

GAD Nuances in the Choice of Skills Training among TVET Students in Selected Technical Vocational Institutes

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Abstract The study aims to describe the gender understanding and beliefs of students enrolled in Technical Vocational Institutes (TVI) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines through a survey that asked about reasons, career plans and beliefs about the role of gender in technical skills training. A total of 108 TVET students responded to the survey that used Google form to solicit consent and responses from the research participants. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the data obtained. Ranking was used to show top skills training program choice, plans and reasons for enrolment. Analysis of data revealed that the respondents still subscribed to perceived gender dictated choice in skills training program although a good number of respondents have claimed that any TESDA qualification is open to those interested and motivated to complete the training program regardless of gender. It is recommended that people who can influence the career choice of female students such as parents, friends and relatives may consider the motivation and encouragement to help them also enroll in male dominated qualifications to widen their options in employment and opportunities. Technologies and equipment may be designed to make it equitable for male and female students to take skills training that will lead to high paying technical jobs.

Keywords: *gender and development, gender mainstreaming, gender bias, stereotyping, technical training, technical skills*

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1. Introduction

Women's participation rate in TVET is still low and gender inequality in accessing TVET is observed in Asian countries [1,2]. Women face more challenges and hindrances in accessing opportunities because of the prevailing perceptions and practices in the male-dominant society [3]. The observed disparities in employment rates are explained by the fact that women shoulder the burden of the housework and so do not fully attend their education programs, which reduces their chances of joining the workforce [4]. This may be attributed to the minimal understanding of the concept of gender mainstreaming [5]. It was said that the promotion of decent work, gender equality, and a social protection floor for all are part of the government's commitment to realizing the sustainable development goals. Thus, gender equality is not only a social issue to be addressed at the micro level, but an economic issue to be addressed at the macro-level as well [6].

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been considered as the driving force for sustainable development. TVET leads to improved quality of life since it helps individuals to become economically productive and thus escape poverty and marginalization. When individuals are equipped with skills, they become entrepreneurs, employable and informed citizens thereby contributing to economic development of a nation [7]. Most importantly, human resource development through TVET not only contributes to economic development and reduction in unemployment, but also leads to enhancement of social inclusion.

TESDA is the Philippines' national government agency managing and supervising the TVET system. It provides national leadership for developing a skilled workforce. It is particularly focused on middle-level skills development (semi-skills, skills, craft, and technician training). In response to the mandate on gender equality, TESDA has integrated gender and development in the curriculum of all its technical vocational training programs. Since 2012, gender sensitivity modules are being taught to students in TESDA's Technology Institutions (TTIs) along with their

respective courses. Together with social inclusion, gender equality is also a concept that addresses unequal power relations between women and men and between social groups that focuses on the need for action to rebalance these power relations, equal rights and respect for all individuals [8].

The Philippines has provided attention on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment through the Philippine Magna Carta of Women (MCW) that required supporting substantive equality between women and men and the empowerment of women [9]. The Magna Carta of Women requires government agencies, including the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), to adopt gender mainstreaming as a strategy "to promote and fulfill women's human rights and eliminate gender discrimination in their systems, structures, policies, programs and processes."

TESDA's initiative for gender equality was strengthened with the establishment of the TESDA Women's Center in 1991. Since its establishment, it has focused on activities that promote the economic empowerment of women and gender equality. Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in TVET is focused towards building awareness on gender equality to increase the participation of women in technical-vocational education and training.

Achieving gender equality in the labor market is one of the goals set by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 5), and it is considered a crucial factor to reach a sustainable development worldwide [10]. In addition, the author emphasized that TVET has the potential to increase women's participation in the labor market, by ensuring equal access to quality education, skills acquisition, and technical training, particularly in those occupations that are traditionally held by men.

Yet despite the many government efforts and policies, gender equality is still a challenge especially in the TVET setting when stereotyping is prevalent in our society. This is because the patriarchal culture of the TVET courses, parents, and the environment also promotes the gender gaps in the TVET activity system [11]. In the 2018 report of Illo on the gender profile of the TVET sector, it was found that there is predominance of men in institution-based programs with 56 percent of total enrollment in 2015 while there were more women who participated in community-based programs (60.3%). However, this same study revealed that the community-based TVET programs are rarely covered by TESDA training regulations. Thus, men get to have certified trainings that may result to more gainful employment here and abroad.

