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Ugandan Adolescents' Gender Stereotype Knowledge about Jobs

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Abstract

Ugandan adolescents ages 11- to 17-years-old ($N = 201$; 48% girls; $M_{age} = 14.62$) answered closed- and open-ended questions about occupational gender segregation, allowing researchers to assess their gender stereotype knowledge. Adolescents answered 38 closed-ended questions such as 'who is more likely to be a doctor?' and were asked to list masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral jobs. Data were analyzed via descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, t -tests, and thematic coding. Findings indicated that adolescents were fairly egalitarian about jobs and there were no differences in occupational stereotype knowledge between males and females. Findings present reasons for hope and for continued work toward gender equality in Uganda. Results may inform interventions that foster egalitarian gender attitudes. Future work could explore adolescents' stereotype endorsement and occupational aspirations.

Keywords: occupational gender stereotypes, gender segregation, Uganda, adolescents

Ugandan Adolescents' Gender Stereotype Knowledge about Jobs

Despite vast improvements in women's rights due to pro-women legislation in Uganda (Wang, 2013), gender inequality persists in various arenas such as the employment sector. Causes of gender inequality may include both systemic (e.g., colonization, De Haas & Frankema, 2018) and individual factors (e.g., attitudes about gender). The present study fills a research gap regarding Ugandan adolescents' occupational *stereotype knowledge* (i.e., perceptions about occupational gender segregation).

Gender Stereotypes about Jobs

Adolescents' perceptions of occupational gender segregation, or their gender stereotype knowledge, may impact their career aspirations and interests. Research shows that the gender of individuals who typically perform a job are linked to children's occupational interests; occupations performed by females are preferred by girls, whereas occupations performed by males are preferred by boys (Hayes, Bigler, & Weisgram, 2018). Studies also show that adolescents' perceptions of gender segregation are positively associated with gender stereotype endorsement or judgments about who *should* perform specific jobs (Ginevra & Nota, 2017).

Research in Europe and North America indicates that children and adolescents often hold gender stereotypes about occupations and about who performs specific jobs (e.g., Ginevra &

Nota, 2017; Teig & Susskind, 2008). Children stereotype jobs with high prestige and salaries (e.g., engineer, pilot) as masculine and jobs with low prestige and salaries (e.g., hairdresser, secretary) as feminine (Ginevra & Nota, 2017; Teig & Susskind, 2008). However, there are some exceptions. Children have stereotyped certain high-prestige jobs (e.g., lawyer, doctor) as gender-neutral and certain low-prestige jobs (e.g., truck driver, plumber) as masculine (Teig & Susskind, 2008).

Similar gender stereotypes likely exist in Uganda based on studies of adolescents' occupational aspirations. In one study, Ugandan girls expressed a desire to be nurses and teachers, and boys expressed a desire to be mechanics, doctors, engineers, pilots, police officers, and soldiers (Ninsiima et al., 2018). Another study found that girls in Uganda aspired to be doctors, lawyers, and teachers (Lovell, 2010). However, little is known about Ugandan adolescents' stereotypes about jobs. To our knowledge, Ugandan adolescents' gender stereotypes have only been examined about math (Picho & Schmader, 2018) and about domestic and recreational activities (domestic chores; Farago, Eggum-Wilkens, & Zhang, 2019; Lundgren et al., 2018; Ninsiima et al., 2018; recreation; Farago et al., 2019). The research questions and hypotheses guiding this study were as follows: Q1: Do Ugandan adolescents' have knowledge about occupational gender stereotypes (i.e., occupational gender segregation)?

H1: We expected high levels of gender stereotype knowledge (i.e., high levels of awareness of occupational gender segregation) among Ugandan adolescents.

Q2: Are there differences between male and female adolescents in knowledge about occupational gender stereotyping?

H2: Although exploratory, we anticipated no differences between males and females in gender stereotype knowledge about occupations.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Adolescents 11- to 17-years-old in Eastern Uganda answered closed- and open-ended questions. Students were recruited from a government primary, a private primary, and a private secondary school in Eastern Uganda (participation rates > 90%). Originally, 252 participants took part in the study but 51 were excluded due to low comprehension, leaving 201 participants (96 females, 87 males, 18 missing). The number of males and females in each school type and grade level is shown in Table 1. Participants were on average 14.62 years-old ($SD = 1.76$, $n = 17$ missing) and were from over 20 tribes, most commonly Iteso ($n = 60$), Jopadhola ($n = 30$), and Luhya ($n = 25$). Although no information was collected about the socio-economic status of participants, it can be assumed that most children came from families living in poverty. The study took place in the Tororo district of the Bukedi sub-region (which includes seven districts), a sub-region with the highest poverty rates among the Eastern Uganda sub-regions (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Also, less than 10% of adolescents reported living in a permanent brick house, which could be a sign of wealth. We did not compare stereotyping among adolescents enrolled in different schools because school is somewhat confounded with age and because low cell counts render the results unreliable. Closed- and open-ended questions were group administered in schools in English, the language of instruction. Reading skills were lower than expected at the government school; thus, survey items also were read aloud.

