have a great influence on the career path an individual chooses to follow. Diverse cultures have different philosophies about the definition of a career, what value is placed on it, and the type of person who should perform the job (Khar, 2015). The degree to which people uphold individualistic or collectivistic cultural norms determines their career choices. In a study conducted in 2003, Sierles et al. found two key elements that affect

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students' job decisions: (1) internal factors and (2) cultural influences and nationality patterns.

Racial and cultural diversity, according to Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly (2008), has a big impact on how students choose their careers. The gender variations in perception and cultural ideas about gender are significant elements that influence career choice (Wesarat, Sharif, and Majid, 2016). Gokuladas (2010) believes that men are more likely to value job content and long-term professional ambitions (intrinsic variables) whereas women place greater significance on work environment and interpersonal interactions (extrinsic factors). Furthermore, the key aspect of career choice is, Cultural views regarding gender including gender stereotypes and gender-role attitudes (Jonsen, Maznevski& Schneider, 2010). Both men and women have encountered gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Stereotypes can be favorable or bad, but they rarely convey accurate information about other people. Stereotypes are basic generalizations about the gender characteristics, distinctions, and roles of people or groups. Those who instinctively assume the gender of another without considering evidence to the contrary are propagating gender stereotyping (Bigilda, 2016). Even though many people are aware of the risks of gender stereotypes, they nonetheless use them (Bigilda, 2016). In the educational system, gender stereotyping is regarded as a serious problem; The thinking of the majority of people that men are normally engineers, doctors, and technical employees, while women work as teachers, nurses, and office assistants influences both genders' employment choices when deciding whether to pursue a college education. Most students choose to enroll in courses primarily related to their genders (Bigilda, 2016).

The main elements that have been linked to the gender gap in research include socio-cultural and socio-economic factors, access to materials and resources, time spent on activities,

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culture, and viewpoint within society (Achalu & Niguse, 2023). Based on the studies discussed so far, the researcher is inspired to investigate the variable influencing career choice, particularly the impact of gender stereotypes on undergraduate students' career choice at Debre Berhan University, which is situated in Ethiopia's Amara region.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Even with advancements in gender equality, college students' career decisions are still influenced by gender stereotypes (Nahimana, 2024). Men and women choose different career paths as a result of these stereotypes, which are embedded in society's norms and frequently dictate views of which professions are considered appropriate for different genders. Researchers suggest that Gender stereotypes have a substantial influence on professional choices because they shape student's views and judgments about certain occupations (Kong et al., 2023).

According to this research, stereotypes can contribute to women's underrepresentation in STEM jobs by reinforcing unfavorable attitudes about their abilities. Also, people's perceptions of their skills and chances of success in a variety of fields can be adversely impacted by exposure to such stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2020).

The media, educational institutions, and social interactions all reinforce traditional gender roles, which feed into this stereotype and restrict the variety of career options that students can pursue (Glick & Fiske, 2018). Furthermore, social gender norms and prejudices might influence early cognitive development, thereby impeding women's pursuit of fields such as engineering (Nahimana, 2024). In addition, college students demonstrate occupational gender stereotypes that influence their career choices, highlighting the need for initiatives to modify attitudes and maximize job prospects (Liu et al., 2022).

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Numerous studies look at various aspects of Ethiopian students' career choices. Students' career choice is influenced by their parents, and there is a link between parents' preferences and occupations among college students in Bahrdar City (Kumar, 2016). Another research finding among Madda Walabu University students shows career development is important in understanding students' personal values, illustrative their goals, career choice directions and job-searching skills. (Getachew & Daniel, 2016).

Although several studies have examined various factors influencing students' career choices, I cannot find studies related to gender stereotypes and career choices in Ethiopia. Therefore, further research is needed to develop additional valuable knowledge. Also, gender stereotypes can result in unequal representation in high-demand industries, ongoing wage gaps, and limited advancement opportunities for certain genders (Fiske & Stevens, 2021). To tackle these issues, targeted interventions and educational initiatives that promote gender diversity and inclusivity in the workforce are essential, along with an understanding of how these stereotypes influence college students' career choices.

This qualitative investigation aims to address the role of gender stereotypes on students' career choices and also explore the role of gender stereotypes on student's career choices by assessing their perception of gender stereotypes, the value of societal expectation and cultural norms to the formation of gender stereotype and student's experience and resistance.

### **1.3 Objective of the study**

#### 1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to explore perceived influence of gender stereotypes on career choices among students at Debre Berhan University.

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### 1.3.2 Specific objective

- To explore the perceptions and internalization of gender stereotypes among students about their career choices.
- To investigate the role of societal expectations and cultural norms in shaping gender stereotypes and its impact on career choices.
- To explore the experiences and challenges faced by students at Debre Berhan University in pursuing careers that defy traditional gender norms.

### 1.5 Significance of the study

This study, on the perceived influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in career choice among students at Debre Berhan University, has significant importance as it contributes to the existing knowledge based on gender and career development, specifically within the Ethiopian higher education context. It can offer insights into the experiences and challenges faced by students in pursuing careers that defy traditional gender norms, identifying specific barriers and informing targeted interventions. The findings are used to inform policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders in promoting gender equality, shaping inclusive environments, and providing effective career guidance. Ultimately, the study aims to empower students to make informed career choices aligned with their abilities and passions, fostering a more equitable and inclusive educational setting.

### 1.6 Scope of the study

This study has investigated the perceived influence and resistance of gender stereotypes on career choice among undergraduate students at Debre Berhan University, which is located in

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Ethiopia, Amara region semen showa zone. This area was selected by the reasons that I know the environment and it makes it easy to collect data and get valuable information.

### 1.7 Definitions of key Terms

**Career choice:** the decisions made by undergraduate students regarding their field of study, academic majors and future occupational aspirations.

**Gender:** the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed.

**Gender stereotype:** socially constructed beliefs and norms that associate specific careers or occupations with gender in a particular.

**Influence:** the impact or effect that societal expectations and cultural beliefs regarding gender roles have on career choices among undergraduate students.

**Undergraduate student:** a student who is studying for their first degree at Debre Berhan University.

### 1.8 Organization of the study

There are five chapters in this study. I explain the backdrop of the investigation, the problem statement, the research aims, the relevance of the study, and the definition of keywords in chapter one. I provide related literature on the influence of several factors, including the effects of gender stereotypes on career choice in chapter two. I outline the study's methodology in chapter three, including the research design, target population, sample size, sampling method, and methods for data collection and analysis. Chapters four and five include the findings, results, discussion, implication, and conclusion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of related Literature**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of literature related to student's career choices. The section contains literature on career choice, factors influencing career choice, the role of gender on career choice, the source of gender stereotypes, the role of significant peoples, the influence of gender stereotypes on career choice, and theoretical framework.

#### **2.1 The Concept of Career and career choice**

According to Supper (1999), a career is the combination and sequence of roles that a person plays during their life. According to Sullivan and Baruch (2009), a career is an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations that form a unique pattern over the individual's life span, the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan, including both paid and unpaid work in an individual's life.

According to Sear (2011), a career is the intersection of several vocations that entail tasks that a person performs for pay or without pay. Sear also went on to say that people create career patterns as they make decisions in life regarding their education, careers, homes, and other duties. Maxwell and Okwulehie (2019) also define a career as a person's lifelong pursuit of achievement that includes all of the significant positions they hold during their lifetime. Human professions are the result of the interplay between the social context's enabling and restricting factors and human agency and experience (Kidd, 2006).

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Choosing a career is one of the most essential decisions a person makes in their life. One of the most challenging aspects of each student's life is making a career decision. This process involves several closely linked elements (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). There are several phases involved in choosing a career. Because each person has a distinct personality, and set of traits, matures at a different rate, and experiences life in a particular setting, choosing a career becomes a unique life journey (Hewitt, 2010). Young adults make important employment-related decisions and investigate several career pathways during their undergraduate years. University students are thought to be mature enough to be able to make career choice decisions on their own, however picking a professional route and developing a career-related identity can be difficult tasks (Hooley, 2012).

### **2.2 Factors That Influence Career Choice**

Previous research has looked at a variety of characteristics that influence professional choices. Career selection is one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of any student's life, involving a complex interplay of numerous elements (Shahid & Akhlaq, 2017). Hewitt (2010) states various factors influence professional choices, which can be intrinsic, extrinsic, or a combination of both. According to Pummel, Harwood, and Lavallee (2008), external variables that assist form an individual's professional decision are also influenced by significant people by peer social support.

According to Hewitt (2010), the majority of students are influenced by the careers that their parents choose for them, while others pursue the paths that their educational choices have

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opened up and some individuals also choose their careers based on the support of friends and significant others. The quality of the relationship between Indian parents and their offspring was thought to have an impact on the preferences of the younger generation for their future careers (Kumar, 2016). Research conducted in Kenya indicates that adolescents consult their parents when they need information on issues like career planning (Edwards & Quinter, 2011).

