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Gender Differences in Career Values and Vocational Interests of High School Students in the Republic of Srpska

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SUMMARY: Numerous studies have documented gender differences in work values and occupational interests which align with employment statistics. Recent years have witnessed renewed research interest in this topic, driven by public reassessment of gender relations and dramatic labor market changes in the digital and AI era. Our study aimed to examine gender differences in work values and interests among Generation Z adolescents in the Republic of Srpska. Valid responses were collected through online surveys from 339 high school students (65.6% female). Participants assessed their vocational interests using the Vocational Interests Single-Item SETPOINT Scale (SISS), while career values were measured using a modified and extended version of the Multi-dimensional Career Values Questionnaire. Male students showed significantly higher interest in physical-mechanical occupations, jobs performed in natural

environments, and technology fields. Female students expressed significantly greater interest in socially-oriented occupations, jobs involving creative expression, and organizational-economic work. Additionally, statistically significant differences were found in eight out of twelve career values, with female students scoring higher on average across all of these dimensions. We discuss these differences in relation to previous research and consider implications for educational policies and future research.

KEY WORDS: vocational interests, career values, adolescents, gender differences.

Introduction

Due to their cultural, ethical, and economic implications, gender differences in occupational preferences remain a topic of substantial scientific and public debate. Official employment statistics across diverse cultural contexts consistently show robust gender differences in many job domains (e.g., International Labour Organization, 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). Beyond physical characteristics, numerous sociological and economic factors have been explored to account for the existing occupational segregation (e.g., Carranza et al., 2023). Psychological science has made unique contributions to this field by systematically investigating two complementary paths. The first path, spanning decades and synthesized in numerous meta-analyses, has examined differences in specific dimensions of basic psychological attributes, such as cognitive abilities (e.g., Giofrè et al., 2022; Hirnstein, 2023; Waschl & Burns, 2020) and personality traits (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2008; Vianello et al., 2013). While these studies have revealed certain gender-specific patterns, Hyde (2005, 2016) convincingly argues that the findings rather support the Gender Similarities Hypothesis, which posits that males and females are similar on most fundamental psychological variables. The second path has focused on constructs more directly predictive of career choices, particularly vocational interests and work values, which have proven valuable in understanding occupational preferences.

Hansen and Wiernik (2018) define vocational interests as *individuals' characteristic patterns of preferences for certain work activities and work environments*. These preferences relate to appealing activities (e.g., expressing oneself, researching, using mechanical skills) and environments (e.g., indoor or outdoor, individual or social, ordered or ambiguous) that a job might provide. The most popular model of vocational interests is Holland's RIASEC taxonomy (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional), which has two higher-order dimensions: Data vs. Ideas and People vs. Things, first defined by Prediger (1982, as cited by Hansen and Wiernik, 2018). A seminal meta-analysis in this domain by Su and colleagues (2009) established large gender differences, showing that men prefer working with things, while women prefer working with people ($d = 0.93$). Recently, in a study across 42 countries, Tao and colleagues (2022) not only confirmed such differences (people vs. things, $d = 1.04$; ideas vs. data, $d = 0.29$) but also found large moderating effects of culture/country characteristics on the difference size. Du and colleagues (2025) replicated these moderating effects across 57 countries, adding the finding that gender differences in Realistic, Investigative, and Social interests are larger in more egalitarian countries. Of particular relevance for the present study, Hedrih (2023), analyzing data collected between 2007 and 2013 in the Balkans region, found that in Serbia, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia d s range from 1.34 to 1.50 for the people vs. things dimension, along with notable differences on other dimensions.