More men than women tend to gravitate toward automotive and land transportation, construction and, to some extent, electrical and electronics [12]. These are sectors with the lowest or relatively low women's participation. In sharp contrast are sectors, such as tourism (hotels and restaurants), social, community development and other services, processed food, health care, and garments, which are dominated by women. In the same way that other fields are linked to masculine attributes (strength), the feminized sectors are associated with feminine attributes of caring and nurturing.

Similarly, the study of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies revealed that there remain

industries that are largely dominated by males such as those that require technical education (i.e., electronics and engineering) [13]. This same report suggested that interventions to make these courses more attractive for women to select could be the main driver of change.

The choice or nature of TVET programs shows that women take stereotypical roles associated with women, an issue that is still present today because of prevailing traditional gender norms [14]. Thus, women are not able to access higher paying jobs because they are labeled as jobs intended for men. The authors further asserted that although there are many factors that affect the employability of women graduates of TVET, the structural and cultural barriers related to gender norms are shown to also hinder the employability of female graduates.

Based on the foregoing statements, the researchers intend to gather data on TVET graduates to profile their training choices, influences and their ideas about TVET careers in general.

2. Materials and Methods

The study surveyed a total of 108 students who are enrolled in skills training in public and private Technical Vocational Institutes (TVIs) in Misamis Oriental to determine their reasons, influence in the choice of skills training and plans after completing the program. A Google form was used for the data gathering and the survey questions were validated by three experts. The questions are focused on the reasons why the students chose a particular TESDA qualification. The respondents were also asked about their plans after completing the training program as well as the influence of their gender over training choice. Technical Vocational Institutes were randomly selected and links to the google forms were provided in the email. Respondents' consent was sought. Participation was voluntary and sampling was purposive. Permission was sought from the administrators of the TVIs for the data gathering activities that include survey, interview and observation. This paper reported only the survey results from the TVI student-respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

The respondents of this study were composed of 47 females (43.5%), 57 males (52.8%) and 4 LGBT (3.7%). Average age of female respondents is 28 while that of the male is 25 years old. In terms of marital status, 84 (77.8%) are still single, while 23 (21.3%) are married and one respondent is a solo parent (0.9%). In terms of education, there are 46 respondents (42.6%) who graduated from high school, while 34 of the respondents (31.5%) reported that their educational level as college level and 21 (19.4%) graduated from college. Only 7 (6.5%) of the respondents indicated that they had graduated from elementary.

Table 1. TOP REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN TVI BY BOTH GENDER

Rank	Female	Male	LGBT
1	to find work	to learn skills	To help my family
2	to learn skills	to find work	To learn and enhanced my skills
3	to gain knowledge	to gain knowledge	to gain national certificate
4	to help/support family	to gain experience	To work abroad
5	to work abroad	To work abroad	To reach my dreams

3.2. Reasons for TVET Enrollment and TVET Career Choice

Table 1 shows the top five reasons why the respondents enrolled in a training course distributed by gender.

These responses came from a question that asked the respondents to list their top three reasons for enrolling for a training course. The results indicated that the reasons are almost the same for both genders. However, it is only with the female that helping and supporting the family is among the top reasons why female enrolled in skills training. This reflects the inclination of women as nurturer in the family. However, this kind of systematic reinforcement of traditional gender identities within and outside the school have a negative impact on females' learning [15]. In addition, study-findings strongly indicated that gender norms lead to minimizing females' TVET participation. Caring for the family should be something that female and male members of the family should do equally together. This may include providing for financial support, household chores, domestic tasks and caring for children and parents when sick. These can result to multiple burdens for women that may hinder their performance at work and access to further training and other opportunities.