Measures

Closed-ended survey. Participants completed the *Ugandan Occupational Gender Stereotypes Survey* (UOGSS). The UOGSS was adapted from the Children's Occupations, Activities, and Traits – Attitude Measure (COAT-AM; Liben & Bigler, 2002) based on

conversations with Ugandan adults working in education settings. The UOGSS included 38 closed-ended items that described jobs (Table 2). Participants choose for each job who is more likely to do it: 'boys/men,' 'girls/women,' or 'neither (i.e., no gender differences).'

Open-ended survey. Next, participants listed at least three open-ended answers about additional jobs that 'boys/men' or 'girls/women' are more likely to do or that 'men and women are equally likely to do.' Open-ended responses were coded in multiple stages. Initially, the first author and a research assistant coded 100% of the open-ended data into thematic categories (primary coding by grouping synonymous words or phrases together), compared their coding (94% agreement), and resolved discrepancies by consulting the second author. Second, coded responses were categorized into core themes (secondary coding) based on literature about gender roles and stereotyping. Themes redundant with closed-ended responses are not reported.

Results

Missing Data

Missing data ranged from 5.0% to 20.4% for closed-ended items and from 11.4% to 41.3% for open-ended items due to comprehension issues and not listing the minimum number of requested responses.

Gender Stereotype Knowledge About Jobs

Closed-ended responses. One job ('social worker') was omitted due to low understanding. Thirteen of the 37 job items were stereotyped, ranging from mildly to strongly stereotyped (11 masculine- and 2 feminine-stereotyped; see Table 2). Strongly stereotyped was defined as at least 75% of participants agreeing that a job is more likely to be done by only one gender (Williams, Bennett, & Best, 1975). We also demarcated moderately stereotyped activities (50-74% agreement) and mildly stereotyped activities (40-49% agreement). Masculine-

stereotyped jobs involved manual labor (e.g., 'carpenter,' 'construction worker'), transportation (e.g., 'truck driver,' 'pilot'), and professional jobs such as 'engineer' and 'doctor.' There were two feminine-stereotyped jobs (i.e., 'nurse,' 'maid') involving caring for or serving others. Non-stereotyped jobs included jobs such as 'lawyer,' 'politician,' 'hotel manager,' 'farmer,' 'cook in a restaurant,' and 'singer.'

Open-ended responses. Open-ended responses provided more variety and specificity about occupations compared to closed-ended responses (see Table 3). For example, masculine jobs included manual labor such as 'construction worker' and 'fisher,' and transportation such as 'conductor' and 'boda-boda rider,' and other jobs such as 'security guard,' 'professional athlete,' and 'tax collector.' Examples of feminine jobs included 'salon worker,' 'matron,' and 'prostitute.' Non-stereotyped jobs included 'business/office worker' and 'artist,' among others. Some themes, such as manual labor (masculine) and service industry (feminine), were controversial as some participants indicated that one gender is more likely to do the job, whereas others indicated that men and women are equally likely to do the job, resulting in these themes to emerge as both stereotyped and non-stereotyped.

Gender Differences

Chi-square analyses indicated that males' and females' responses on the UOGSS were very similar, indicating that there were no gender differences in gender stereotype knowledge of jobs. Gender stereotype rigidity was calculated by summing the number of 'boys/men' and 'girls/women' responses and dividing this by the total number of UOGSS responses for each participant. There was no significant gender difference in stereotyping of jobs between females ($M = .36, SD = .18$) and males ($M = .39, SD = .18$), $t(181) = -0.99, p = .322$.

Discussion

Findings indicated that most jobs (65%) were not stereotyped, which did not support our expectations for high gender stereotyping. Adolescents indicated that neither men nor women were more likely to be 'lawyers' or 'politicians,' among other jobs. These results could mean that adolescents' attitudes about gender-roles in Uganda are fairly egalitarian, possibly due to campaigns supporting the education of girls and the rights of women. Alternatively, the results may indicate that the measures assessed adolescents' ideals, or their attitudes about how the world *should* be, rather than how it is. Another interpretation is that adolescents in this study have not been exposed to some of the jobs listed, hence they may have indicated that anyone can perform the jobs, regardless of gender. This is a possibility as the vast majority of families in the Bukedi sub-region work in agriculture (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018); therefore, it is possible that adolescents were not directly familiar with some of the jobs presented and did not personally know anyone holding these jobs.

