

Family Gender Stereotypes in Shaping Educational and Career Orientation of Ethnic Minority Girls in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: In recent years, gender equality and women's empowerment have become global priorities, as evidenced by policies such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, gender equality is not simply about ensuring access to education, but also involves deep-rooted cultural and social factors. In Vietnam, ethnic minority girls still face many barriers in education and career due to the influence of gender stereotypes in the family, which are reinforced through traditional expectations and diverse cultural structures of 54 ethnic groups. This study aims to clarify the role of gender stereotypes in the family in gender roles perception, thereby affecting the educational and career orientation of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam. The quantitative research method was implemented through primary data collection from 317 ethnic minority girls and young women in Northern Vietnam. The research results show that family gender stereotypes have a direct impact on gender roles perception, in addition to the mediating role of gender roles perception in the relationship between family gender stereotypes and educational and career orientation of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam. The study highlights that expanding education for ethnic minority girls is not enough without addressing gender biases in the family. Programs need to incorporate in-depth gender education, culturally appropriate mentoring, and engagement with male family members. More importantly, they need to be empowered to become agents of change in their communities.

KEYWORDS: Career orientation; educational orientation; ethnic minority; family gender stereotypes; gender roles perception.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment have become a buzzword for development over the past decades, with NGOs, IGOs, and governments adopting this "fashionable concept" (Medel-Anovuevo & Bochynek, 1995) in their strategies and policy frameworks. A prominent example is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), launched after the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, where Goal 3 was set to promote gender equality and empower women. One of its specific targets was the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015, aiming to balance the ratio of girls and boys in all levels of education. However, it can be argued that gender equality is not simply about equal access to schools or equal opportunities in the labor market. Studies across the globe have indicated that persistent gender imbalances in education remain a major obstacle to the realization of substantive gender equality (Phan & Pham, 2021). Against this backdrop, this study examines such imbalances through the lens of family gender stereotypes, particularly how they shape the educational and career orientation of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam.

Socialization processes at the macro level enable the reproduction of a hierarchical structure of gender that expresses inequalities between men and women in different domains such as autonomy, prestige, or social status. Within families, these stereotypes are often reinforced by parents' expectations and behaviors, creating subtle but powerful influences on children's perception of gender roles. Research has shown that parental gender beliefs directly affect the educational investment made in children and shape their aspirations (Fu et al., 2024). For ethnic minority girls, such influences are particularly salient, as family expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities and early marriage over academic achievement, thereby restricting opportunities for further education and career development.

In Vietnam, these dynamics intersect with a complex cultural context. As a multi-ethnic country comprising 54 groups, Vietnam exhibits diverse cultural practices and family systems, including patriarchal, matrilineal, and bi-parental structures. For ethnic minority girls, family gender stereotypes interact with cultural traditions, economic conditions, and structural barriers,

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profoundly influencing their educational orientation and career aspirations. This study therefore examines the role of family gender stereotypes in shaping the educational and career orientation of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam. By engaging with debates on gender equality, cultural reproduction, and empowerment, it seeks to provide insights into the mechanisms through which inequalities persist and to highlight potential avenues for promoting more equitable opportunities.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are pervasive cognitive structures that shape beliefs about the characteristics and roles of men and women. They typically associate men with task performance and assertiveness, while linking women with social relationships and care. In this framework, men are perceived as more agentic, displaying confidence and risk-taking in domains such as sexual behavior, gambling, or driving (Byrnes et al., 1999), whereas women are considered more communal, often engaging in household and caretaking roles and participating in long-term, care-oriented activities. As social generalizations, gender stereotypes apply to individuals based solely on their group membership. They operate through two dimensions: descriptive stereotypes, which denote beliefs about what men and women are like, and prescriptive stereotypes, which dictate what men and women should be like (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Both forms have critical implications for women's educational and career development. Descriptive stereotypes may create a perceived lack of fit between women's assumed attributes and the skills required for traditionally male-dominated fields, while prescriptive stereotypes impose normative expectations that penalize women who deviate from conventional roles.