Hansen and Wiernik (2018) defined work values as *individuals' characteristic pattern of preferences for certain work outcomes, goals, or objectives*. This implies that, in contrast to interests, values are more outcome-oriented, focusing on the worth of "the rewards, psychological states, relationships, or conditions that work can provide." Both the structure and dynamics of gender differences in the importance of different work attributes have been well documented for quite some time (e.g., Konrad et al., 2000). Recent studies (e.g., Lašáková et al., 2023; Leszczyńska, 2018; Meyerding & Lehberger, 2018; Seehuus, 2023) suggest that women are more likely to prioritize work-life balance, altruistic aspects of work, supportive peer relations, job variety, and opportunities for self-devel-

opment, whereas men are more likely to prioritize job independence, personal influence over others, high salaries, and advancement opportunities. However, these differences appear to be mostly small in magnitude, if they exist at all.

The rapidly evolving nature of modern work environments, along with advances in career development research, has sparked important new conceptualizations in both domains. In the domain of vocational interests, the SETPOINT model was created in response to the restrictive nature of the hexagonal RIASEC model and its limited applicability to contemporary work settings (Su et al., 2019). SETPOINT comprises eight professional domains: health Sciences, creative Expression, Technology, People, Organization, Influence, Nature, and Things. While there are certain analogies with the RIASEC model (see Table 1 and Table 6, Hou et al., 2024), empirical results show a slightly better confirmatory fit and marginally improved concurrent validity of SETPOINT compared to RIASEC when occupational membership is used as the criterion. Regarding career values, Abessolo and colleagues (2021) made a significant contribution by attempting to systematize the domain. Their work aimed to integrate work values with two largely overlapping constructs—career orientations and career anchors (both primarily related to the self-deterministic mindset underlying career choices)—into a single construct of career values. Using an empirical approach based on factor analysis of multiple existing instruments related to these constructs, they proposed an integrative framework and its operationalization. This model consists of eight career values belonging to four broad components: social and work-life balance (relational); management and mobility (status); salary (extrinsic); and specialization, independence, and variety (intrinsic).

Professional orientation—the systematic process of career counseling and guidance—is crucial for effective educational planning and workforce development. Despite its importance, professional orientation in the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks systematic implementation, with only sporadic projects and limited enforcement of existing legislation. Furthermore, local research on vocational interests and career values is almost nonexistent. This gap is particularly concerning given the significant proportion of young people considering

emigration from Bosnia and Herzegovina, partly due to limited educational and professional opportunities (Osmić et al., 2024; UNFPA, 2021). Additionally, studies indicate changes in job perception and work values among individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (i.e., Generation Z; see Barhate & Dirani, 2022, for a review), which has not been previously explored in our region.

With this in mind, our study aimed to examine the vocational interests and work values of high school students in the Republic of Srpska by introducing two promising models of these constructs, with a particular focus on gender differences. Building on robust evidence of gender differences in people-oriented versus things-oriented preferences across cultures—particularly the strong effects documented in neighboring Balkan countries—we hypothesized that our results would replicate previous findings. Specifically, for the SETPOINT model, we expected that, on average, men would be more interested in careers related to things and technology, while women would tend to prefer careers involving people and creative expression. As for career values, consistent with prior research showing modest but consistent gender patterns, we expected to observe small differences: on average, we expected women to place greater importance on work-life balance, altruistic aspects of work, supportive peer relationships, job variety, and opportunities for self-development, whereas men would prioritize job independence, personal influence over others, high salaries, and advancement opportunities.

Method

Population and Participants

The theoretical population for this study comprised high-school students in the Republic of Srpska (self-governing entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina), while the operational populations comprised high-school students in its largest city, Banja Luka. From the city's 17 public high schools, we purposively selected four schools to represent diverse vocational tracks and ensure gender variability: the Technical School and Gymnasium (the two largest by student population), the Economics School, and the Electrotechnical School. After obtaining ap-

proval from the principals, the school psychologists were provided with links to an online survey. The survey introduction explained the scientific purpose of the research and informed participants about the principles of anonymity and voluntary participation. Since all potential participants were over 15 years old (age range 16-19), parental consent was not required, according to the Code of Ethical Research with Children and on Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Muratbegović & Šućur-Janjetović, 2013). Data collection took place from April to June 2024.

