FEMALE ENROLLMENT IN MALE-DOMINATED VOCATIONAL TRAINING COURSES: PREFERENCES AND PROSPECTS

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KEY MESSAGES

• **Networks matter**: The strongest predictor of a young woman’s decision to enroll in male-dominated technical and vocational courses is her existing relationships with people who work in the associated trade.

• **Personal preferences and prospects rule**: When choosing coursework, personal preferences and future work prospects are rated as more important than the preferences of family and friends.

• **Gender beliefs are not the main roadblock**: Gender beliefs and anticipated gender discrimination in the workplace does not appear to affect young women’s preferences in coursework.

Occupational gender segregation is a worldwide phenomenon that is frequently cited as one of the contributing factors to the gender gap in earnings. Research by the World Bank’s Africa Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) in Uganda and Ethiopia, studied the factors associated with women entrepreneurs’ decision to start a business in a male-dominated trade. One of the main findings of these studies was that women who choose to operate in a male-dominated trade—or “crossover”—typically do so with the help of husbands or other male family members who have existing connections in these trades. Moreover, when they do crossover their average profits are about three times higher than that of non-crossover firms and they earn as much as men who operate in those sectors.

In partnership with UNIDO and Selam David Röschli Technical and Vocational College, the Gender Innovation Lab set out to study what motivates students to choose different streams of coursework at a technical and vocational education (TVET) institution and how their personal interest, expectations for future employment and other factors influence this choice.

THE PROGRAM

To address the lack of well-trained machine technicians in Ethiopia, a Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Volvo and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) opened a Heavy Duty Equipment and commercial Vehicles Academy (HDECoVA) at the Selam David Röschli Technical and Vocational College (SDR-TVc). Launched in 2012, the project aims to prepare young people for future livelihoods and facilitate access to employment opportunities.

HDECoVA is the first state of the art vocational training for heavy machinery in Ethiopia. During the courses, students access modern machinery to train to do repairs and service work and receive education in English and information technology. Overall, about a third of the college’s 600 students are female.

HERE’S WHAT WE DID

In 2016, the World Bank’s Africa Gender Innovation Lab conducted a study to examine the personal characteristics that drive young women to choose male or female dominated TVET courses. The research team evaluated how a female student’s choice is influenced by her own gender beliefs, the gender beliefs of her family and friends, her relationships with people employed in trades she can choose to study, and several other factors.

GIL researchers collected and analyzed survey responses from 172 female students at SDR-TVc who were enrolled in their first, second or third year of coursework. Data collection consisted of a one-hour interview with each of the students during the first two weeks of the 2016 school year.

HERE’S WHAT WE FOUND

The strongest predictor of a young woman’s decision to enroll in male-dominated technical and vocation courses is her existing relationships with people who work in the associated trade. When a student knows someone who works in a vocational trade, she may have a better idea of the earning potential of workers in that trade and the type of tasks they do, which potentially influences her decision. We find that young women who know someone in an associated male-dominated trade, are 14 percentage points more likely to prefer a male-dominated department at SDR-TVC.

Only one third of respondents indicated their top registration preference was one of the male-dominated departments at SDR-TVC. However, 83 percent of respondents listed at least one male dominated department in their top three preferences, which suggests these students are actively considering male-dominated courses but are not currently prioritizing them above non-male dominated courses.

When choosing coursework, personal preferences and future work prospects are rated as more important than the preferences of family and friends. Our analysis showed that students appear to be very practical and forward-looking in their decision-making, with 77 percent identifying the utility of degrees they are pursuing or personal interests as the most important factors in their preference to attend SDR-TVC and choose a department. Only 9 percent of the surveyed students identified family and friends as the most important factor in their decision.

Traditional gender beliefs do not appear to affect young women’s preferences when choosing between female or male-dominated courses. The majority of students agreed with three of four gendered statements about men and women in the workplace, such as that men are more well-adapted than women to doing physically demanding work. However, these beliefs do not appear to dissuade women from entering traditionally male-dominated sectors of study. Moreover, despite agreeing with some traditional beliefs about differences in the roles or abilities of women and men, only a small minority of women (3-15%, depending on the sector) anticipate discrimination in remuneration between women and men.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we strived to better understand the factors that influence a female students’ choice of a TVET college course. We find that the strongest predictor of a young woman’s decision to enroll in male-dominated courses is her existing relationships with people who work in the same vocational trade. We also find that the perceived future prospects in the profession and personal interest are among the most important motivating factors for this course choice. More work needs to be done to pilot and evaluate the impact of interventions that create early points of contact and exposure for young women to professions that are traditionally dominated by men.

WHAT ARE THE MALE DOMINATED DEPARTMENTS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>% Male Students</th>
<th>% Female Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Making</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric &amp; Electricity</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Duty Equipment &amp; Commercial Vehicles</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Office &amp; Secretarial Technology</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male dominated departments are those where >66% of its students are male.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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For HDECoVa-related information please contact Mattias Larsen at M.larsen@unido.org

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