Within education, gender stereotypes function as self-fulfilling prophecies. For instance, the belief that boys are naturally better at mathematics undermines girls' self-confidence and aspirations, contributing to persistent gender gaps in mathematics performance and the under-representation of women in STEM fields (Alan et al., 2018). At the family level, gender ideologies play a decisive role in transmitting these stereotypes. Parents influence their children not only through advice but also via the transmission of cultural norms, role modeling, and unequal investment of resources (Farr & Vella, 2013). Thus, family gender stereotypes act as a primary channel through which societal beliefs are internalized, shaping children's academic orientations, narrowing girls' opportunities, and reinforcing broader gender inequalities.

Gender Roles Perception

Perceptions of gender roles in education and career pathways are strongly shaped by persistent stereotypes that associate men with science and women with the humanities. Throughout their schooling years, girls are frequently exposed to remarks such as "women are not good at math or science," while being praised for supposed strengths in linguistics, history, and other language-based disciplines. These repeated messages foster self-doubt, constrain aspirations, and function as self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, girls who excel in mathematics during elementary school are often reminded that "girls will not be good at math in middle school," and even when they continue to perform well, they may be told that "women are not suitable for science studies." Empirical evidence supports this trajectory: while female students outperform male students in mathematics at the elementary level, this advantage diminishes in junior high school and reverses in senior high school, where male students score significantly higher (Xie & Liu, 2023).

Despite substantial progress in closing the gender gap in educational attainment in China where women's literacy has converged with men's and female enrollment in higher education surpassed that of men by 2015, the problem of gendered discipline choice remains salient. Gender segregation persists in high school subject selection, with many high-achieving girls in mathematics nonetheless opting for liberal arts tracks, thereby limiting their opportunities in scientific and technological fields. As a result, women remain underrepresented in science and technology research, accounting for only 26% of researchers in 2019, reflecting the enduring barriers faced by women in STEM based on the report of Department of Social Science, Technology, and Cultural Industry in the National Bureau of Statistics & Department of Innovation and Development in the Ministry of Science and Technology (2020).

Beyond structural constraints, the perceptions of practitioners also reinforce gender stereotypes. Baig (2015) demonstrated that teachers' gendered views significantly shaped girls' construction of identity by reproducing cultural stereotypes. Similar findings by Chapman (2016) suggest that curriculum implementation and differentiated expectations between boys and girls influence how gender is learned in the early years. The interplay between parental and practitioner perceptions, and how these align with children's own gendered self-conceptions, remains an underexplored area. The persistence of such gendered perceptions has implications beyond individual life choices. The continued underrepresentation of women in science and technology weakens national innovation capacity and limits influence in the context of global competition for STEM talent. As science and technology are increasingly central to national productivity, many Western countries have elevated STEM education

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to a strategic priority and introduced targeted policies to enhance women's participation (Zhang et al., 2019). These dynamics highlight the crucial role of gender role stereotypes and educational perceptions in shaping both individual trajectories and broader societal outcomes.

The Context of Family Gender Stereotypes among Ethnic Minority Girls in Vietnam

Vietnam's rapid socio-economic transformation over the past three decades has been accompanied by notable achievements in education and gender equality at the national level. Since the early 1990s, the poverty rate has declined dramatically, while access to education has expanded substantially (World Bank, 2016). Universal primary education has been achieved for both boys and girls, with near-universal lower-secondary enrollment (Ministry of Education and Training, 2015). Current trends even show that girls are more likely than boys to transition to upper-secondary and tertiary education (GSO & UNICEF, 2015). In addition, early marriage, often a critical barrier to girls' education in many developing contexts, is relatively rare in Vietnam. The 2009 Census indicated that the average age of first marriage for women was nearly 23 years, and the 2014 MICS revealed that less than 1% of women aged 15–49 had been married before age 15, while only 10% of adolescent girls aged 15–19 were married or in union.

Beyond education, women's participation in the labor force is comparatively high. In 2014, 73% of Vietnamese women aged 15–64 were engaged in paid employment, compared with the global average of 50.3% (World Bank, 2016). This reflects both Vietnam's socialist legacy and the relatively strong integration of women into the labor market. However, this participation is characterized by persistent structural inequalities, including a gender wage gap (ILO, 2013) and the disproportionate burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities shouldered by women (Teerawichitchainan et al., 2008).