The total number of valid responses was 339, with response validity verified through both a mid-survey control question and an end-survey question about response honesty. Participation varied substantially across schools and did not correspond to school size. Namely, the Economics School had the highest number of participants ($n = 141$), followed by the Gymnasium ($n = 98$) and the Electrotechnical School ($n = 73$), with the Technical School having the lowest participation ($n = 17$). Despite our sampling strategy aiming at achieving gender balance through the selection of schools with diverse vocational tracks, female participants ($n = 216$, 65.6%) outnumbered male participants ($n = 113$, 34.4%). Despite this unbalanced distribution, power analysis indicated that the sample size was adequate to detect gender differences of $d = 0.33$ or larger (power = .80, $p < .05$, two-tailed independent samples t-test), and was highly powered for detecting moderate differences of at least half a standard deviation (power = 0.99).

Measures

Vocational interests were assessed using a very brief version of the Vocational Interests Single-Item SETPOINT Scale (SISS; Hou et al., 2024). SISS consists of eight single-item scales measuring interest in eight professional domains defined by the SETPOINT model (Health Sciences, Creative Expression, Technology, People, Organization, Influence, Nature, Things). For example, the statement for the Organization was: “*I would enjoy planning, organizing, processing information, or computing (e.g., coordinating people and resources, managing files and records, keeping financial accounts, calculating monthly balances, and arranging travel plans or accommodation)*”. Compared to longer versions operationalizing

the same model (TISS with 24 items and BISS with 41 items; Hou et al., 2024), SISS showed lower test-retest reliability. However, it demonstrated somewhat better content validity indices, expert classification consistency, largely comparable correlations with external criterion variables (e.g., RIASEC model scales, occupational membership), and gender difference estimates that most closely matched previously established interest differences (e.g., a meta-analytic study by Su et al., 2009). Given these characteristics, we considered SISS to be a reasonably valid measure of the interest differences that were the focus of our study.

Career values were assessed using a modified and expanded version of the Multidimensional Career Values Questionnaire (MCVQ; Abessolo et al., 2021). The MCVQ was developed to operationalize an integrated framework encompassing several broad career constructs (i.e., work values, career orientations, and career anchors). The authors generated a new item pool by systematically rephrasing items from five existing instruments measuring these constructs. The items were adapted specifically for the career context, shortened, and refined through multiple rounds of review before being factor analyzed to develop the final integrated measure. Factor analyses across two studies (exploratory in the first phase, confirmatory in the second) suggested an eight-factor structure. The original MCVQ used multiple items (32 in total) to assess each of its eight dimensions: Social, Management, Specialization, Mobility, Independence, Salary, Work-Life Balance, and Variety.

However, our critical content analysis of the MCVQ instrument revealed certain limitations. Beyond the suboptimal confirmatory factor analysis results reported by the authors (Abessolo et al., 2021), we identified that the career values space was under-represented. Due to the authors' decision to factor analyze items from only a sample of instruments, MCVQ omits mapping some important work values typically included in work value systems, which we considered particularly relevant in our context. Specifically, MCVQ notably lacks items addressing the career values of public recognition and working in a supportive environment, while job security and hierarchical advancement were mentioned but subsumed under other scales, where they showed noticeably lower loadings (Salary and Management, respectively). Therefore, building on recent

evidence that properly developed single-item measures can demonstrate adequate validity and reliability for organizational constructs (Matthews et al., 2022), we decided to add these four values and re-operationalize the remaining values through single-item scales, analogous to the SISS scale. This was facilitated by the relatively high similarity among the existing items. For example, the Specialization scale's five items ("To have sharp/highly intellectual challenges," "To use one's intellectual skills," "To exercise advanced expertise," "To face complex situations/challenges," "To become an expert in one's domain") were consolidated into a single statement: "It is important to me to have a job in which I will..." (stem part) "...engage in intellectually challenging work where I can learn a lot and apply that knowledge."