Herbart (2006) asserts that environments are crucial for the development of abilities to levels that are nearly equal to capacity heights. As a result, teenagers who rose in homes with wholesome environments, harmonious parent-child relationships, and supportive and nurturing parenting are destined to follow their parents' lead. Agrawala (2008) also concluded that the father's influence, aptitude, and competencies have a significant role in influencing the career choice of Indian mixed martial arts pupils.

According to Ukwueze and Obiefuna (2017), parents' educational backgrounds and socioeconomic status have an impact on their children's professional choices. Previous research demonstrating a favorable correlation between a family's objectives and socioeconomic level was highlighted by Mau and Bikos (2000). Research consistently indicates that the expectations or aspirations of parents have an impact on the aspirations of teenagers (Stebbleton, 2007). It has been discovered that parental encouragement and support have a significant role in influencing professional choice. Just to please their parents, children may choose what they want.

Additionally, personality plays a big part in choosing a career. A student's career choice may be influenced by how they have viewed themselves in a situation where personality is a determining factor (Hewitt, 2010). According to Splaver (1977), for students to make wise professional decisions, they must have a solid awareness of who they are as individuals and their

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personalities. Their job path is determined in part by their aspirations and personality. Their interests, unique skills, and mental capacities are among the personality traits that need to be taken into account. Verbal comprehension, word fluency ability, spatial ability, numerical ability, reasoning ability, and memory were deemed to be components of mental talents also considered as a factor (Splaver, 1977). Students should possess a self-motivated attitude that encourages them to explore their career options from an early age, rather than delaying decisions until they are forced to make a decision (Splaver, 2011). Splaver continued, saying, "If one wants to have a great career in life, it is vital for students to have a good understanding of himself, his personality" (Splaver, 2011).

Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly (2008) explain that racial and ethnic differences have a big impact on students' job decisions; individuals who identify as racial or ethnic minorities are joining a labor market where a greater proportion of members of their group hold entry-level jobs and low-skilled employment, which may affect how they see the options that are open to them. The cultural backdrop influences how people choose their jobs and make decisions. Individuals who identify as members of racial or ethnic minorities may also experience racism and prejudice (Fouad & Byars, 2005).

The society in which students reside has an impact on the careers they choose. According to Fouad et al. (2016), societal norms and cultural practices shape students' expectations for their careers; Careers and societal values refer to how a society's tenets influence a person's decisions and day-to-day actions. A society's values and ethics have a variety of effects on professions (Hui & Lent, 2018).

### **2.3 The Role of Gender on career choice**

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Gender is defined as roles, behaviors, and activities that are socially created and specify the characteristics that men and women in a certain community are expected to have and also gender can be defined as the character attributes and behaviors that a particular community accepts as appropriate for people of both sexes (Woolfolk, 2010). Gender is one of the most powerful of all influences on vocational behavior (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). According to Frieze et al. (2006), cultural concerns are important and should be acknowledged by researchers and practitioners since they have a big impact on the job possibilities that women can pursue. In their study, Durosaro & Nuhu (2012) found that senior secondary school students in the Ilorin Metropolis made professional decisions based in large part on their gender.

Gender norms promote misconceptions about women. For example, men are typically perceived as assertive, aggressive, independent, and task-oriented in many civilizations, while women are perceived as more delicate, sensitive, dependent, emotional, and people-oriented (Archer & Lloyd, 2002).

### **2.4 Source of Gender Stereotyping Thought**

Gender stereotypes are broad beliefs or presumptions about the traits or qualities that men and women have or ought to have, as well as the roles that men and women should perform. It is the act of attributing particular traits, qualities, or responsibilities to a specific man or woman solely based on that person's gender (Cusack, 2013).

The treatment of boys and girls differently by parents is the first indication of gender stereotyping. Parents are a source of inspiration and role models for children. Boys would therefore wish to emulate their fathers, and girls, their mothers. In other words, gender roles,

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actions, and tasks carried out by men and women in the household have an impact on boys and girls. For instance, a boy's definition of masculinity will incorporate his father's care giving role if he witnesses him tending to a newborn child (Archer & Lloyd, 2002).

According to preliminary studies, kids start learning gender roles in preschool (Miller et al., 1999). Children pick up gender stereotypes and gender identities as they grow up, and these ideas are furthered by toys, games, television, books for kids, teachers, and significant others. Furthermore, early childhood toys play a major role in the development of stereotyping. These in turn establish the roles that are expected of kids. Baby girls wear pink, while boys wear blue according to Western tradition. Children typically attempt to fit in with what their parents or other adults expect of them. They interpret them as expectations, and they adjust their conduct appropriately. Children's decisions are eventually impacted as they become older (Archer & Lloyd, 2002).

### **2.5 The Role of Parent, Society and Others in forming Gender Stereotyping**

People's opinions are important to an individual while making decisions, such as choosing a career. These views, nevertheless, can occasionally be predicated on stereotypes. Parents, friends, peers, instructors, and career counselors are examples of significant individuals who have a significant impact on young people's goal-setting and career goals. Their impact is particularly significant in the early and teenage years (Cobb, 2001). According to a 2006 study by Moore in the United States, parents, friends, mentors, and role models all have a significant favorable impact on the employment decisions of young people. From an early developmental stage, children watch and learn about the various jobs that people who are very important to them perform, this is typically accomplished through socialization within the community.

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Unconsciously, parents who praise their kids' efforts or constantly place the blame on them might have a favorable or bad impact on their kids' professional decisions. Parents and other family members become role models for young people's careers as a result of role model practices (Cobb, 2001). To promote atypical careers, parental encouragement and support are crucial. In a similar Vein et al. (1992) research revealed that family history affects economic standing, educational attainment, and professional choices. That is to say, some parents, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, could prefer seeing women as homemakers. Moreover, a study by Mapfumo et al. (2002) finds a strong positive association between significant others and the careers chosen by men and women. Teachers and parents have an impact on how students view their jobs. Also, our thoughts and aspirations for our careers are heavily shaped by our social and cultural experiences for example; negative attitudes about science disciplines or careers may result from negative perceptions about women's ability in certain fields (Isaacson, 1985).

### **2.6 Gender Stereotyping on Careers**

Both men and women make decisions about their careers based on how they view other people and themselves. That is to say, young people's attitudes and career goals are greatly influenced by our social and cultural experiences for instance; unfavorable preconceptions about women's aptitude in science fields could negatively impact students' attitudes toward the fields or careers (Isaacson, 1985).

According to a Zimbabwean study by Mapfumo et al. (2002), men and women choose their careers based on stereotypes, with male-dominated fields thought to include engineering, building, electrical work, carpentry, managerial positions, security services, welding, mining,

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and driving. Jobs for women included teaching, nursing, catering, designing, clerical, and housekeeping. The views of boys and girls on jobs that are considered masculine and feminine had a strong positive correlation. Evans (2006) found that women value work traits more than men including interacting with people and helping them; Males claim to value employment attributes associated with income, power, and leadership more than females do, however.

According to a study by McQuaid and Bond (2004), many females in Scotland expressed unfavorable attitudes against working in jobs that were thought to be associated with men. McQuaid and Bond's (2004) results revealed that a significant portion of students believed that men and women could work as waiters and waitresses, teachers, store owners, police officers, managers, attorneys and solicitors, and medical professionals. Some vocations, such as those associated with "men," such as truck driving, engineering, plumbing, electrician, labor, and military service, continued to be stigmatized based on a person's gender, and care assistant and nurse roles continued to be held by women.

Courses in the social sciences and home economics are considered feminine, yet disciplines like mathematics and physics are considered manly; however, males who excel at feminine jobs are not viewed as highly worthy in the same way (Myers, 2005). Nonetheless, women who excel in fields and careers traditionally associated with men are sometimes seen as exceptional, blessed, or extremely driven. According to a Puja (2001) study done in Tanzania, women are employed and concentrated in traditionally female-dominated fields like nursing, typing, and machine operation, which are repetitive and pay less compared to the number of top jobs held by men. As a result, by being hired for jobs that promote gender stereotypes, both men and women comply with gender stereotypes.

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### **2.7 Influence of Gender Stereotype on Career Choice**

Findings demonstrate that gender influences subject choices made by boys and girls. It is an ingrained perception that certain subjects are better suited for men and women (Schuster & Martiny, 2017). Girls themselves indicate low efficacy in some STEM-related disciplines, according to studies by Hand et al. (2017) and Schuster and Martiny (2017); Because there aren't many women in STEM professions, students develop a culture that influences their behavior while making career decisions. This culture encourages more boys to choose the sciences and more ladies to choose the arts. According to Igbo et al. (2015), this type of gender stereotyping affects students' self-confidence and assurance about particular occupations.

This suggests that certain students assert their membership in particular career fields and follow that path without solid evidence. This style of thinking that is based on gender stereotypes has led to the categorization of subjects according to gender. Mutekwe et al. (2011) observed that there was a difference in the disciplines chosen by male and female students in Zimbabwe. According to Makarova et al. (2016), research conducted in Switzerland revealed that whereas mathematics and physics were perceived as hard, serious, rigorous, or robust, female students were labeled as soft, dreamy, lenient, or fragile.