Despite these advances, the situation of ethnic minority girls reveals a more complex reality. While aggregate statistics highlight Vietnam's success in promoting education and gender equality, ethnic minority groups continue to lag behind the Kinh majority in both school participation and learning outcomes. Deeply embedded cultural traditions and family gender stereotypes often shape expectations for girls, privileging domestic roles over academic and professional aspirations. In patriarchal family structures, daughters are frequently perceived as responsible for household chores and caregiving, which may conflict with or limit their opportunities for sustained educational engagement. These stereotypes are reinforced by intergenerational beliefs about gender roles and the economic value of daughters, particularly in rural and resource-constrained communities.

Family Gender Stereotypes and Gender Roles Perception

Family gender stereotypes are among the most pervasive channels through which gendered expectations are transmitted across generations. They are understood as the set of socially and culturally constructed beliefs about what is appropriate behavior, attitudes, or responsibilities for males and females (Phan & Pham, 2021; Dong et al., 2025; Ha, 2022). These stereotypes do not arise naturally but are socially acquired, reflecting broader cultural norms that frame and legitimize differential treatment of boys and girls. In families, such stereotypes often become embedded in daily practices, shaping children's sense of identity and acceptable life trajectories. Gender roles perception, on the other hand, refers to how individuals internalize and interpret these socially constructed expectations regarding masculinity and femininity (Thao & Cuc, 2021; Bankston, 1995; Mendez & Crawford, 2002). Prior research emphasizes that the family acts as a primary agent of gender socialization, where implicit messages about appropriate gendered behaviors are learned and reproduced. When families adhere strongly to traditional gender stereotypes, girls are more likely to develop constrained views of gender roles, potentially limiting their aspirations, educational opportunities, and future career paths. Based on the arguments, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: Family gender stereotypes have a significant influence on ethnic minority girls' gender roles perception.

Gender Roles Perception and Educational and Career Orientation

Perceptions of gender roles strongly shape the educational orientation of ethnic minority girls. According to Thao & Cuc (2021), gender norms rooted in family and tradition establish what are seen as appropriate behaviors, responsibilities, and expectations for males and females. Bankston (1995) emphasized that the formation of gender norms within communities often creates pressures that may lead girls to view education as less important than family obligations or early marriage. Conversely, when girls hold more egalitarian perceptions of gender, education is regarded as a pathway to enhancing personal capacity and expanding social opportunities. Mendez & Crawford (2002) also highlighted that positive gender attitudes can strengthen motivation for learning and increase persistence in schooling. Similarly, Jones et al. (2018) demonstrated that egalitarian gender perceptions are closely associated with long-term educational engagement and aspirations. Based on the arguments, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H2: Gender roles perception has a significant influence on the educational orientation of ethnic minority girls.

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Career orientation, which encompasses individuals' values, goals, and long-term aspirations for their working lives, is strongly shaped by the ways in which gender roles are perceived. Gendered expectations not only influence what types of jobs are considered suitable for women but also shape how individuals evaluate their own capabilities and professional ambitions (Mendez & Crawford, 2002). For ethnic minority girls, entrenched stereotypes such as prioritizing caregiving roles over professional achievement can significantly restrict the range of careers they consider accessible or acceptable. In contrast, egalitarian perceptions of gender roles encourage girls to pursue diverse career paths, including those traditionally dominated by men, thereby broadening their professional horizons. Dong et al. (2025) have emphasized that cultural and social expectations often channel women into predetermined occupational categories, while those who resist stereotypical roles demonstrate higher levels of career commitment and autonomy (see also Askew, 2002). Based on the arguments, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H3: Gender roles perception has a significant influence on the career orientation of ethnic minority girls.

The Mediating Role of Gender Roles Perception

Family gender stereotypes, rooted in cultural and social practices, play a central role in shaping how individuals internalize expectations of male and female behavior (Gaur & Jain, 2013). However, these stereotypes do not directly determine outcomes such as educational orientation; rather, their influence is filtered through the way girls come to perceive gender roles. As Wharton (2005, cited in Kretchmar, 2009) emphasizes, gender socialization involves learning what their society expects of them as males or females. For ethnic minority girls, this process often transmits traditional norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities or limit the perceived relevance of advanced education. By contrast, girls who adopt more egalitarian gender role perceptions are more likely to see education as a pathway to self-fulfillment and social mobility. Thus, gender role perception serves as the mechanism through which family gender stereotypes are translated into educational choices, reinforcing or counteracting the influence of traditional family expectations. Based on the arguments, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H4: Gender roles perception mediates the relationship between family gender stereotypes and educational orientation.