For both instruments, participants responded on a unipolar five-point scale ranging from "Not at all" to "Absolutely," indicating how well each statement described them.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive statistics for variables measuring vocational interests and career values across the entire sample. Regarding professional interests, an interesting division emerged reflecting two classes of popularity. The popular domains—where at least one-quarter of participants responded with "To a large degree" or "Absolutely"—included Influence, Creative Expression, Organization, People, and, slightly less so, Technology. In contrast, practically half as many such positive responses (only 12%–15%) were received for Health Sciences, Things, and Nature. Our assumption is that this difference is directly related to the types of schools included in the sample and therefore does not depict a representative image of the population. For example, while some gymnasium students indicated they would pursue careers in health sciences as doctors, this didn't include future nurses and medical technicians who attend medical high schools. The influence of school type on the distribution of results was further indicated through a series of analyses of variance, which demonstrated statistically significant effects on all vocational interest scales ($p < .05$) except for Nature ($p = .104$).

Table 1*Descriptive statistics of vocational interests (SISS)*

Variable	M (SD)	Mdn	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Influence	3.02 (1.26)	2.98	12.7	23.6	28.6	19.2	15.9
People	3.00 (1.12)	2.97	9.1	23.6	36.6	19.2	11.5
Organization	2.86 (1.16)	2.87	14.2	24.2	31.6	21.5	8.6
Creative Expression	2.86 (1.30)	2.81	18.0	23.3	27.7	16.2	14.7
Technology	2.67 (1.33)	2.61	25.7	21.5	25.1	15.6	12.1
Nature	2.17 (1.08)	2.04	32.7	31.9	23.6	8.8	2.9
Health Sciences	2.19 (1.18)	1.97	35.1	31.6	18.3	9.1	5.9
Things	2.10 (1.13)	1.89	38.6	29.2	19.5	8.8	3.8

Notes. Mdn = interpolated median. Columns 1% to 5% present percentages of the following responses: 1 = Not at all, 2 = To a small degree, 3 = Moderately, 4 = To a large degree, 5 = Absolutely.

Table 2 presents a more complex picture of career values distribution. Salary emerged as the most important value, with 83.7% of participants considering it important *to a great extent* or *absolutely*. This is followed by a group of three values—Job Security, Work-Life Balance, and Supportive Work Environment—the latter two of which were added in our revision of the MCVQ instrument. Less than 50% of participants rated Social, Management, and particularly Public Recognition as important *to a large degree* or *absolutely*, with the latter being endorsed by only about half as many participants as the previous two. Nevertheless, at least every fifth participant rated the Public Recognition value as largely or absolutely important, thus supporting our decision to include it in the instrument. As with vocational interests, these descriptive statistics should not be considered representative of the theoretical population, although the omnibus effect of school type did reach statistical significance ($p < .05$) for three (Management, International Mobility, Public Recognition) out of 12 values.

Table 2*Descriptive statistics of career values (MCVQ+)*

Variable	M (SD)	Mdn	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Salary	4.35 (0.90)	4.62	1.5	2.9	11.8	27.1	56.6
Work-Life Balance	4.19 (0.95)	4.46	1.2	3.8	18.3	27.7	49.0
Security	4.17 (0.97)	4.41	1.8	4.4	16.2	30.4	47.2
Supportive Environment	4.03 (0.99)	4.17	2.9	3.5	19.2	36.3	38.1
International Mobility	3.68 (1.27)	3.89	7.4	11.8	21.8	23.0	36.0
Independence	3.75 (1.08)	3.84	3.8	7.7	27.7	31.6	29.2
Specialization	3.73 (1.06)	3.82	3.2	8.6	27.7	32.4	28.0
Variety	3.72 (1.06)	3.78	2.9	8.8	29.5	31.0	27.7
Advancement	3.48 (1.10)	3.50	5.0	12.7	32.4	29.2	20.6
Social	3.42 (1.06)	3.35	3.8	13.3	38.6	25.7	18.6
Management	3.26 (1.27)	3.28	10.3	18.6	27.1	22.7	21.2
Public Recognition	2.61 (1.25)	2.51	21.8	28.0	28.0	11.2	10.9