According to Buschor et al. (2014), the percentage of female students pursuing STEM disciplines in EU member states has stayed relatively stable at about 25%, with Germany having an even lower percentage at about 18%. According to Kurtz Costes et al. (2014), gender segregation in the STEM areas was discovered to be enduring and evident. Furthermore, according to Kurtz Costes et al. (2014), the fields with the lowest percentage of women were information (10%) and technology (8.5%), whereas the percentage of women in chemistry and

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biological sciences was noticeably higher (43%). Lubaale (2020) discovered that in Kyambogo University in Uganda, female completion rates in the sciences were lower than those of male students. Students can find this kind of information in books and the media, which has a significant influence on how they present their job choices.

### **2.8 Career Choice in Ethiopian Students**

Various researchers in Ethiopia examine various aspects that influence students' career choices. For instance, Kumar (2016) found that Parents have an impact on their children's professional choices, and among college students in Bahrdar City, there is a correlation between parents' preferences and occupations. The most frequent factor influencing a student's choice of profession at Ambo University is personality, which is followed by professional awareness and family impact (Getachew, 2022). Additionally, although Tekle (2012) explains in his findings that personality variables do play a significant role in narrowing the field of study that students choose to pursue in higher education, the data from the study does not show an interesting fit, particularly in certain departments within the Ethiopian higher education setting. However, there are no sufficient studies that address the role of gender stereotypes on career choice in Ethiopia.

According to Kassie (2018), the number of male students enrolled exceeded the number of female students in every academic year and subject of study. In science and engineering, social science, and health, the proportion of female students overall throughout the five years was 21.2%, 34%, and 35%, respectively. This indicates that compared to health and social science professions, the percentage of female enrollment in science and engineering fields was lower and that the gender gap in these fields was the largest of the three. Furthermore, compared

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to health and social sciences, science and engineering enrolled less women every academic year (Kassie, 2018). This suggests that gender role issues are also a problem in Ethiopia.

To summarize, there are a lot of studies that explain different factors in career choice. Stebleton (2007) ,shows that the students had an external locus of control and believed that various external factors influenced their career choices. These external factors include; (1) previous work experience, (2) political and economic considerations, and (3) the influence of key individuals in a person's life. According to a 2003 UK study by Hensley, traditional gender ideas were assumed to be correlated with androgynous subjects and gender traditionalism in work choice, with male gender roles assumed to have higher career aspirations than feminine role gender. Lemkau (1984) notes that both genders adopt rules that govern their behavior, such as selecting employment that is predominately held by men or women or getting hired for conventional male occupations. That finding shows gender stereotyping among people. Nicholas (2014) investigated the effects of gender stereotyping on secondary school students' career choices in Dares Salaam, Tanzania. His findings indicate that traditional beliefs or culture had a significant influence on both boys' and girls' career choices, with both genders making decisions about their careers based on the values of their societies.

Furthermore, research in Ethiopia has examined several factors influencing students' career choices; nevertheless, further investigation is necessary to fully understand the impact of gender stereotypes. Research to date indicates that students' decisions are influenced by their parents, personality types, and knowledge of available job options. In addition, there is a gender gap in higher education, with fewer women enrolling in scientific and engineering programs than in other subjects.

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### **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Cognitive Career Theory**

According to Brown & Hackett (2006), ideas that people adopt and refine through social persuasion, vicarious learning, personal performance accomplishment, and psychological moods and reactions all have an impact on the choice of career. In general, the theory demonstrates that an individual's professional decision is influenced by a variety of elements, some of which may be acquired from other individuals. Furthermore, the decision can also be the outcome of career stereotyping. For this reason, this theory is crucial to understanding professional development and career choices.

SCCT also emphasizes that choice goals are sometimes influenced more directly and potently by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, or environmental variables than they are by interests. Interests are expected to exert their greatest impact on academic and occupational choice under supportive environmental conditions, which enable people to pursue their interests. However, many adolescents and adults are not able to follow their interests either unfettered by obstacles or with the full support of important others. The choice-making of these persons is constrained by such experiences as economic need, family pressures, or educational limitations. In such instances, people may need to compromise their interests and, instead, make their choices based on such pragmatic considerations as the type of work that is available to them, their self-efficacy beliefs (can I do this type of work?), and outcome expectations (will the job pay enough to make it worthwhile?). Cultural values (e.g., the degree to which student's choices may be guided by elder family members) may also limit the role of personal interests in career choice.

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This study finds the SCCT a useful guide. Using the theory, the study seeks to establish what the influence of societal perception about gender on the choice of career. To what extent does gender influence choosing a career among undergraduate students? What relationship do gender stereotypes and career choice have? What are some other factors that influence a student's career choice?

### **2.10 Synthesis and Research Gap**

This review has generally shown that the concept of career choice, factors that influence career choices and the role that parents, teachers, and peers play in influencing career choice among men and women are all significant. Belief in traditional gender roles, gender stereotyping of careers and persistent gender differences in career choice are also revealed. It has also shown that there isn't plenty of research on career choices carried out in Ethiopia. The ones that have been done have focused on different factors that influence career choice. Moreover, no other research has been discovered that looked into gender stereotypes and career choice.

Thus, the goal of the study is to investigate how gender stereotypes influence career decisions as well as how students perceive and internalize gender stereotypes in connection to their profession choices. Additionally, this study examines how cultural norms and societal expectations shape gender stereotypes and how they affect job choices. It also looks at the experiences and difficulties faced by Debre Berhan University students who choose to pursue careers that go against conventional gender standards.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

This section focuses on the methodology that was employed in the study. The procedure that follows to select participants and the process of data collection and analysis are also included in this section.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Leedy (1997), a research design is a study plan that offers the general framework for gathering data. Research design is a framework for strategic action that connects the execution of the research strategy with the research questions.

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research investigates and delivers greater insights into real-world issues (Moser & Korstjens, 2011). Qualitative research collects data about individuals' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. It addresses the how and whys rather than how many or how much. From a qualitative research design, phenomenological research is selected for this study. The phenomenological method is described as the study of the meaning of phenomena or the study of the particular, at its essence; phenomenological study seeks to study experiences through the lens of the person (Cleland, 2017). Phenomenological study is simply delving into the participants' life experiences and seeks to investigate how and why they behaved in a given way, from their perspective also phenomenological study is concerned with describing and interpreting an event or phenomenon from the viewpoint of individuals who have experienced it. Therefore, a phenomenological research approach was used

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in this study to examine how gender stereotypes affect students' career choices from the viewpoint of their experiences and perceptions.

### **3.2 Study area**

The study was carried out at Debre Berhan University. This University is one of Ethiopia's universities, which is located in Ethiopia's Amara region. The institution is situated in Debre Berhan town's north shewa zone, some 130 kilometers north of Addis Ababa, with two campuses, eleven colleges, 118 departments, and 250 majors. A rich and expansive environment is offered by this academic setting for researching to study the impact of gender stereotypes on students' career choices. I choose this university because it allows for the exploration of diverse experiences and viewpoints, as university students come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, also the researchers reside there, know the environment, and can conduct investigations more easily.

### **3.3. Sampling Technique**

The technique of purposive sampling was employed. Choosing participants with the traits or experiences relevant to the study topic or phenomena of interest is known as purposeful sampling, which is a qualitative research sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling is the purposeful selection of participants based on attributes or experiences that are relevant to the goals of the study. The purpose of this study was to gather a wide range of viewpoints and experiences on gender stereotypes and career choices. Purposive sampling would thereby make it possible to deliberately choose individuals from a range of genders, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and academic fields. By including people who have faced and overcome gender

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stereotypes in their career decision-making processes, this selection strategy guarantees that the sample contains individuals who offer rich and valuable data for analysis. The study tries to provide in-depth insights from participants who have experience with the issue of interest by using purposive sampling, which allows for a thorough investigation of the impact of gender stereotypes on students' career choices.

I try to select participants from third-year students. Nine participants were selected for semi-structured interviews from different departments by taking into account the saturation point. Also, eight participants were in focus group discussions from different departments in the same class year. Senior students were chosen with the purpose of gaining relevant experience from their department selection experience. More outgoing, articulate, and assertive students were chosen with the assistance of college administrators and teachers.

### **3.5 Methods of Data Collection**

The main method of gathering data for this study was in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (IDI and FGD). This investigation used in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions to get rich insights from participants. With this method, the researcher tries to examine participant experiences, viewpoints, and actions about how gender stereotypes affect students' career choices in great detail. The interview was semi-structured format which offers a framework that is flexible and allows the investigation of certain areas of interest while allowing for the development of good results. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio recorded to guarantee accuracy in data gathering and transcribing. Semi-structured questions during in-depth interviews are a useful tool for collecting detailed qualitative information that improves our understanding of complex phenomena (Patton, 2015).