Gender stereotypes embedded in family structures shape the implicit "hidden curriculum" of socialization (Hernandez et al., 2013), which frames girls' career aspirations in subtle but powerful ways. Yet, their effect on career orientation does not operate in isolation. Instead, gender role perception functions as a critical intermediary. As Mkuchu (2004, cited in Seker & Dincer, 2014) noted, cultures assign traits and roles that individuals internalize as part of their gender identity, shaping how they evaluate which occupations are appropriate. Ethnic minority girls who perceive gender roles in restrictive ways may limit themselves to "feminine" or caregiving occupations, while those with more egalitarian views are more likely to aspire toward diverse and ambitious career paths, including male-dominated fields. In this sense, gender role perception channels the influence of family gender stereotypes into concrete career orientations, either narrowing or broadening the scope of professional possibilities. Based on the arguments, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H5: Gender roles perception mediates the relationship between family gender stereotypes and career orientation.

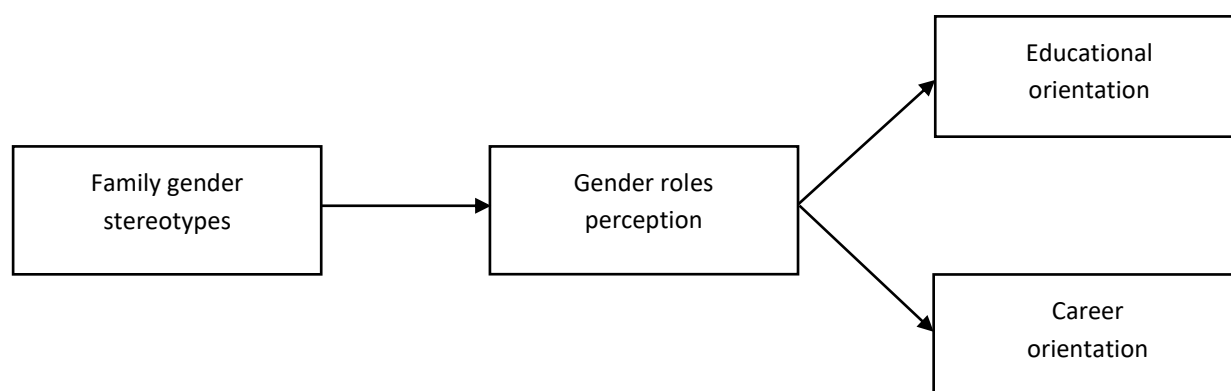


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

III. METHODOLOGY

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire Design

The measurement framework for this study was carefully developed to ensure that each construct was captured in a reliable and valid manner. A structured questionnaire was employed, drawing upon well-established scales from prior research that

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were refined and adapted to the context of ethnic minority girls' educational and career orientations in Vietnam. The instrument incorporated four core constructs: Educational Orientation (EO), Career Orientation (CO), Family Gender Stereotypes (FGS), and Gender Roles Perception (GRP). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree." The construct of Educational Orientation (EO) was measured through five items adapted from Jones et al. (2018). Career Orientation (CO) was assessed using five items derived from Dong et al. (2025) and Askew (2002). Family Gender Stereotypes (FGS) were measured with four items drawing on prior research by Phan and Pham (2021), Dong et al. (2025), and Hà (2022). Finally, Gender Roles Perception (GRP) was assessed through four items adapted from Thao and Cuc (2021), Bankston (1995), and Mendez and Crawford (2002). By employing validated scales from prior literature and tailoring them to the context of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam, the questionnaire was designed to capture the interplay between family gender norms, gender role perceptions, and their influence on educational and career orientations. This approach enhances the robustness of construct operationalization, ensuring both content validity and comparability with existing scholarship. The collected data will subsequently be analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the psychometric properties of the measurement model and to test the hypothesized structural relationships.