Notes. Mdn = interpolated median. Columns 1% to 5% present percentages of the following responses: 1 = Not at all, 2 = To a small degree, 3 = Moderately, 4 = To a large degree, 5 = Absolutely.

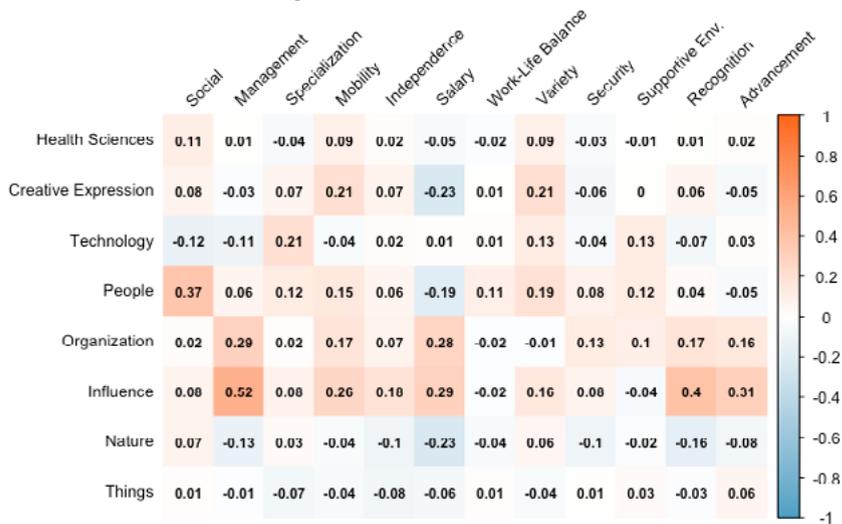
Figure 1*Gamma correlations among vocational interests and career values*

Figure 1 shows the relationships between vocational interests and career values across the entire sample. The only correlation that exceeded 0.50 was the one between Influence over others (vocational interest) and Management (career value). Since we observed that these two sets of variables not only have different levels of endorsement but also do not substantially overlap, we can reasonably claim the discriminant validity of vocational interests and career values.

Tables 3 and 4 present the gender differences that were the focus of the study. Table 3 shows that gender differences were observed for all eight interest domains, with four showing stronger formal indicators of difference ($BF_{10} > 6$ and/or $p < .01$). In terms of magnitude, the differences were small to moderate. As expected, the largest differences favoring males were found for the Things and Technology scales, while females scored higher on the People and Creative Expression dimensions. Some potentially surprising differences were found for Nature (higher male endorsement) and Organization (higher female endorsement). For the Influence and Health Sciences scales, relatively small differences were found without formal indicators of significance, though female participants scored slightly higher on both scales. Although female participants achieved higher scores in more popular domains (i.e., Influence, People, Organization, Creative Expression), there were no gender differences in the combined average score ($t(215.5) = 0.21, p = .834, d = 0.02$).

Table 3

Gender differences in vocational interests (SISS)

Variable	Fem. M (SD)	Mal. M (SD)	d	pt	pMWW	pAoV	BF10
Health Sciences	2.26 (1.22)	2.09 (1.14)	0.15	.197	.224	.246	0.3
Creative Expression	2.99 (1.28)	2.60 (1.28)	0.30	.010	.012	.009	3.0
Technology	2.50 (1.29)	2.98 (1.37)	-0.36	.003	.002	.582	12.8
People	3.14 (1.12)	2.74 (1.11)	0.35	.003	.003	.009	10.4
Organization	2.98 (1.18)	2.66 (1.11)	0.28	.016	.014	.494	1.8