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FGD enables the investigation to view social interactions, group attitudes, and shared experiences relevant to the study topics. This offers participants a unique opportunity to connect and build on one another's ideas, resulting in rich and diverse insights. FGDs are an effective tool for investigating group dynamics and discovering collective viewpoints on complicated topics (Krueger & Casey, 2014). In this study, Focus group discussion (FGD) was also used to collect additional data, as they are a common tool in qualitative research for capturing group dynamics and examining shared viewpoints on a study issue. In an FGD, a researcher was facilitating a conversation among eight participants who were selected from different departments with the recommendation of teachers. Before the data collection, pilot testing was done to ensure the effectiveness of data collection tools.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Process**

After the data collection, the study employs a phenomenological data analysis process which consists of several key steps aimed at better understanding participants' lived experiences. First, I was engaged in bracketing, which involves setting aside biases and preconceptions to approach the data with an open mind, as emphasized by Giorgi (2009). Van Manen (1997) supports the use of in-depth interviews to collect data, which allows participants to share their experiences in detail. Then the collected data was transcribed including verbatim preserving every detail of the participants' speech, which is critical for accurate analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Following transcription, researchers use thematic analysis to identify significant themes and patterns, repeatedly reading the transcripts to highlight key insights, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis for the interview data and FGD were completed separately

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first, and the researcher tried to sum up both finding themes from the interview, and FGD with general themes and overarching themes were selected from the overall finding.

### **3.7 Ethical Consideration**

In conducting research, informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement. Participants must be fully informed about the study's goals, methods, and potential benefits before agreeing to participate. This process respects their autonomy, allowing individuals to make an informed choice regarding their involvement. Additionally, confidentiality and anonymity are paramount; any identifying information collected during the study is kept private and accessible only to authorized personnel. Anonymity is further ensured by replacing real names with codes or pseudonyms, safeguarding participants' identities throughout the research process.

Respect for autonomy extends beyond informed consent, emphasizing the importance of individuals' rights to make their own decisions. In this study, participants were informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. This approach encourages active participation and allows participants to voice their experiences and opinions. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity is crucial, as it acknowledges and honors the diverse cultural practices and values of participants. This involves understanding the cultural context in which the research is conducted and ensuring that data collection methods are respectful and relevant. By employing culturally appropriate language and engaging participants from various backgrounds, the study aims to uphold ethical standards while fostering a respectful and inclusive research environment.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Findings**

#### **4.1 General Overviews**

The findings of the study on how gender stereotypes influence students' career choices are presented in this chapter. Using a phenomenological thematic analysis methodology, the study involved focus group discussions with eight students and in-person interviews with nine students. The participants are Debre Berhan University third-year students. This section includes background information on participants and finding themes.

#### **4.2 Background of Participant's Overview**

Participant 01 is a third-year accounting and finance department student. She comes from Bahirdar City to attend her class. She tries to explain her career aspiration as a hostess and also she inspired by music. She reports that her parents and society discouraged her from being a singer; instead, her mother wants her to be an accountant. She reported that in addition to gender stereotypes parental influence and societal expectations affect career choice.

Participant 02 is a 23-year-old male computer science student. He is from Hawassa. His career aspiration is to be a software developer. His parents are very supportive of accomplishing his dream. He said that the majority of societies think that technical jobs are best suited for men and caring and nurturing fields are suited for girls. He reports that even his families support this thought and this thought may affect student's career choices, especially female students.

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Participant 03 is from the mechanical engineering department. She is happy to learn mechanical engineering. She reports that only two female students are in the classroom. Her parents are in Addis Ababa and they are very supportive. But when she selected a department her parents pushed her towards the health sector, especially nursing, they thought it was more suitable for girls and they believed that engineering would be too challenging for her. She reported that societal thought about gender-stereotypical careers is very influential if the students are not self-confident and their family support is also affected.

Participant 04 is a third-year marketing management student. She wants to be an event organizer and be the owner of Advertisement Company. She said that the cultural society has a perception that engineering fields are more suitable for men, while women are often encouraged to pursue careers in healthcare, nursing, and marketing due to traditional gender beliefs. The idea is that engineering and logistics are perceived as more masculine fields, suitable for men, while marketing and nursing are seen as more feminine fields. But also she states that at this time, people's views have changed because her class has almost an equal mix of both male and female students. This contradicts the stereotype that marketing is primarily for women.

Participant 05 is from the sociology department. He comes from Addis Ababa to attend his higher education class. He wants to be a social worker like his mother. He believes that there are no specific jobs related to gender. He explains that he wasn't affected by gender stereotypes when he chose his department.

Participant 06 is from Gonder to attend her class. She is a third-year economics department student. Her family did not support her in learning economics because of their

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gender-stereotypical thought. She believes that all jobs are suited for both males and females if they are interested.

Participant 07 is a third-year civil engineering student. He wants to be an actor. He said that gender stereotypes don't affect his career choice but his parent forced him to study engineering or medical doctor but his ambition is to be an actor. He explains gender stereotypes in career choice, certain fields like nursing, health care, and education, and also social science; viewed as more appropriate for women. And he thinks that this perception leads to wrong decisions.

Participant 08 is a Biotechnology student at Debre Berhan University. He comes from Balerohe to attend his class. His future career aspiration is to establish a laboratory and do investigations. He was never forced or discouraged from choosing a certain job path due to his gender. He also said certain fields like nursing; social science and education are viewed as more appropriate for women. Engineering is considered a men's job, but this thought is not correct.

Participant 09 is a female journalism department student. She studies what she wants and her family supports her ambition. She said that she was never forced or discouraged because of her gender, but still, in society, there is some sort of gender stereotypical thought and this societal expectation can create some influence on student's career aspirations. Most of the time our society thinks natural science-related fields is suited for men and this thought can create frustration among female students. But nowadays people's view has changed about job classification according to gender.

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The study also collects data from focus group discussions to get more ideas and experience. This discussion includes eight participants who include four male and four female students from different departments. They were from Psychology, Logistics and Supply Management, Agriculture, Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Civics, Construction and Technology Management and Computer Science departments.

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4.2.1 Demographic Data of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Department</b>
Participant 01	20	Female	Accounting
Participant 02	23	Male	Computer Science
Participant 03	20	Female	Mechanical Engineering
Participant 04	21	Female	Marketing
Participant 05	22	Male	Sociology
Participant 06	20	Female	Economics
Participant 07	20	Male	Civil Engineering
Participant 08	21	Male	Biotechnology
Participant 09	20	Female	Journalism

*Table 1: background information of participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Department</b>
Participant 010	20	Female	Psychology
Participant 011	21	Male	Logistics
Participant 012	23	Female	Agriculture
Participant 013	22	Male	Biology
Participant 014	23	Male	Mechanical engineering
Participant 015	21	Male	Civics
Participant 016	21	Female	COTOM
Participant 017	22	Female	Computer science

*Table 2: Backgrounds of FGD participants*

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### 4.3 Findings

The study results on participants' experiences with gender stereotypes, students' career aspirations, societal influence, and career counseling and support in relation to Debre Berhan University student's career choice are given in this section. Each section development is supported by direct quotes.

#### 4.3.1 Findings from the interview

##### 1. Theme One - The Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Career Choices

This theme explores how gender stereotypes impact students' career aspirations. Participants consistently reported that societal expectations and prevailing beliefs about gender significantly influence students' choices. Additionally, repeated messages from various sources about gender roles lead to the internalization of these concepts, ultimately shaping gender stereotypes and affecting career decisions.

##### Subtheme 1- Societal Expectations

Participants expressed feeling pressured to conform to established societal norms. For example, Participant 01 noted, "*In our community, females are often expected to pursue roles in nursing.*" This societal conditioning significantly influences students' self-perceptions and aspirations.

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Theme	Subtheme	Explanation
1. Influence of Gender Stereotypes on Career Choices	1.1 Societal Expectations	Views of what careers are appropriate for each gender are shaped by societal ideas.
	1.2 Stereotype Internalization	Individuals assimilate the beliefs of society, which affects their ambitions and choices.
2. Family Influence and Support	2.1 Parental Pressure	Family pressure often leads individuals to conform to unwanted career paths.
	2.2 Support Systems	Supportive family environments empower individuals to pursue their true interests.
3. Cultural Context and Educational Environment	3.1 Cultural Norms	Women in male-dominated fields face cultural expectations that limit their opportunities.
	3.2 University Environment	Gender stereotypes can be reinforced or challenged by the university's policies and culture.
4. Personal Goals and Conflicts	4.1 student's career choice versus Societal Expectations	Participants face tensions between personal interests and societal expectations.
	4.2 Overcoming Challenges	Individuals overcome challenges in order to follow the careers they want.
5. Recommendation to change stereotypical thought		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved career counseling, with a focus on gender equity, is recommended.</li> <li>• Universities must strive to create inclusive environments for all of their students.</li> </ul>

**Table 3:** overview of themes and sub- themes

Similarly, Participant 03 remarked, *“In Ethiopian society, there is a clear expectation that men should take on more technical roles, while women are commonly steered towards nurturing careers. This cultural context complicates the process of being taken seriously as women in our department.”* Participant 04 also highlighted societal perceptions concerning gendered fields, stating, *“There is a prevailing belief in our society that engineering is more*

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*suitable for men, while women are encouraged to explore careers in healthcare, nursing, and marketing due to traditional gender beliefs. Engineering and logistics are regarded as masculine fields, whereas marketing and nursing are considered more feminine.”*

Participants reported experiencing pressure to conform to traditional roles, although this pressure may not be overt. Society tends to associate certain professions with specific genders; for instance, nursing and teaching are predominantly viewed as women's fields, while engineering and computer science are often seen as reserved for men. This societal conditioning has a significant impact on students' self-perceptions and aspirations.