Sampling and Data Collection

This study focuses on ethnic minority girls in Vietnam, aiming to explore how family gender stereotypes shape their educational and career orientations. A structured questionnaire survey was administered to ethnic minority female students and young women across selected provinces in Northern Vietnam. Data collection was conducted over a four-week period in 2025 with the support of local schools and community organizations. After data cleaning and screening for completeness and eligibility, a total of 317 valid responses were retained for analysis. A purposive and convenience sampling strategy was employed to ensure that all respondents were female and belonged to ethnic minority groups. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: (1) demographic and background information, and (2) measurement items related to family gender stereotypes and their influence on educational and career orientation. The demographic section collected information on age (under 15, 15–25, over 25), ethnicity (H'Mong, Thai, Dao, Tay, Muong, and others), current education level (secondary school, high school, vocational training, university/college, other), household size (1–3 people, 4–6 people, 7–9 people, over 9 people), parents' education (no schooling, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, college/university or above), parental occupation (farm, non-farm, both), and household income (low, average, fairly good, comfortable/high). The demographic composition of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The diversity in age distribution, ethnic representation, educational attainment, household characteristics, and family socioeconomic background offers a solid foundation for analyzing the extent to which family gender stereotypes influence the educational and career orientations of ethnic minority girls in Vietnam.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of Respondents

The survey captured the demographic and socioeconomic background of 317 ethnic minority girls and young women in Northern Vietnam. The data provide valuable insights into their family contexts, educational situations, and living conditions, which are essential for understanding how family gender stereotypes may shape their educational and career orientations.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 15	82	25.9
	15 – 25	192	60.6
	Over 25	43	13.6
Ethnicity	H'Mong	98	30.9
	Thai	76	24.0
	Dao	42	13.2
	Tay	38	12.0
	Muong	34	10.7
	Others	29	9.2
Current Education	Secondary school	121	38.2

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	High school	108	34.1
	Vocational training	46	14.5
	University/College	29	9.2
	Other	13	4.1
Household Size	1 – 3 people	32	10.1
	4 – 6 people	144	45.4
	7 – 9 people	101	31.9
	Over 9 people	40	12.6
Parental Education	No schooling	72	22.7
	Primary	98	30.9
	Lower secondary	81	25.6
	Upper secondary	46	14.5
	College/University or above	20	6.3
Household Income	Low	119	37.5
	Average	101	31.9
	Fairly good	64	20.2
	Comfortable/High	33	10.4
Total		317	100

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 15–25 years old (60.6%), followed by those under 15 (25.9%) and those over 25 (13.6%). This indicates that most participants were at schooling or early career stages, when family influence is particularly strong. With regard to ethnicity, the largest groups were H'Mong (30.9%) and Thai (24.0%), together accounting for more than half of the sample. Smaller proportions included Dao (13.2%), Tay (12.0%), Muong (10.7%), and others (9.2%), ensuring ethnic diversity in the sample. Concerning educational status, most respondents were attending secondary school (38.2%) or high school (34.1%), while a smaller number pursued vocational training (16.4%), university/college (9.2%), or other forms of study (2.2%). The household size of respondents largely ranged between 4–6 members (45.4%) and 7–9 members (31.9%), reflecting the prevalence of medium to large families, with fewer households reporting fewer than three (10.1%) or more than nine (12.6%) members. As for parents' education, nearly one-third had only primary education (30.9%), while significant proportions had no schooling (27.8%) or lower secondary (20.2%). Fewer parents had completed upper secondary (14.5%) or attained college/university education (6.6%), reflecting limited educational attainment among the older generation. Regarding household income, over one-third of families reported low income (37.5%), while others fell into the average (31.9%), fairly good (20.2%), or comfortable/high (10.4%) categories. This indicates that financial constraints remain common within ethnic minority households.