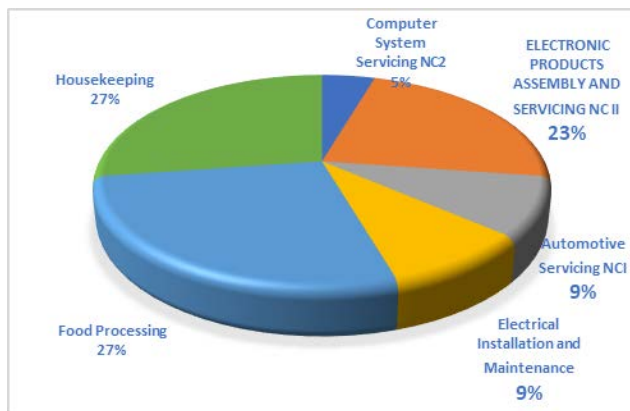


Figure 1. Profile of Skills Training Enrolled by Female Respondents

Figure 1 shows the distribution of skills training enrolled by the female respondents of the study. The figure revealed that the top three skills training courses are housekeeping, food processing and electronic products assembly and servicing. We can also see some interest in automotive servicing, electrical installation and maintenance and computer system servicing NCII.

This result is the same with the observation of many studies. For example, female was not imaginable as a technician in the past, and therefore only boys attended this training institution for professional technical industrial education [16]. In addition, systematic reinforcement of traditional gender identities within and

outside the school have a negative impact on females' learning [17]. Study-findings strongly indicated that gender norms lead to minimizing females' TVET participation.

Thus, it was recommended that in the gender dimension, specific attention should be given to mainstreaming across all initiatives using specific courses of action in order to ensure women's equal participation that will enrich their competence, experiences and potentials in TVET courses dominated by males [18,19].

Table 2 shows the distribution of skills training enrolled by male respondents. The top three choices automotive, shielded metal arc welding and electronic products assembly and servicing NC II.

Although the top three TVET coursed subscribed by our male respondents are considered to be male dominated, we also saw some interest in food processing and housekeeping that are historically female dominated training programs. Several factors might determine the selection of a student to undertake a vocational training program. The representation of vocational training is one of the reasons that play a significant role in the choices of the students to participate in such programs.

Table 2. DISTRIBUTION OF SKILLS TRAINING ENROLLED BY MALE RESPONDENTS

Rank	Skills Training
1	Automotive
2	Shielded Metal Arc Welding
3	Electronic Products Assembly and Servicing NC II
4	Electrical Installation and Maintenance
5.5	Food Processing
5.5	Housekeeping
7	Bartending NCII
8.5	Computer System Servicing NCII
8.5	Construction
12	Driving
12	Bookkeeping
12	Carpentry
12	Plumbing
12	Visual Graphic Design

Parents, relatives, peers, as well as school administrators, may often influence an individual's decision in choosing vocational training through their personal beliefs [20,21].

One of the survey questions asked the respondents whether their choice of skills training has something to do with their capacity as allowed by their gender by birth. This is to determine the beliefs of the respondents when it comes to skills training's gender "appropriateness".

Table 3 shows the distribution of response from the male, female and LGBT respondents. Majority of the female respondents indicated that their physical capacity as dictated by their gender has nothing to do with their

career choice because they believe that the skills training programs are suitable for all gender.

Table 3. DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE ON GENDER AS BASIS THE TRAINING CHOICE

Gender	Responses		
	Yes f (%)	No f (%)	Maybe f (%)
Female	12 (25.53%)	33 (70.21%)	2 (4.26%)
Male	36 (63.16%)	21 (36.84%)	0 (0%)
LGBT	2 (50%0)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)

The responses from the female respondents have included some explanations. For example, for those who stated that gender is not a consideration for skills training choice reasoned out that female students can do what male students can do provided that interest, motivation and determination are present. However, for those female respondents who asserted that gender is a basis, they pointed out that skills training such as carpentry and heavy equipment operation would be more suitable for male trainees. This can be a form of gender stereotyping that is being subscribed by many. It was claimed that sex-stereotyped male occupation over female occupation is a culture that has conditioned women to believe that it is taboo to enter a male-dominated occupation [22].

Since some women are keen on participating in “male dominated” qualifications, there is a need to reduce if not eliminate gender bias and stereotyping in training centers and in work places as not to hinder career promotion among women in TVET. It is affirmative that there is still a great deal to be done based on gender transformation interventions to inform, sensitize, empower and transform men and women leaders at key stages of their career pathways [23].