### **Subtheme 2- Stereotype internalization**

Participants indicated that they internalized stereotypes through various societal narratives. The notion that certain careers are unsuitable for women often deters individuals from exploring interests in technical fields. This internalization perpetuates a cycle of gender stereotype perceptions regarding careers, affecting both current and future generations. Some of the experiences shared by the interviewees include:

*“I frequently hear that women are perceived as less capable in science and technology fields, which contributes to a lack of confidence among female students. However, our university values female students and strives to provide equal opportunities for all regarding their choice of department.” (Participant 05)*

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*“There are certain fields, such as nursing, health care, education, and social sciences, that are considered more suitable for women, and I believe this perception leads to misguided decisions.”* (Participant 07)

*“Society posits that engineering is predominantly suited for men, and I have personally been affected by my family's beliefs. Nevertheless, I chose my own path regardless of their opinions. I also know there are only two female students in the mechanical engineering department, which highlights a significant gender-related perception among students.”*  
(Participant 06)

These experiences illustrate how gender stereotypes are negatively internalized and perceived among students, both directly and indirectly. This internalization stems from societal norms and familial beliefs surrounding gender roles, which also influences students' career choices in their field selection.

### **2. Theme two – Family influence and support**

The role of family was highlighted as a significant factor in shaping career paths. Participants discussed the impact of family support and influence on their decisions. When families are supportive, students are better able to overcome challenges and are more likely to pursue their chosen career pathways. Conversely, if there is parental pressure regarding field selection, students may struggle to follow their desired career paths.

#### **Subtheme 1- Parental Pressure**

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Participants reported feeling pressured by their families to pursue careers traditionally associated with either females or males. This pressure significantly influences students' perceptions of their career choices. Participant 01 expressed, "*My mother forced me to choose accounting. My family does not support my desire to be an artist, even though music is my talent and a great source of inspiration for me. I am here studying to be an accountant because of my parent's choice.*" This statement highlights the significant impact that family can have on a student's career decisions.

Participant 06 similarly noted that her parents tried to sway her choices, underscoring that parental and family influence affects students' decisions. Participant 03 shared, "*My family pushed me toward the health sector because they believed engineering would be too challenging for me. However, they later changed their minds.*" This type of pressure often leads to conformity with traditional roles, ultimately limiting individual aspirations.

### **Subtheme 2 - supportive system**

In contrast to the previously mentioned sub-theme, supportive family environments play a crucial role in enabling students to pursue their true interests. Participant 02 shares, "*My family believes that technical skills are meant for males. Their beliefs positively influence me alongside my aspirations.*" Similarly, Participant 03 notes, "*Initially, my family encouraged me to pursue a career in the health sector, particularly nursing, as they thought it was more appropriate for girls. They believed engineering would be too challenging for me. It took considerable persuasion to gain their support for my chosen path, but their eventual support has made me very resilient.*"

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Participant 09 echoes this sentiment, stating, *“I didn’t encounter challenges when selecting my department because my parents helped me a lot to achieve my dreams.”* Participant 06 also emphasizes the importance of family support, stating, *“I’ve observed that family background significantly matters for students. When families are supportive, students can pursue and realize their dreams. However, in the absence of such support, they often end up conforming to their parents’ and society’s choices, as I’ve seen with some of my friends.”*

These statements highlight how family support assists students in achieving their dreams and empowering them to make their own choices. When families are supportive, students can more easily overcome other challenges, such as gender stereotypes. In addition to parental support, participants also acknowledge that the backing of school communities, including department heads and teachers, is essential for shaping students’ career paths.

### **3. Theme 3 - Cultural Context and Educational Environment**

Participants highlighted cultural norms surrounding gender roles as obstacles that hinder female students from pursuing careers in male-dominated fields. Beyond these cultural barriers, the university environment, including the support from faculty deans and teachers, plays a significant role in shaping students' career choices and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

#### **Subtheme 1- Cultural Norms**

Participants highlighted how Ethiopian culture often directs women towards caring professions while encouraging men to engage in technical roles. Participant 03 remarked, *“There is a clear expectation in Ethiopian society for men to take on more technical roles while women are expected to pursue nurturing careers.”* Similarly, Participant 07 noted, *“In our culture,*

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*female students are often expected to marry and manage home responsibilities, such as taking care of children and their husbands. In school, female students are more likely to pursue nurturing professions like nursing and teaching, and in my class, the majority of students are men.”*

Participant 05 shared his perspective: *“Societal norms expect men to take on technical roles while women are encouraged to follow nurturing paths. Often, society undermines women's potential, which I believe can influence students' career choices.”* These cultural expectations can leave women feeling unsupported in various environments.

Participants also discussed the role of media and societal norms in perpetuating gender stereotypes. Participant 01 stated, *“From infancy, families often reinforce gender stereotypes through assigned responsibilities. For example, a girl receives a doll to take care of, while a boy is given trucks or toy guns. This creates certain expectations in children's minds. As we grow older, if a boy attempts to cook or engage in household tasks, society questions him, saying, and ‘Are you a girl? Why don't you do that?’ Additionally, in media advertising—such as bank and hospital promotions—accountants and nurses are frequently portrayed as female, further entrenching gender stereotypes within our society.”* Overall, the findings indicate that culture plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of gender stereotypes.

**Sub theme 2 – the university environment**

Nearly all participants expressed their views on how the university supports gender balance by prioritizing the choices of female students. For example: Participant 06 stated, *“This University actively supports female students in pursuing their interests, which helps to reduce*

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*gender stereotypes among the student body. There is a career center available, but many students are unaware of its existence. This center could provide valuable guidance on their career aspirations.”*

Participant 05 remarked, *“During the department selection process, there was a program where faculty advisors promoted their respective departments and provided introductions about them. This program is beneficial as it offers students a clearer understanding of all available departments, aiding their career choices.”* Participant 04 added, *“Debre Birhan University is dedicated to ensuring equal opportunities for both genders in selecting their academic paths. The university fully supports women in pursuing their interests and specializing in their chosen fields.”*

While the participants acknowledged the university's support, they emphasized the need for additional resources, such as organized career counseling services and various programs related to career development.

### **4. Theme 4- Personal Goals and Conflicts**

Participants frequently articulate the internal conflicts that emerge when personal aspirations conflict with familial and societal expectations. Individuals possess their passions and career ambitions, yet society or their families often anticipate a different path for them. This creates significant internal strife for students.

#### **Subtheme 1- student’s career choice versus Societal Expectations**

Students possess unique talents and preferences regarding their career paths. However, many may encounter challenges when pursuing their desired profession. These obstacles often

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arise from pressure exerted by parents, peers, and societal gender norms or stereotypes. The respondents expressed conflict between following their passions and adhering to societal expectations and their parents' wishes.

Participant 01 from the accounting department noted, *“Due to the current job opportunities available, particularly for women, my mother insisted that I choose accounting. My family does not support my desire to be an artist, even though music is my talent and inspires me greatly. As a result, I am here studying to become an accountant at my parents' behest.”* In her case, the tension between her aspiration to be a musician and her parents' insistence on pursuing accounting creates an internal struggle.

Similarly, Participant 03 and Participant 07 conveyed a sense of conflict between their career choices and societal expectations. Participant 03 reflected, *“Sometimes I wonder if I am making the right choice or just different from everyone else. During the department selection process, my friends questioned my decision, saying, ‘Are you serious about selecting Mechanical? It’s a difficult field, and it’s meant for men.’ This has led to some internal conflict for me.”* Participant 07 also aspires to be an actor but feels pressured by his parents to study civil engineering instead.

### **Subtheme 2- Overcoming Challenges**

Participants indicated that despite facing challenges in their career choices, they strive to overcome familial and societal pressures. Some respondents highlighted the obstacles associated with selecting a department, with a consensus around the influence of family and societal expectations based on gender. Reflecting on these experiences, Participant 03 noted, *“Our*

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*culture and media encourage more males to pursue science and technical skills, while females are often directed towards caring and nurturing professions. I, too, have faced gender stereotyping and encountered challenges from both my family and friends until they eventually accepted my choice.*” Her expression of determination and happiness about her decision was evident.

Another participant, Participant 06, shared her approach to overcoming societal challenges: *“To tackle various obstacles, including gender stereotypes and peer attitudes towards choice, it is crucial to consider the matters of student perspectives.”* Participants 01 and 07 presented a different viewpoint, as their career choices aligned closely with their family's expectations.

