

DOES GENDER CONDITION FUTURE PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES?

STUDENTS' GENDER PERCEPTION IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS

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The underrepresentation of women in technology and engineering has received special attention for several decades. A large body of research has now established that the existing gender disparity across various technological fields is a complex and multifaceted social issue. The multiple causes of women's underrepresentation in male-dominated fields contribute to two central problems: underrepresentation of women among individuals entering these fields and a "leaky pipeline" in which more women than men who have entered these fields, later decide to leave or are pushed out by gender-biased personnel policies and decisions [1].

Within engineering, a gender barrier exists, as some aspects are revealed as 'rmanly' (i.e. mechanical engineering, or building/construction engineering, for that matter) while others are typically associated with women's work (i.e. textiles, human ecology) and thus devalued [2].

Students' declaration on future career choices are dependent upon gender identity. Students make their decisions in order to conform to the traditional notions of man and woman, whereby science and engineering are considered for boys as a masculine identity, while for girls as a not-feminine identity [3].

Therefore, although female incoming students increase every year in many engineering and technological degrees, 50% levels are still far from being reached.

Nowadays, it is a fact that the labor market turns to professionals with a technical profile for decision-making in hiring new staff, and there are continuous evidences of the existence of biases in the contracting, especially increased within the category of technical positions.

In order to detect when the gender bias in the evaluation of a candidate suitability for a given position takes place, a research study has been carried

out with second and fourth year students following the Building Engineering degree.

To this end, a questionnaire has been developed so that students could evaluate different items on the suitability of a candidate for a job in the specific building construction sector. The survey has been carried out with both male and female students in order to study the existence of a gender bias in their perception of the candidate. Both male and female candidates to the job offer presented identical curriculum vitae, and these were distributed among the students randomly.

In this paper the results of the survey and the analysis of the incidence of the gender perspective in the adequacy of a candidate for a technical position (engineering and technology) are shown.

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