Variable	Fem. M (SD)	Mal. M (SD)	d	pt	pMWW	pAoV	BF10
Influence	3.14 (1.25)	2.86 (1.22)	0.23	.052	.055	.717	0.8
Nature	2.03 (0.98)	2.40 (1.20)	-0.35	.006	.011	.009	8.5
Things	1.89 (1.09)	2.49 (1.12)	-0.54	< .001	< .001	< .001	2884.2

Note. p_t = p-value for independent t-test; p_{MWW} = p-value for Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test; p_{AoV} = p-value for analysis of variance after partitioning the amount of shared variance with the type of school variable. BF_{10} = Bayes factor for independent t-test with default Cauchy prior (0, 0.707).

To examine the potential effects of school type on the relationship between gender and interests, type 2 analyses of variance were conducted with both variables (gender and type of school) simultaneously entered as predictors of interests. For the Technology and Organization variables, the p -values changed, with gender effects becoming statistically non-significant after including the school type. Further analysis revealed interactions within these variables, showing that larger differences on the Technology scale were only observed in the Technical School (Figure 2a), while the Organization scale showed a clearly balanced effect of the school type (Figure 2b).

Regarding career values, a somewhat stronger overall gender effect was evident. Four scales showed differences of $0.45d$ or greater (along with $p < .001$ and $BF_{10} > 100$), while for three more we observed indicative inferential statistics ($BF_{10} \approx 3.0$ and $p < .05$) (Table 4). Particularly interesting was that female participants had higher career values ($d \geq 0.15$) on eleven out of twelve scales, and showed notably higher average scores on the aggregate measure ($t(174.3) = 4.63$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.59$). The largest differences were found on the Supportive Work Environment, International Mobility, Job Security, and Social Values scales ($d = 0.45 - 0.58$), with noticeable differences also observed on the Work-Life Balance, Job Variety, Management, and Independence scales ($d = 0.27 - 0.31$). The only scale showing no differences was the Specialization scale.

Table 4*Gender differences in career values (MCVQ+)*

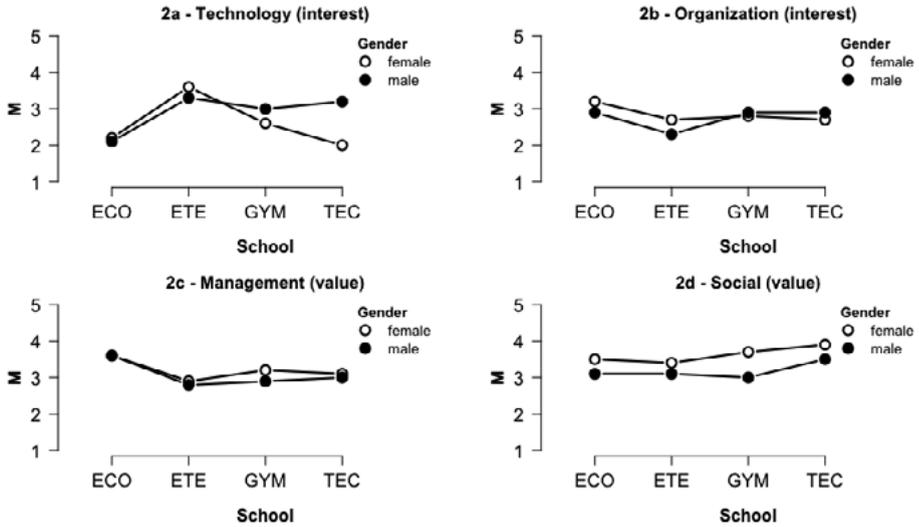
Variable	Fem. M (SD)	Mal. M (SD)	d	pt	pMWW	pAoV	BF10
Social	3.57 (1.02)	3.11 (1.07)	0.45	< .001	< .001	< .001	153.6
Management	3.41 (1.25)	3.03 (1.26)	0.31	.009	.008	.369	3.6
Specialization	3.75 (1.04)	3.76 (1.05)	-0.02	.897	.879	.742	0.1
Mobility	3.89 (1.18)	3.29 (1.31)	0.49	< .001	< .001	.002	522.3
Independence	3.86 (1.06)	3.57 (1.08)	0.27	.021	.019	.016	1.7
Salary	4.42 (0.80)	4.21 (1.09)	0.22	.080	.224	.096	0.8
Work-Life Balance	4.29 (0.88)	4.01 (1.06)	0.30	.016	.022	.004	3.0
Variety	3.81 (0.99)	3.50 (1.13)	0.29	.016	.023	.006	2.7
Security	4.32 (0.86)	3.86 (1.12)	0.49	< .001	< .001	< .001	481.3
Supportive Environment	4.23 (0.86)	3.67 (1.11)	0.58	< .001	< .001	< .001	16101.5
Public Recognition	2.70 (1.18)	2.46 (1.37)	0.19	.117	.042	.709	0.5
Advancement	3.56 (1.03)	3.39 (1.20)	0.16	.199	.286	.276	0.3