Some of the occupations deemed as non-stereotyped by adolescents are in fact highly gender segregated in Uganda. Professional jobs (e.g., 'lawyer,' 'politician'), which are the highest paid and require the highest level of education, are dominated by men (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017a). Only 3% of local elected officials are women and only 35% of the 10th Parliament in Uganda is comprised of women (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017a). Further, about 70% of households in Uganda are headed by men (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018), meaning that men are responsible for making the main decisions within the household. Given this context, it is conceivable that adolescents reported an idealistic, rather than a realistic, state of labor market affairs. In some ways, adolescents' stereotypes were aligned with labor force realities about transportation and construction jobs, which are far more likely to be performed by

men than women in Uganda, and about service industry jobs, which are more likely to be performed by women in Uganda (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017a, 2018).

The results of the current study diverge somewhat from findings of previous studies. Potentially, children in the U.S. (Teig & Susskind, 2018) and in Italy (Ginevra & Nota, 2017) are more familiar with and have more day-to-day exposure (e.g., via the media, their parents, books) to gender segregation in the job market. This could have resulted in higher levels of gender stereotype knowledge and occupational gender segregation reported in previous studies (Ginevra & Nota, 2017; Teig & Susskind, 2018). There were some similarities between the present findings and previous research. For instance, 'lawyer' was non-stereotyped, and 'truck driver' and manual labor were stereotyped as masculine in the current and in former studies (e.g., Teig & Susskind, 2008). 'Engineer' and 'pilot' were stereotyped as masculine jobs in the current and in former studies (Ginevra & Nota, 2017; Teig & Susskind, 2008). 'Nurse' was stereotyped as a feminine job in the current and in former studies (e.g., Teig & Susskind, 2008). There may be certain professions in which gender segregation is evident across cultural contexts, whereas other occupations in which the level of gender segregation varies across cultural contexts. Results indicated that males and females had similar levels of gender stereotype knowledge about occupations, mirroring findings of previous studies (e.g., Ginevra & Nota, 2017; Teig & Susskind, 2008) and confirming our expectations. Males and females seem to be equally aware of occupational gender segregation possibly because they are likely equally exposed to it. It is plausible that gender differences would emerge in studies assessing the actual endorsement of occupational gender stereotypes (i.e., who *should* do particular jobs as opposed to who usually does these jobs).

Studies in Uganda have primarily asked adolescents about their career expectations and aspirations (Lovell, 2010; Ninsiima et al., 2018), as opposed to asking about their stereotype knowledge. This difference may explain why adolescents reported stronger gender norms about careers in previous studies (Lovell, 2010; Ninsiima et al., 2018) compared to the present findings. Adolescents', especially young women's, occupational aspirations may be more strongly gender-typed than their gender stereotype knowledge given the context of real-life constraints they face (e.g., chores, marital duties, poverty) when pursuing particular careers (Lovell, 2010; Ninsiima et al., 2018). Further, adolescents may report more realistic, rather than idealistic, attitudes when they are asked about their own career aspirations as compared to when they are asked about hypothetical jobs that men and women are likely to or usually do (i.e., gender stereotype knowledge). This may be another reason why the present findings diverge from findings in other studies (i.e., Lovell, 2010; Ninsiima et al., 2018). Curiously, being a 'professional athlete' was deemed as masculine in the open-ended responses and as non-stereotyped in the closed-ended responses. Open-ended responses included 'football player' and 'boxer,' whereas closed-ended responses did not allow for elaboration. Thus, when answering closed-ended questions, some adolescents may have recognized that athletic professions such as 'running' or 'playing netball' are dominated by women, whereas other athletic professions, such as 'football player,' are dominated by men, resulting in overall non-stereotyped responses for 'professional athlete.' In open-ended responses, service industry jobs emerged as feminine and non-stereotyped, whereas 'manual labor' emerged as masculine and non-stereotyped. These findings could mean that certain subtypes of each occupational category are differently stereotyped. For example, 'air hostess' was deemed feminine, however 'work in a hotel' was non-stereotyped. Some participants reported that women are more likely to be a 'bartender'

whereas others reported that women and men are equally likely to do it, which may allude to individual differences in stereotype knowledge.

One limitation is that open-ended questions were listed after the closed-ended questions, which may have impacted adolescents' responses. It is also plausible that adolescents' socio-economic status impacted the results, as participants were recruited from two private and one public school (as explained in Eggum-Wilkens, Zhang, & An, 2018). However, in Uganda, many students attend private schools because they are orphaned and are sponsored through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Therefore, we did not anticipate vast socio-economic differences among schools. Future work could assess adolescents' occupational aspirations and stereotype endorsement about occupations. Future work could also assess occupational gender stereotypes in urban Ugandan adolescents, as well as in Ugandan adolescents from families with relatively higher socio-economic status to examine if findings differ based on adolescents' familiarity with and exposure to occupations.