Overall, the insights from all participants suggest that students can pursue their interests regardless of gender stereotypes and family influences. They offered various strategies to reconcile their aspirations with external perceptions, such as engaging in open discussions with family members and pursuing their dreams. Moreover, several interviewees expressed that while gender stereotypes and societal influences do not dictate their choices, they often encounter the narrative of gendered careers—like nursing being seen as a female profession and engineering as a male one—which can shape their thoughts about gender and career paths.

### **5. Theme 5- Recommendation to address stereotypical thought**

Enhancing career counseling and implementing awareness programs that emphasize gender equity are crucial steps in combating gender stereotypes and societal expectations. As one participant noted, *“If the university organized awareness programs about gender stereotypes, it*

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*could help students make informed choices*” (participant 02). Such initiatives would empower students to pursue their interests freely, unhindered by gender norms. Additionally, participants suggested that these programs should feature role models from diverse fields to inspire students. *“Seeing women succeed in engineering would truly motivate others to follow their dreams,”* remarked Participant 03, a response echoed by Participant 05.

Furthermore, the university must cultivate an inclusive environment that encourages all students, regardless of gender, to explore various career paths. Participant 03 proposed, *“The University should create supportive networks for female students in engineering and other male-dominated fields.”* The establishment of peer support groups and mentorship programs could provide essential encouragement. *“Having a community that supports us can change everything”* concluded Participant 08.

In summary, the participants recommended several strategies to combat gender stereotypes and their influence on career choices, including the provision of guidance and counseling during department selection and career planning, as well as the formation of clubs that promote female students in scientific fields. It is essential for the university to ensure equal opportunities for all students consistently.

#### **4.3.2 Findings from Focus Group Discussion**

Additionally, the researcher tries to get information from the students through group discussions. There were four female and four male students in this group. The focus group discussion highlights the complex interactions between societal norms, individual aspirations, and gender stereotypes among Debre Berhan University students. Participants described how

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they have come across and internalized stereotypes, how cultural norms have pressured them, and how conflicts arise when expectations and personal interests don't align. The researcher arranges the data into themes to create additional insight.

### 1. Theme 1- Experiencing Gender Stereotypes

Participants frequently reported that gender stereotypes had an impact on their career paths. For example, Participant 016 (female, COTOM Engineering student) said, "*My neighbors always told me that engineering was a man's field before I went to university, so there are preconceived ideas in the community and this can influence me.*" Similarly, Participant 011 (a male, Logistics student) said, "*My family feels that the logistics field is more appropriate for men from social science streams.*"

The following is also reflected by Participant 010 (female, psychology student) "*The family and society have pressure on students to pursue subjects that are culturally acceptable or assigned to specific genders, such as engineering for men and social fields for women. However, I believe that gender is not a factor in career choice; anyone can follow their passions as long as they avoid thinking in gendered based classification.*" Those quotations show how cultural norms impose boundaries on individuals, forcing them to select careers that are socially acceptable for their gender if the students can't defy the influence of societal expectations.

### 2. Theme 2- internalization of stereotypes

One significant theme that emerged was the internalization of gender stereotypes among participants. They indicated that, either directly or indirectly, they absorb these societal expectations. Participant 012, a female agriculture student, remarked, "*In our society, there are*

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*clear job classifications for men and women. My parents exemplify this; my mother and father share unequal responsibilities at home. Furthermore, my father encourages my younger brother to pursue masculine jobs, like working part-time in a garage. This instills in me the belief that garages are only for men.”*

Participant 017, a female computer science student, added, *“Society typically divides jobs between men and women. For instance, nursing is predominantly associated with girls, reflecting societal beliefs, while most of my classmates are boys. This highlights the presence of gender stereotypes regarding occupations, even if they are not overtly or intentionally directed at us as students.”*

Additionally, participant 016 introduced a different perspective, stating, *“Many Ethiopian parents tell their children to ‘act like a girl’ or ‘act like a man,’ and questions like ‘Why aren’t you doing this, if you’re a girl?’ carry significant weight. These phrases can unconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes and lead to their internalization.”* Overall, the participants suggested that societal beliefs exert a profound influence on perceptions of gender roles, which individuals internalize, often unintentionally.

### **3. Theme 3- Societal influence and challenges**

The impact of family, media, and cultural norms emerged as a significant challenge faced by participants. Participant 017 (female, Computer Science) noted, *“Media portrayals often depict men in technology roles, which reinforces the notion that these careers are not for women.”* This insight emphasizes the role of media in shaping societal perceptions regarding gender appropriateness in various fields.

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Furthermore, Participant 014 (male, Mechanical Engineering) remarked, *“Families often encourage certain career paths based on gender, disregarding the ambitions of their children. This familial pressure creates an environment where individuals feel compelled to conform to expectations rather than pursuing their genuine interests.”* Participant 016 (female, COTOM student) also shared her perspective on media influence: *“Our media has a significant impact on fostering gender-based beliefs; for instance, advertisements on TV often conform to cultural norms, such as baby diaper commercials typically featuring female actors or models. This supports societal expectations for women and has the power to indirectly create gender stereotypes.”* Overall, societal, media, and cultural norms play a crucial role in influencing students’ career choices.

### **4. Theme4-Handling Conflicts in Aspirations**

Participants expressed feelings of conflict between their personal aspirations and societal expectations. Many participants experience tension between their choices and their families' desires. For instance, Participant 013, a male Biology student, shared his struggle: *“I have loved biology since my early classes, but my family is pushing me to join the engineering department, and I feel torn between following my interest and meeting their expectations.”* This struggle between personal ambition and societal or parental validation is a common experience among participants, leading to feelings of frustration and uncertainty.

Participants 016, 017, and 014 also reflected on their experiences, noting the conflicts they encounter between their career choices and influences from family, friends, and societal expectations. The experiences of these participants illustrate that students often grapple with internal conflicts regarding their career paths in relation to societal and familial pressures.

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### 5. Theme 5- Overcoming Challenges and Seeking Support

Participants shared insights on overcoming stereotypes and finding encouragement in their pursuits. Participant 017, a female computer science student, highlighted a peer's initiative: *“I know of a female student who started a tech club to support women in computer science at another university. If we could create and join similar clubs at our own university, it would promote female participation in technology fields.”* This underscores the power of community and mentorship in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment, which can help eliminate gender stereotypes.

Participant 010, a female psychology student, stressed the importance of support systems within the university, stating, “Establishing support groups for students pursuing non-traditional careers could provide a safe space to share experiences. While the university has a career center, most students are unaware of it, so there needs to be greater outreach.” Additionally, participants highlighted the significance of personal beliefs in one’s potential as a key factor in overcoming challenges. The support from family, as well as a positive school environment, is essential in mitigating obstacles related to career choices and goals.

#### 4.4 Overreaching Themes from the Interview and FGD Findings

##### Theme 1- Influence of Gender Stereotype on Career Choice

Participants shared that their perceptions of suitable career pathways are often shaped by prevailing gender stereotypes. Participants expressed experiencing societal and familial pressures to choose fields typically associated with their gender. In particular, men may feel expected to pursue technical professions such as computer science or engineering, while women might feel

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inclined toward careers in nursing, teaching, or other care giving roles. This societal pressure can create disconnection between students' interests and external expectations, ultimately limiting their career options. Although participants acknowledged the impact of gender stereotypes on their choices, some were able to navigate these challenges and follow their desired career paths.

### **Theme 2- Perceptions and Internalization of Gender Stereotype**

The repeated societal discourse surrounding gender roles and the beliefs held by families contribute to the internalization of gender stereotypes, as revealed in both the interviews and focus group discussions. These societal views on gender roles play a significant role in shaping participants' self-perception and influencing their career trajectories. For instance, in technical fields, pervasive stereotypes suggesting that these subjects are more appropriate for men can lead female students to doubt their abilities. The continual reinforcement of these societal beliefs fosters the development of gender stereotypes.

### **Theme 3- The Role of Cultural Norms and Societal / Family Expectations**

Students' perceptions of gender expectations and stereotypes are significantly shaped by cultural norms. Participants highlighted that in Ethiopian society, traditional gender roles are well-defined, with men often seen as suited for technical and leadership positions, while women are typically relegated to supporting or nurturing roles. The reinforcement of these traditional beliefs, combined with a lack of diversity in academic fields, particularly in STEM, can create an environment where students feel constrained in their career choices. Participants also shared their experiences of both pressure and support from their families, indicating that family significantly influences the careers students pursue.

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**Theme 4- Supportive Institutional Frameworks**

Participants reported that Debre Berhan University provides substantial support for female students in their choice of departments. However, they noted a need for the university to foster a more inclusive environment for all students to address challenges related to gender stereotypes. Moreover, participants advocated for the strengthening of counseling and guidance services, as well as the establishment of supportive clubs to enhance the overall student experience.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

#### 5.1 Discussion

The findings from the interviews and focus group discussions reveal significant insights into the influence of gender stereotypes on career choices among students at Debre Berhan University. The themes identified gender stereotypes; family influence, cultural context, and institutional support are consistent with recent literature on gender and career development.

