

Men studying female-dominated subjects could improve gender equality

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Encouraging men to study female-dominated industries could improve gender equality, reveals new research by the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by Professor Marita Jacob together with researchers from the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB), investigated the impact of guidance counselling on gender segregation and found intensive counselling programmes contributed to gender desegregation significantly.

They found that counselling students increased the number of students who selected subjects that were not stereotypical for their gender – and this effect was more pronounced for men.

“Our analysis reveals that the programme was particularly strong on men’s subject choice. The number of men who chose subjects that are female-dominated doubled once they received counselling,” says Professor Jacob.

The researcher adds that if the programme was to be implemented on a wider scale, it would potentially lead to a much more frequent choice for men to select subjects largely studied by women.

If men studied ‘female-dominated’ fields, it would help mitigate gender stereotypes and in turn have a positive effect on women’s decisions.

“These findings reveal that gender equality can be promoted from two sides. In addition to supporting young women to aspire and succeed in male-dominated majors, programmes addressing the careers of young men – particularly in female-dominated industries – can support our goal for equality,” says Professor Jacob.

The researcher believes that interventions to improve equality are targeted exclusively to young women, but a change in perspective in educational policies to target both men and women could be effective.

This research was published in the journal *Frontiers in Sociology*.

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For more information, a copy of the research, or to speak with Professor Jacob, please contact Katie Hurley from BlueSky Education on khurley@bluesky-pr.com.