Scale Reliability and Validity Assessment

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and convergent validity assessment for the measurement model. All four constructs exhibited strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2019). Specifically, Career Orientation (CO: $\alpha = 0.913$, CR = 0.935), Educational Orientation (EO: $\alpha = 0.898$, CR = 0.924), Family Gender Stereotypes (FGS: $\alpha = 0.898$, CR = 0.929), and Gender Roles Perception (GRP: $\alpha = 0.886$, CR = 0.921) all demonstrated satisfactory reliability. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the 0.5 threshold, ranging from 0.709 (EO) to 0.767 (FGS), thereby confirming convergent validity.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CO	0.913	0.927	0.935	0.742
EO	0.898	0.907	0.924	0.709
FGS	0.898	0.904	0.929	0.767
GRP	0.886	0.888	0.921	0.745

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity results assessed using both the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The HTMT values across constructs are all well below the conservative threshold of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019). The highest HTMT observed was 0.497 (between Career Orientation and Gender Roles Perception), which remains within the acceptable range. Other values, such as 0.494 (between Educational Orientation and Gender Roles Perception; between Family Gender Stereotypes and Gender Roles Perception), and 0.443 (between Career Orientation and Family Gender Stereotypes), further support adequate discriminant validity among constructs. Similarly, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied. The square roots of AVE values (CO = 0.861; EO = 0.842; FGS = 0.876; GRP = 0.863) were all greater than their corresponding inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal elements). This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs. Taken together, these results confirm that discriminant validity is established in the measurement model, ensuring that Career Orientation, Educational Orientation, Family Gender Stereotypes, and Gender Roles Perception are empirically distinct constructs and suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Fornell-Larcker Criterion				Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)			
	CO	EO	FGS	GRP	CO	EO	FGS	GRP
CO	0.861							
EO	0.119	0.842			0.125			
FGS	0.400	0.314	0.876		0.443	0.348		
GRP	0.457	0.447	0.444	0.863	0.497	0.494	0.494	

Structural Measurement Assessment and PLS-SEM Result

The structural model demonstrates acceptable explanatory power, explaining 20.6% of the variance in Career Orientation (CO), 19.8% in Educational Orientation (EO), and 19.4% in Gender Role Perception (GRP). Although these R^2 values are modest, they provide meaningful evidence that the framework effectively captures the interplay between family gender stereotypes and role perceptions in shaping girls' educational and career trajectories. Effect size analysis further clarifies this pattern: gender role perception (GRP) exerts a medium effect on both CO ($f^2 = 0.264$) and EO ($f^2 = 0.250$), confirming its pivotal role in shaping aspirations and decision-making processes. Family gender stereotypes (FGS) also show a medium effect on GRP ($f^2 = 0.245$),

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emphasizing their role as a central channel through which cultural expectations are internalized and reproduced across generations. This combination of explanatory and effect size results suggests that psychological and cultural mechanisms, rather than structural access alone, are decisive in shaping aspirations among ethnic minority girls.

Table 4. Structural Equation Modelling Results Estimates

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Hypothesis Results
FGS -> GRP	0.444	0.442	0.061	7.262	0.000	Accepted
GRP -> CO	0.457	0.468	0.061	7.486	0.000	Accepted
GRP -> EO	0.447	0.444	0.067	6.719	0.000	Accepted
FGS -> GRP -> CO	0.203	0.207	0.042	4.795	0.000	Accepted
FGS -> GRP -> EO	0.198	0.197	0.046	4.360	0.000	Accepted
Adjusted R ² : CO: 0.206; EO: 0.198; GRP: 0.194						

The analysis reveals a strong and positive influence of family gender stereotypes on gender role perception ($\beta = 0.444$, $t = 7.262$, $p < 0.001$). This finding underscores that family remains a powerful site of gender socialization, transmitting cultural norms and expectations that shape how girls interpret their roles in both domestic and public spheres. In many ethnic minority households in Vietnam, traditions emphasize caregiving and household responsibilities for women, which are deeply embedded in everyday practices such as parental advice, role modeling, and division of labor. These subtle yet persistent cues shape girls' perceptions of what is considered "appropriate" behavior and aspirations. The result is consistent with Bandura & Bussey's (1999) social cognitive theory, which highlights the family as a primary environment where gendered expectations are modeled and reinforced. It suggests that without shifting these family-based narratives, broader interventions may only achieve partial success. H1 is supported.

