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Factors Affecting Female Students' Career Choices and Aspirations: A Zimbabwean Example

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ABSTRACT The study sought to investigate the factors affecting female students' career choices and aspirations in selected Zimbabwean schools. The study adopted a qualitative approach and used focus group interviews with a convenient and purposive sample size of 20 high school girls. Data were analysed through content analysis as emerging key issues led to themes that guided the analysis and discussion. The study revealed that career choices and aspirations for girls are influenced by a whole range of factors most notable of which are gender role socialization, parental expectations, teacher attitudes, the gender-typing of school subjects studied as well as the gendered occupational landscape in which they exist. The study concluded that there is a strong need for significant others, especially parents and teachers, to help girls and females by deconstructing the gender-role stereotypes or perceptions of roles society considers appropriate for girls or boys. The researchers thus recommend that female students be empowered to aspire for a stake in occupations or careers traditionally regarded as male-domains. The school curriculum, teachers, parents and older siblings need to be supportive of the need to minimize gender stereotypes in school subjects and career choices.