The impact of gender stereotypes on career aspirations is well-documented. Participants expressed that societal expectations shaped their perceptions of suitable careers, aligning with research by Eagly & Karau (2002), which suggests that societal norms dictate the roles deemed appropriate for men and women. This internalization of stereotypes leads to self-limiting beliefs, particularly among female students, who often feel discouraged from pursuing fields such as engineering and computer science (Schmader et al., 2008). Such findings highlight the necessity of addressing these stereotypes through educational interventions.

The role of family emerged as a critical factor influencing career choices. Participants reported experiences of parental pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, echoing findings by Eccles (2011), who argues that family expectations can significantly impact children's career aspirations. Conversely, supportive family environments were noted to empower students, consistent with research by Wang & Degol (2013), which suggests that encouragement from family can mitigate the negative impacts of societal stereotypes. This kind of influence emphasizes the importance of fostering family support systems to enable students to pursue their interests.

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Cultural norms played a key role in shaping students' career paths. Participants indicated that Ethiopian cultural expectations often push women towards nurturing roles and men towards technical fields, reflecting findings by Murtagh et al. (2012) on the cultural constraints faced by women in STEM. The educational environment can either reinforce or challenge these stereotypes. Consistent with Baker et al. (2020), who suggest that inclusive educational practices can help take apart gender biases, the university's support for female students was recognized as a crucial factor in promoting gender equity.

The conflict between personal aspirations and societal expectations was another issue among participants. This aligns with Hoffman & Kahn (2018), who discuss the psychological distress caused by such conflicts, particularly for women navigating careers in male-dominated fields. Despite these challenges, some participants demonstrated resilience, seeking to overcome societal pressures to pursue their chosen paths. This aligns with Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy, suggesting that individuals who believe in their capabilities are more likely to overcome obstacles.

The participants' recommendations for enhanced career counseling and support programs reflect a growing recognition of the need for institutional changes to address gender disparities in career choices. Research by Shen et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of mentorship and support networks in encouraging underrepresented groups in STEM fields. Institutions are urged to implement structured programs that not only provide guidance but also challenge existing stereotypes through awareness campaigns, as supported by the participants' suggestions for role model inclusion.

In general, this phenomenological study's findings highlight the complex nature of gender stereotypes and their significant influence on students' career decisions. Students' perceptions and

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aspirations are shaped by the interaction of cultural norms, family influence, and societal expectations. It is important to address these stereotypes by providing enhanced career counseling and support services in order to create an inclusive atmosphere that encourages all students to follow their career goals.

### **5.2 Implications**

The study's findings provide insight on how gender stereotypes influence students' career choices at Debre Berhan University. Understanding these dynamics contributes to the educational discussion and emphasizes the necessity of implementing practical methods to advance gender equality in educational and professional environments. This research has implications for a number of stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, families, and community organizations.

**Counseling Implication-** In order to help students to understand their career options and fight the impact of gender stereotypes, counseling is essential. It is vital that career guidance sessions in counseling programs incorporate conversations regarding gender bias. Counselors can assist students in recognizing and challenging gender-related limiting beliefs by using techniques that encourage self-examination and critical thinking. Giving students access to materials that present achieved role models from a variety of backgrounds can also encourage them to choose their career paths.

**Educational Institutions -** It is important that universities implement comprehensive career counseling programs that actively address gender biases and raise awareness of diverse career opportunities. Universities can empower students to pursue fields that align with their interests

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rather than conforming to societal expectations by providing workshops and seminars on gender equity in career choice.

**Policymakers** - should consider this study's findings when developing initiatives to promote gender equity in education and employment. Encouraging female representation in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as engineering and technology, can help reduce stereotypes. This can be accomplished through targeted scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and collaboration with industries that value diversity in hiring practices.

**Family commitment** - The study emphasizes the importance of family on students' career choices. Engaging families in discussions about gender stereotypes and the importance of diverse career paths can help to create supportive environments for students'. Educational outreach programs involving parents and guardians can help shift perceptions by encouraging families to support their children's dreams regardless of traditional gender roles.

**Community Awareness** - Raising community awareness of gender stereotypes and their impact on career choices is crucial. Community organizations and local governments can work together to develop campaigns that challenge societal norms and highlight the advantages of gender diversity in all professions. Such initiatives can help to reshape public perceptions, fostering a culture that prioritizes individual aspirations over traditional gender norms.

**Future Research** - More research is needed to investigate the long-term effects of interventions designed to reduce gender stereotypes in educational settings. Longitudinal studies could provide useful information about how changes in institutional policies and community practices affect students' career choices over time. Furthermore, comparative studies across cultural contexts could improve understanding of the broad effect of gender stereotypes on career aspirations.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

This phenomenological study demonstrated how gender stereotypes influence students' career choice at Debre Berhan University. By examining the experiences of both male and female students, the study indicates how societal expectations, cultural beliefs, and family influences shape their aspirations and choices. Many students are split between what they want to do and what society expects of them, highlighting the need for change in schools and society as a whole. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing gender stereotypes through targeted actions such as improved career counseling, family involvement, and community awareness. These actions are critical for creating an inclusive environment in which all students can pursue their careers without being restricted by traditional gender roles.

Overall, this study contributes to the discussion about gender equality in career choice and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to create a more equitable academic environment. Future research should focus on how these actions can result in long-term changes in how society perceives gender and career choices.

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**Annex**

**Appendix A**

**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Psychology**

**Interview questions**

**Introduction**

Dear participants the objective of this interview question is for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts Degree in counseling psychology. These questions are designed to collect data about Perceived Influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in Career Choice among Students. The data collected from these interview questions will all be used for the research purpose only. And also all the collected data will be kept only in the hands of the researcher. I hereby request you to be open and honest while responding, so that the research could succeed and achieve the intended goal.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

**Background information**

Age.....

Sex.....

Department.....

Date of interview.....

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### Opening Questions (Icebreakers)

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your academic program at DebreBerhan University?
2. What are your current career aspirations, or what types of jobs have you considered for the future?

### Core Questions

1. **How does gender stereotype influence student's career choice?**
  1. Have you ever been forced or discouraged from choosing a certain job path due to your gender?
  2. How do cultural expectations for men and women impact profession choices for DebreBerhan University students?
    - o In your opinion, are there any specific academic subjects or fields of study at DebreBerhan University that are seen as more suitable for one gender than the other? Why or why not?
2. **How do students perceive and internalize gender stereotypes in relation to their career choices?**
  - o Can you think of any examples of gender stereotypes you've encountered regarding careers? (e.g., jobs that are "better suited" for men or women)
  - o How do you think these stereotypes have influenced your own career aspirations, or the aspirations of your classmates?

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- Have you ever felt conflicted between your personal interests and pursuing a career that aligns with societal expectations for your gender?
3. **How do societal expectations and cultural norms contribute to the formation and perpetuation of gender stereotypes among students at DebreBerhan University?**
- In your experience, how do families, media, or religious beliefs reinforce gender stereotypes related to careers?
  - Have you observed any differences in how male and female students at DebreBerhan University are encouraged or discouraged from pursuing certain career paths?
  - How do you think the university environment, including faculty, advisors, or peers, can contribute to or challenge gender stereotypes surrounding career choices?
4. **What are the experiences and challenges faced by students at DebreBerhan University in pursuing careers that defy traditional gender norms?**
- Can you share any stories about students who have faced challenges or obstacles because of their career aspirations?
  - What kind of support do you think would be helpful for students at DebreBerhan University who want to pursue careers that challenge gender stereotypes?

### **Closing Questions:**

- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences with gender stereotypes and career choices?
- Do you have any questions for me about this research?

**THANK YOU**

Appendix B

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

ሳይኮሎጂ ትምህርት ክፍል

የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች

መግቢያ

ውድ ተሳታፊዎች የዚህ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄ አላማ በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የካውንስሊንግ ሳይኮሎጂ የሁለተኛ ዲግሪ እየተማርኩ ላለው ትምህርት ማሟያነት ነው። እነዚህ ጥያቄዎች የተነደፉት የሥርዓተ-ጾታ አመለካከቶች በተማሪው የሥራ ምርጫ ላይ ስላለው ተጽእኖ መረጃ ለመሰብሰብ ነው። ከእነዚህ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች የተሰበሰበው መረጃ ሁሉም ለምርምር ዓላማ ብቻ ይውላል። እንዲሁም ሁሉም የተሰበሰቡ መረጃዎች በተመራማሪው እጅ ብቻ ይቀመጣሉ። ጥናቱ እንዲሳካ እና የታሰበውን ግብ እንዲመታ ምላሽ በሚሰጡበት ጊዜ ግልፅ እና ታማኝ እንድትሆኑ በዚህ እጠይቃለሁ ።

ስለ ትብብርዎ እናመሰግናለን።

ዳራ መረጃዎች

ዕድሜ .....

ጾታ .....

ትምህርት ክፍል.....

የቃለ መጠይቁ ቀን.....