The results also indicate that gender role perception exerts a significant positive effect on career orientation ($\beta = 0.457$, $t = 7.486$, $p < 0.001$). This highlights that career aspirations are not solely determined by external opportunities such as labor market demand or policy incentives but are deeply tied to how girls perceive gender equality and their own potential. Girls with more egalitarian views of gender roles are more likely to consider diverse occupational pathways, including male-dominated fields such as engineering, technology, or leadership roles. This finding resonates with Eccles' (2011) expectancy-value theory, which emphasizes the role of identity, competence beliefs, and values in career decision-making. In the context of Vietnam's ethnic minorities, where girls often face double barriers of cultural traditions and socioeconomic limitations, the internalization of egalitarian gender norms can act as a transformative driver, motivating them to aspire beyond traditionally prescribed roles. H2 is supported.

Similarly, gender role perception significantly predicts educational orientation ($\beta = 0.447$, $t = 6.719$, $p < 0.001$). Girls who question traditional gender expectations and embrace egalitarian norms show stronger aspirations to continue education, whether through higher secondary schooling, vocational training, or university. This suggests that perceptions of gender roles directly shape whether education is viewed as a meaningful investment or merely a temporary pursuit before fulfilling domestic responsibilities. The result supports Biesta's (2015) notion that cultural and normative frameworks shape educational aspirations as much as material opportunities. In ethnic minority regions, where access to education is already limited by geography and economic hardship, the reinforcement of progressive gender role perceptions becomes even more critical in ensuring that girls persist in their studies. Thus, addressing gender role perceptions may yield significant returns in enhancing educational participation and achievement. H3 is supported.

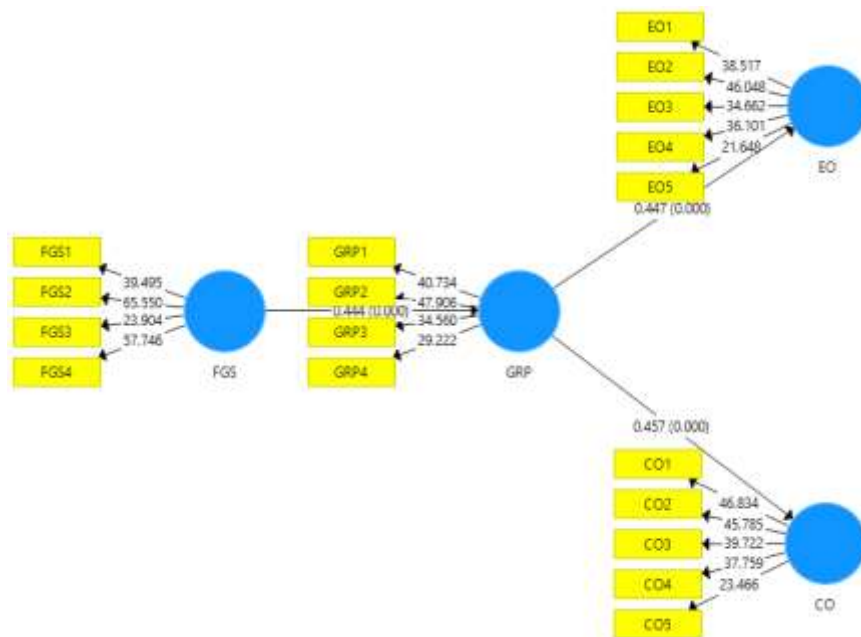


Figure 2. PLS Bootstrapping Model

Beyond direct effects, the mediating role of gender role perception is particularly revealing. Family gender stereotypes were found to influence career orientation indirectly through GRP ($\beta = 0.203$, $t = 4.795$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that stereotypes do not suppress career aspirations in a direct and deterministic way; instead, their effect operates through the psychological process of internalization. In practice, when families repeatedly communicate traditional expectations such as prioritizing domestic caregiving over employment, girls internalize these beliefs, which subsequently shape their career ambitions. This finding provides an important theoretical contribution by highlighting the indirect and subtle mechanisms of gender norm transmission. It also explains why programs that only expand access to vocational training or job placement may not lead to significant outcomes for girls if their perceptions of gender roles remain unchanged. H4 is supported.