The scope of findings should be limited to the sub-population of Ugandan adolescents that the current study included. Finally, our sample may have been somewhat biased as a result of recruiting participants enrolled in school. Primary school enrollment rates are around 80% for boys and girls; however, secondary school enrollment rates are 38% for girls and 43% for boys (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017b). Possibly, children in school have more egalitarian attitudes than children who are not in school. Despite these shortcomings, this study provides valuable information on Ugandan adolescents' gender stereotypes about occupations.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Ethical Compliance Statement

All study protocols were approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board and institutional ethical standards were followed to obtain participant consent and to ensure protection of participant confidentiality. All protocols were performed in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Consent

was obtained from parents/guardians or from head teachers, whereas adolescent participants provided oral assent. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Table 1

Participants by School Demographics

School Type ^a	Gender	
	Males	Females
Government primary school	15	18
Private primary school	26	25
Private secondary school	39	41
Total	80	84
Grade ^b		
Primary 4	3	3
Primary 5	10	7
Primary 6	29	38
Primary 7	2	3
Senior 1	14	7
Senior 2	9	16
Senior 3	13	10
Senior 4	0	1
Senior 5	1	4

^a data are missing for 37 participants

^b data are missing for 31 participants

Table 2

Percentage of Respondents Reporting Who is More Likely to Do Jobs (UOGSS)

Job	Boys/Men More Likely (masculine)	Girls/Women More Likely (feminine)	Neither Gender More Likely (non-stereotyped)
<i>Carpenter</i>	85.5***	0.6	14.0
<i>Taxi driver</i>	88.2***	1.6	10.2
<i>Truck driver</i>	83.0***	0.6	16.5
<i>Airplane pilot</i>	82.2***	0.0	17.8
<i>Mechanic</i>	71.9**	1.2	26.9
<i>Construction worker</i>	69.7**	1.7	28.7
<i>Soldier</i>	59.3**	2.3	38.4
<i>Engineer</i>	57.8**	2.9	39.3
<i>Barber in hair salon</i>	52.9**	12.8	34.3
<i>Factory worker</i>	42.5*	3.9	53.6
<i>Doctor</i>	45.8*	1.1	53.1
<i>Nurse</i>	4.5	82.5***	13.0
<i>Maid</i>	8.1	46.8*	45.2
Teacher - primary	1.7	2.8	95.6
Teacher - secondary	4.5	0.0	95.5
Government worker	6.5	1.6	91.9
Police	9.9	0.6	89.5
Writer	3.7	7.0	89.3
Teacher for university	11.7	1.1	87.2
TV/movie actor/actress	10.7	3.7	85.6
Banker	10.2	4.5	85.2
Singer	8.0	6.8	85.2
Shop owner	13.5	2.8	83.7
Farmer	16.0	1.2	82.8
Newspaper reporter	16.8	2.4	80.8
Computer specialist	17.9	4.0	78.0
Scientist	18.1	4.0	78.0
Professional athlete	17.9	4.3	77.8
Accountant	18.0	5.4	76.6
Politician	23.0	2.8	74.2
Lawyer	26.0	4.1	69.8
Cook/chef in a restaurant	5.6	27.1	67.2

Seamstress/tailor	11.3	22.6	66.1
Hotel manager	21.9	12.4	65.7
Pastor or religious leader	34.1	0.5	65.4
Street vendor	33.3	4.8	61.8
Secretary	4.4	35.0	60.6

Note. Italicized items are 'gender stereotyped'; ***strongly stereotyped = > 75%; **moderately stereotyped = 50-74%; *mildly stereotyped = 40-49% of participants indicating that boys/men or girls/women are more likely to do the job

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Table 3

Top Five Most Commonly Reported Open-Ended Themes and Exemplars for Who is More Likely to Do Jobs (UOGSS)

	Men More Likely (masculine)	Exemplars	Women More Likely (feminine)	Exemplars	Men and Women Equally Likely (non-stereotyped)	Exemplars
1	Manual labor	construction worker; electrician; plumber; butcher; fisher	Service industry	waitress; air hostess; bartender	Manual labor	digging; potter; slashing****
2	Security	gate keeper; security guard; bank security	Salon worker	salonist; plaite hair	Manager/director	bank manager; administrator; post office manager
3	Transportation	conductor; boda-boda rider*; motorcyclist; football player**;	Maid	cleans markets; house girl; janitor	Business/office worker	they work in offices; they do business
4	Professional athlete	cyclist; boxer	Matron***	matron at school	Artist	poet; acting; musician
5	Tax collector	collects taxes	Sex worker	prostitute	Service industry	waiter/waitress; work in a hotel; bartender

Note. *boda-bodas are bicycle or motorcycle taxis common in East Africa; **football in East Africa refers to what is soccer in the U.S.; *** matrons work in boarding schools and look after the well-being of students as well as the domestic side of school life; ****slashing refers to cutting grass by hand using a scythe.