

Sociocultural influences on adolescents' educational and occupational choices

Gendered choices in STEM as a special interest

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Introduction

- Occupational segregation levels are high and stable in Finland, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- Labour markets in many other states in Europe and in the United States of America have similar characteristics.
- Missing the female skills and labour input causes concerns in STEM fields.

Literature review

- The narrowing gender differences in science and mathematics achievement have suggested that the causes underlying gendered choices in STEM are related to socialization and attitudes rather than to academic achievement.
- Parents, teachers, friends, and other *socializers* contribute to the continuance of gender segregation in STEM fields by mediating the cultural stereotypes of male superiority in science and mathematics and encouraging boys and girls towards different career trajectories.

Sub-studies

1. Understanding what is the role of socializers for ninth graders' educational and career-related choices.
2. Investigating what kinds of gender-related perceptions on occupations do Finnish ninth graders have according to themselves and to their school guidance counselors and how do STEM occupations occur in these perceptions.
3. Investigating gender and STEM fields in education and career related discussions between parents and their adolescent children.



Methods

- Sub-study 1 and 2: An online survey for ninth graders ($n = 246$) and phone interviews for school guidance counselors ($n = 7$).
- Sub-study 3: An online survey for adolescents' parents ($n = 103$).
- Research data consists of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Preliminary findings

- Ninth graders state to have future education and career-related discussions mostly with their parents, friends, and school guidance counselors but only rarely with their STEM subject teachers.
- According to school guidance counselors, parents are the main source for occupational gender-stereotypes and gender-typed views are clearly present in education and career-related discussions in friend groups.
- Ninth graders refer often to masculine physical traits when justifying certain occupations to be more suitable for men than for women. Whilst justifying certain occupations to be more suitable for women than for men, they refer mostly to gender-typical interest.

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