A similar pattern emerges with respect to educational orientation. Family gender stereotypes were shown to shape educational aspirations indirectly through gender role perception ($\beta = 0.198$, $t = 4.360$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the family's influence on education does not operate merely through material resources (such as support for tuition fees or school supplies) but through normative messages about whether education is "appropriate" for girls. When girls internalize restrictive stereotypes, they may perceive education as less valuable or unnecessary beyond a certain level, whereas those with egalitarian perceptions view education as a legitimate pathway to self-empowerment and future careers. This highlights the crucial need for interventions that challenge family-based narratives and create enabling conditions for girls to envision education as compatible with both personal growth and community contribution. Without such changes, even significant structural investments in schools or scholarships risk being underutilized. H5 is supported.

V. CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications

This study advances the literature on gender and education by examining ethnic minority girls in Vietnam, where cultural norms shape educational and career pathways. By integrating family gender stereotypes, gender roles perception, educational orientation and career orientation into one framework, the research shows how family expectations are internalized and influence girls' aspirations. The findings confirm that gender role perception directly affects educational and career orientations while also mediating the impact of family stereotypes, thereby clarifying how gender norms operate. This provides empirical support for sociological theories of gender socialization (Bandura & Bussey, 1999; Biesta, 2015) while extending their application to ethnic minority populations, a group often overlooked in mainstream research.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer profound implications for policymakers, NGOs, educators, and local communities seeking to promote gender equality in education and careers among ethnic minority girls. Crucially, expanding access to schooling, while necessary, is insufficient on its own if deep-seated family gender stereotypes remain intact. Programs must go beyond surface-level interventions to address the cultural and familial expectations that subtly but powerfully restrict

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girls' aspirations. Policies should aim to reshape the environments in which girls form their identities by acknowledging the pivotal role of perception as a mediating force between family norms and life choices. Awareness campaigns, while important, must move past generic representation and engage both students and families at a deeper cognitive and emotional level. Interactive storytelling methods such as theater, documentaries, and virtual reality experiences can immerse students in the lived realities of successful women from similar cultural backgrounds. Facilitated reflection circles following these activities can help students internalize new gender norms, transforming exposure into genuine belief change. Meanwhile, curriculum reforms should be approached not merely as content additions but as an opportunity to embed critical gender thinking across subjects. For example, literature, history, and even science can be used to explore how gender roles have shaped knowledge and society, helping students critically assess and reconstruct their perceptions of what is possible. Mentorship initiatives must also be more culturally and contextually responsive. Instead of generic female mentorship, girls benefit most from what can be termed "identity-mirrored mentorship" pairing them with women who share not only their gender but also their ethnic background, language, or migration story. This can foster a stronger sense of connection and possibility. Furthermore, dual-mentor models that pair girls with one mentor from within their community and another from outside can help them navigate the dual cultural worlds they often inhabit, expanding their vision without alienating them from their roots.

Crucially, efforts to reshape gender perceptions must involve families and not just mothers. Fathers, brothers, and male relatives often reinforce caregiving expectations, so it's vital to include them in structured dialogues and workshops that reframe masculinity and male support. Programs can help reposition men as allies in girls' empowerment, reducing resistance and fostering broader buy-in. Simultaneously, peer programs for adolescent boys can encourage them to challenge rigid masculinity norms that limit everyone, not just girls. Community initiatives should be designed to normalize alternative gender roles by showcasing success stories of girls from similar backgrounds. This can include neighborhood events, local storytelling nights, and family-to-family mentorships where parents of older, successful daughters mentor families with younger girls just entering school. These relational interventions foster intergenerational and community-level shifts in belief systems, offering social proof that diverging from tradition can lead to success and dignity rather than shame. Finally, empowering ethnic minority girls must include opportunities for them to become agents of change in their own right. Schools should support the creation of "Girls' Assemblies" or youth gender councils where girls can voice concerns, advocate for inclusive practices, and lead peer initiatives. Turning support into leadership allows girls not only to shift their own perceptions but to actively shape the perceptions of others creating a multiplier effect. When girls are given the tools and platforms to lead, they become visible counter-narratives to limiting stereotypes in their own communities.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. Firstly, it relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Secondly, the focus on one ethnic minority in Vietnam limits generalizability. Thirdly, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference. Future research could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches, and comparative studies across groups or countries to test the consistency of findings. Further extensions may include factors such as peer influence, media exposure, or community norms that shape girls' educational and career orientations.

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