የመክፈቻ ጥያቄዎች

- ስለራስዎ እናበደብረብርሃንዩኒቨርሲቲስላሎትየአካዳሚክመርሃግብር

- አሁን ያለዎት የሞያ ምኞቶች ምን እንደሆነ ወይም ለወደፊት ምን እይነት ስራዎችን ከግምት ውስጥ ያስገባሉ

**ዋና/አንኳር ጥያቄዎች**

1. የስርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች እንዴት በተማሪው የስራ/ሞያ ምርጫ ላይ ተጽእኖ ያሳድራሉ?
  - በፆታዎ ምክንያት አንድን የስራ መንገድ እንድትመርጥ ደህንነት ወይም ተስፋ ቆርጠህ/ሽ ታውቃለህ/ሽ ?
  - ከወንድና ከሴቶች የሚጠበቀው የባህል ወይም ሞያ ምርጫ በደብረ-ብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ ተማሪዎች ላይ ምን ተጽዕኖ ያሳድራል ?
  - በአንተ/ቺ አስተያየት በደብረ-ብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ በጾታ የተለየ የትምህርት አይነት ወይም የትምህርት ዘርፎች አሉ? ለአንዱ ጾታ ከሌላው የበለጠ ተስማሚ ሆነው የሚታዩ ፣ ለምን ?
2. ከሥራ ምርጫቸው ጋር በተያያዘ የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች እንዴት ይገነዘባሉ እና የግል እምነት ወይም ውስጣዊ ስሜት ይሆናል ?
  - ሥራን በተመለከተ ያጋጠሟቸውን የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች ማሳሰቢያዎችን (ለምሳሌ፡ ሥራ ለወንዶች ወይም ለሴቶች "የተሻሉ" ናቸው)
  - እነዚህ የተዛባ አመለካከቶች በራስዎ የሥራ ምኞቶች ወይም በክፍል ጓደኞች ምኞት ላይ ተጽዕኖ ያሳድራሉ ብለው ያስባሉ ?
  - በግልፍ ላይ ተጽእኖ ያለው ሰብአዊ ጾታዎ ከሚጠበቀው ጋር የሚስማማው ያበመከተል መካከል ግጭት ውስጥ ገብተው ያውቃሉ?
3. በደብረ-ብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ ተማሪዎች መካከል የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች እንዲፈጠሩ እና እንዲቀጥሉ የህብረተሰቡ ፍላጎቶች እና ባህላዊ ደንቦች እንዴት አስተዋፅዖ ያደርጋሉ?
  - በእርስዎ ተሞክሮቤ ተሰቦች ፣ ሚዲያዎች ወይም ሃይማኖታዊ እምነቶች ከሙያ ጋር የተዛመዱ የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች እንዴት እንደሚያጠናክሩት አስተውለው ያውቃሉ?
  - በእርስዎ ምልክታዎች የደብረ-ብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ ተማሪዎች የሙያ ጎዳናቸውን እንዲከተሉ ይበረታታሉ ወይስ አይበረታታሉም ?

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- የዩኒቨርሲቲው አካባቢ መምህራንን፣ አማካሪዎችን ወይም እኩያዎችን ጨምሮ በሙያ ምርጫ ዙሪያ የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶችን እንዴት ሊረዳ ወይም ሊሞግታ ይችላል ብለው ያስባሉ?

4. በደብረብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ ውስጥ ከተለምዶ የሥርዓተ-

ፆታ ሙያ የሚጸረር ሙያን በመከታተል ላይ ስላሉ ተማሪዎች በሙያ ምርጫቸው ምክንያት ያጋጠሟቸው ልምዶች እና ተግዳሮቶች ምን ምን ናቸው?

- በሙያ ምርጫቸው ምክንያት ፈተናዎች ወይም መሰናክሎች ስላጋጠሟቸው ተማሪዎች ማንኛውንም ታሪክ ብታካፍሉ
- በደብረብርሃን ዩኒቨርሲቲ መማር ለሚፈልጉ ተማሪዎች ምን ዓይነት ድጋፍ ይጠቅማል ብለው ያስባሉ በሥርዓተ-ፆታ ሙያዊ አመለካከቶች ላይ

**የመዝጊያ ጥያቄዎች**

- ስለ የሥርዓተ-ፆታ አመለካከቶች እና የሙያ ምርጫዎች ስላሉት ልምድ ማካፈል / መጥቀስ የሚፈልጉት ሌላ ነገር አለ ?
- ስለ ዚህ ምርጫ ለእኔ ምንም ዓይነት ጥያቄ ካሉት

**አመሰግናለሁ።**

## Appendix C

**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Psychology**

### **Focus Group Discussion on Perceived Influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in Career Choice among Students**

#### **Introduction**

This focus group discussion will gather insights from a diverse group of DebreBerhanUniversity students to address the research questions. The focus group discussion will be a semi-structured conversation guided by a researcher. The discussion will begin with icebreaker questions to establish rapport and encourage participation. The researcher will then introduce the research questions and facilitate a discussion using a series of prompts designed to explore the students' experiences and perspectives.

The prompts will address themes related to:

**Perceptions and Internalization of Gender Stereotypes:** This will involve discussions about encountering stereotypes, how they impact career choices, and any internal struggles students have faced.

**Societal Influences and Challenges:** This section will explore how families, media, cultural norms, and even the university environment contribute to gender stereotypes and the challenges students face when pursuing non-traditional careers.

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**Solutions and Future Vision:** Here, the group will brainstorm ideas for creating a more supportive environment at DBU and discuss ways to address and challenge gender stereotypes in career choices.

### Opening Questions

- Briefly introduce yourselves and share your academic program or area of interest.
- Think about a time when you considered a career path. Did you encounter any assumptions about that career being more suited for one gender than the other?

### Discussion Prompts

#### 1. Perceptions and Internalization (Research Questions 1 & 2):

- **Brainstorming Stereotypes:** List examples of gender stereotypes you've encountered regarding careers at DebreBerhan University. To what extent do these stereotypes exist?
- 1 **Impact on Choices:** How do these stereotypes influence the types of careers students at DebreBerhan University consider? Discuss personal experiences or observations.
  - 2 **Internalized Stereotypes:** Share examples of situations where you felt pressure (internal or external) to pursue a certain career path because of your gender.
  - 3 **Conflicting Aspirations:** Have you ever felt conflicted between your personal interests and pursuing a career that aligns with societal expectations? How did you navigate this conflict?

#### 2. Societal Influences and Challenges (Research Questions 3 & 4):

## PERCEIVED INFLUENCE AND RESISTANCE TO GENDER STEREOTYPING IN CAREER CHOICE AMONG STUDENTS

- **Sources of Stereotypes:** How do you think families, media, religious beliefs, or even faculty/advisors at DebreBerhan University contribute to gender stereotypes related to careers?
- **Gender Differences:** Have you observed any differences in how male and female students are encouraged or discouraged from pursuing certain career paths? Share specific examples.
- **Challenges of Non-Traditional Careers:** What are some of the challenges students at DebreBerhan University face when pursuing careers that defy traditional gender norms? (e.g., societal disapproval, lack of role models)
- **Overcoming Stereotypes:** Share stories (personal or from others) of students who have successfully pursued unusual careers. How did they overcome these challenges?

### 3. Solutions and Future Vision:

3. **Support Systems:** Brainstorm ideas for creating a more supportive environment at DebreBerhan University for students pursuing unusual careers.
4. **Addressing Stereotypes:** What kind of workshops, awareness campaigns, or resources could be helpful to challenge gender stereotypes in career choices?
5. **Future Vision:** Imagine a future where gender stereotypes don't limit career choices for students at DebreBerhan University. What would that future look like?

### Wrap-Up Discussion:

- What key takeaways do you have from our discussion about gender stereotypes and career choices?
- What advice would you give to younger students navigating gender stereotypes and career aspirations?

## **Appendix D**

**Addis Ababa University**

**School of Psychology**

**Informed Consent**

**Title of Research Study: Perceived Influence and Resistance to Gender Stereotyping in Career Choice among Students**

**Principal Investigator:** Dasash Getnet

**Institution:** Addis Ababa University

### **Introduction**

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores the influence of gender stereotypes on student career choices at Debre Berhan University.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how gender stereotypes are seen and internalized by students, as well as how these preconceptions affect their career goals. The data acquired will help create a more welcoming atmosphere for students thinking about different career pathways.

### **Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45 – 80 minutes. The interview will be conducted in either in Amharic or in English language based

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on your preference and audio-recorded with your permission. The interview will focus on your experiences and perceptions regarding gender stereotypes and career choices.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no anticipated physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study.

The potential benefits of your participation include contributing to a better understanding of gender stereotypes in career choices and as well as having a beneficial effect at Debre Berhan University.

### **Confidentiality**

All your information will be kept confidential. Your name and other identifying details will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study. We will assign a pseudonym to your interview data to ensure anonymity. Also your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. You can also choose to skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information presented above. You agree to participate in this research study voluntarily.

- Signature : \_\_\_\_\_
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Researcher Information:**

- Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Signature: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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