In case of the LGBT respondents, the responses were split into half; 50% said yes and the other half said no that they consider their gender in deciding what skills training to enroll into. For the male respondents, there were no explanations provided for their response. However, more that 50% of the male respondents indicated that they used their gender as the basis for the choice of skills training.

Table 4 shows the top plans after graduating from the training program by gender.

Table 4. RESPONDENTS’ PLANS AFTER GRADUATING FROM SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Male	Female	LGBT
find job locally	work locally	work locally
Further training, NC II or TM	work abroad	work abroad
start a business/open a shop	further training to get NC II or TM	
Undecided	start a business	
Find job abroad	enroll in formal education	
	work as teacher	

What is common among the respondents is finding employment either locally or abroad as a result of completing a certified skills training program. Both male and female respondents also articulated that they want to further the skills acquired by getting National Certification

II and a Training Methodology Certification. It is also noteworthy that both female and male are considering using the skills learned to start a business. This means that TESDA training courses can help successful trainees have multiple options in employment, further training in technical field or become entrepreneur. In addition, they can also consider formal higher education or get an employment as a teacher. This is because the teacher applicants can present the training certificate and earn points for ranking in the public school.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results, the following conclusions were drawn.

Students tend to enroll in TVET qualifications based on their self-perception of their abilities and their ideas about gender and TVET careers. Thus, people who can influence their career choice such as parents, friends and relatives may consider the motivation and encouragement to help female students also enroll in male dominated qualifications to widen their options in employment and opportunities. Technologies and equipment may be designed to make it equitable for male and female workers.

The students enrolled in TVET courses plan to find employment in the country and overseas for the intention to support their family, start a business or transition to higher education. There should be a program to help support the TVET graduates realize these aspirations. Perhaps, inter-agency cooperation or a referral system can be established to bridge the professional and entrepreneurial journey of TVET graduates. This is because findings revealed the most peculiar challenge is the lack of supportive systems during transition and the disconnection between curriculum and business needs [24].

It is further recommended to increase capacity building and advocacy for TVET, improving infrastructure facilities, and use of gender-sensitive approaches and materials, for boosting gender equity among TVI students [25]. TVET trainers may be provided with adequate training in gender and development and gender mainstreaming. This is because untrained teachers may be responsible in promoting gender issues such as gender biases, stereotyping that hinders women’s progress in technical-vocational fields, and stereotypes in resources, content, and language [26]. Moreover, gender issues may also arise from the rules, tools, community and division of labor.

Enabling mechanisms should be in place to ensure that girls can transition from training to work successfully [27]. The author outlines how girls’ participation in TVET be made successful. These are as follows:

- Create an enabling environment for girls to complete TVET programs

The intention is to break socio-cultural norms that prevent girls from realizing their full potential in TVET. The author emphasized on the monitoring and supervision of all TVET institutions and programs to ensure training delivery is competency-based, responsive to girls’ needs, and geared toward transforming persisting gender inequalities. There is also a need to provide necessary financial and technical assistance to institutes and

programs in their efforts to help girls complete the programs [28]. This will also include the provision of professional development opportunities for school leaders, teachers, and instructors to improve their efficiency [29] and ability to use gender responsive approaches [30].

- Make TVET gender-responsive and gender-transformative - The highest call for inclusive gender and development is to develop gender-transformative TVET programs so that girls can participate in programs that enable them to break out of gender norms that are typically perpetuated by gender-blind TVET programs [31, 32].
- Facilitate girls' and young women's transition to work through government and private sector collaboration. This government and private collaboration is needed not only in developing and updating curricula but also in ensuring that curricula are gender-transformative [33,34,35]. This will help to match curricula with market needs while also serving the need for social transformation advocating gender equity. The private sector must be encouraged by the government to make the labor market attractive to girls.

NGOs can likewise play a supportive role by promoting and advocating for equal rights and opportunities for men and women. Most importantly, improved labor laws and regulations that will effectively remove gender bias will greatly help girls to transition through high quality TVET programs [36].

The battle against gender bias and stereotyping is ongoing and it would need all kinds of reforms and societal paradigm shift to make the society gender inclusive and equitable. Gender mainstreaming is yet to be fully institutionalized [37,38]. Thankfully, there are noticeable shifts in the attitude and mind set among men and women and yet, we need to continue working hard for gender development in this country.

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