Note. p_t = p-value for independent t-test; p_{MWW} = p-value for Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test; p_{AoV} = p-value for analysis of variance after partitioning the amount of shared variance with the type of school variable. BF_{10} = Bayes factor for independent t-test with default Cauchy prior (0, 0.707).

As with interests, additional analyses of variance were conducted to test for potential school type effects. Only the Management scale showed a change in significance status after introducing the school type effect into the formula. As expected, Figure 2c shows that Economics School students valued Management notably higher, with no gender effect among them, though the effect persisted in other schools. For comparison, Figure 2d shows a typical situation for the Social career value, where the gender effect remained unchanged after introducing the school type.

Figure 2

*Average values by gender and type of school for dimensions
Technology, Organization, Management, and Social*



Note. ECO = Economics, ETE = Electrotechnical, GYM = Gymnasium, TEC = Technical.

Discussion

With this study we explored gender differences in vocational interests and career values among Generation Z high-school students in the Republic of Srpska, using new and promising conceptualizations of both constructs. Our findings on vocational interests largely mirror those reported by the authors of the SET-POINT operationalizations for their U.S. sample (Hou et al., 2024). We found similar patterns for most hypothesized gender differences (Technology, People, and Creative Expression), although the effect size for the Things scale was somewhat lower in our sample. While most other interests showed small, inconclusive differences between genders, the Nature scale stood out with a more distinctive pattern. This difference might reflect cultural moderation of gender roles, possibly indicating that females in our sample are less likely to envision

themselves working in natural environments. Moreover, it is important to note that the explanatory power of gender is relatively modest—it accounts for only 2–3% of the variance in most vocational interests, with Things being the exception at 6.2%. This suggests that the vast majority of individual differences in vocational interests must be explained by other factors.

Career values revealed more pronounced gender differences than vocational interests.

Four dimensions—Social aspects, Job Security, International Mobility, and Supportive Work Environment—showed the largest disparities, with gender accounting for between 4.4% and 7.2% of the variance. While these differences are notable, they are not conclusive, and further research will need to verify if these patterns of job aspect valuation remain consistent. A particularly intriguing finding emerged regarding the overall valuation of career aspects: female students consistently rated a wider range of job characteristics as important. This raises two compelling questions: why did male students generally attribute lower importance to job characteristics overall, and why did we observe the opposite results for traditionally male-associated dimensions like job independence, personal influence over others, high salaries, and advancement opportunities? One possible explanation lies in the local context—male students in our country might be more willing to accept any employment that provides basic financial independence. This interpretation is supported by another finding from our study: while 20% of male students plan to enter the workforce immediately after high school, only 5% of female students share this intention.

Our study yielded additional noteworthy observations. For example, we conceptually replicated Šverko et al.'s (2017) finding that vocational interests and career values represent distinct sets of constructs. This has important implications for both research and career counseling practice, suggesting that both constructs need to be measured independently.

Additionally, we obtained a picture of work values that might indicate population-level tendencies among our Generation Z. However, this finding also highlighted the importance of more comprehensive sampling that would include a broader range of secondary schools. Finally, while the MCVQ framework represents a valuable attempt to integrate several similar constructs under career values,

our supplementary dimensions showed significant prevalence in the sample and demonstrated up to moderate overlap with other values. For instance, the correlation between the Job Security and Salary aspects (combined into a single dimension in the original MCVQ) was only .30 (not shown in Results), suggesting these might be better treated as separate dimensions.

That said, we are aware of several limitations of our study. Our sampling was confined to students from a single city, including just one gymnasium and three vocational schools. The voluntary nature of participation likely introduced self-selection bias, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of female respondents—a pattern suggesting that more motivated students were more likely to complete the survey. The varying response rates across schools further complicate the interpretation of our findings. While we opted for single-item measures to maximize efficiency, we recognize the inherent trade-offs of this approach. The constraints on the survey length forced us to make methodological compromises, particularly notable in our inability to include specialized instruments for assessing gender-based occupational stereotyping (such as VGSA; Babarović et al., 2023). Such measures could have provided valuable context for interpreting our findings about gender differences.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our study contributes to the growing awareness of the importance of examining career-related variables during a period of dramatic labor market transformation. We have demonstrated that gender differences in vocational interests and career values do exist in our country, although their magnitude is mostly modest. This finding has important implications for educational policy: carefully designed, gender-sensitive occupational presentations could help counteract the documented threats arising from unregulated media exposure among adolescents (e.g. Guilbeault et al., 2024). Future activities should focus on testing longer measures of the new conceptualizations and working toward a more systematic approach to career guidance.

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Polne razlike u karijernim vrijednostima i profesionalnim interesovanjima srednjoškolaca u Republici Srpskoj

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SAŽETAK: Nalazi velikog broja istraživanja opisuju polne razlike u radnim vrijednostima i interesovanjima za različita zanimanja, što je u skladu i sa statistikama zapošljavanja. Posljednjih godina svjedočimo novim istraživanjima ove teme, podstaknutim javnim preispitivanjem karaktera rodni odnosa, te ogromnim promjenama tržišta rada u digitalnom i AI dobu. Cilj našeg istraživanja je ispitati polne razlike u radnim vrijednostima i interesovanjima među adolescentima u Republici Srpskoj koji pripadaju popularno nazivanoj Generaciji Z. Onlajn anketiranjem su prikupljeni valjani odgovori 339 učenika srednjih škola (65.6% ženskog pola). Ispitanici su procjenjivali svoja interesovanja ispunjavanjem instrumenta Jednoajtemske SETPOINT skale za ispitivanje profesionalnih interesovanja (SISS), dok su karijerne vrijednosti procjenjivali putem analogno modifikovanog i dopunjenog Multidimenzionalnog

upitnika karijernih vrijednosti. Mladići pokazuju u prosjeku značajno viša interesovanja za poslove fizičko-mehaničkog karaktera, poslove koji se obavljaju u prirodnom okruženju i rad u STEM oblastima. Djevojke su značajno zainteresovanije za društveno orijentisane poslove, poslove koji podrazumijevaju kreativno izražavanje i organizaciono-ekonomske poslove. S druge strane, za osam od dvanaest ispitivanih karijernih vrijednosti su dobijene statistički značajne razlike, a na svima njima su djevojke imali više prosječne skorove. U diskusiji upoređujemo dobijene razlike sa ranijim istraživanjima, i razmatramo preporuke za obrazovne politike i buduća istraživanja.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: profesionalna interesovanja, karijerne vrijednosti, adolescenti, polne razlike.