SOCIAL CORRELATES OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE GIRLS

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Abstract

A gross inequality which arises in Indian society has their origin in the social context of class, class and gender. The most common form of disparities in Indian and in the most of the South East Asian countries is gender inequalities in education which in turn have immense effects on the life chances of girls. Gender inequalities in education is manifested in numerous ways; it can be seen in the differential access to education, dropout and retention rate, differential quality of education, gendered choices of subjects and in the educational aspirations of girls. The present study was undertaken to explore the effects of social correlates on the educational aspiration and vocational preferences of undergraduate girls. The study was conducted in Varanasi city and a total sample of 34 respondents was drawn from six colleges and three popular disciplines of study i.e. B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com. Results show that social correlates have not only strong hold over girl's educational aspirations but also shape and direct vocational preferences of these undergraduate girls. Most of the respondents told that familial and social responsibilities are at the first priority to them than their education and career. Beside this they told coping strategies adopted by them to minimize the conflict between their aspiration and societal expectations.

Key Words: Social correlates, Educational aspiration and Vocational preference.

Introduction:

Nature and processes of education cannot be studied without its social context. Thus it is important to interrogate that what is the role of society in the process of education? How does it affect the education, educational process vis-a-vis teacher, student and curriculum? Social context of education provides valuable insight for deeper probe of educational problems such as, who studies in what type of schools? Whose education is more important and why? And, *who is expected to be what?* There is a need for more interdisciplinary work in education with structural and institutional factors that push out girls from higher education and work force participation. The identification of such factors will point to the genuine reasons responsible for the slow educational and particularly vocational progress of women.

Although women are no longer hesitant or apologetic about claiming a share of space and visibility in public places, at work, and in public discourse yet this must not be understood that she has moved beyond the paradoxes. The new age women are scripting their own success stories, which are not content to be led but prefer to lead. They are pushing against the limits, society imposed on them. With an identity no longer defined by domesticity or relationship, she now come across as a person with a strong sense of self and self worth. But this is the only one aspect of the picture, the off-screen facts and truth can't be ignored as they affect the whole scene significantly. According to MHRD annual report (2009-10) only 15 percent are in vocational courses such as engineering, medicine, law, and veterinary sciences, 49 percent are in Humanities and Social Sciences, 20 percent in Science, and 16 percent in Commerce. Report said that even after 60 years of independence, responses of girls towards vocational education are not very enthusiastic. In spite of impressive growth in enrolment (41.44 percent) in 2009-10 the meager percentage of girls in vocational courses

is itself evident. It is not possible to view women's education in isolation. The influence of other societal structures is multifold in keeping a secondary status for women.

Nevertheless another survey conducted by Confederation of Indian Industry shows that "Women are just 6 percent of India's workforce" (TOI, 16 Dec, 2005). It means only 6 percent out of 48 percent population of women are contributing in the development of the nation. The limited participation of women is an issue of serious concern. The report pointed out a number of problems being faced by women that lessen their success and performance;

1. Inequality of opportunity i.e. Hierarchy of access to schooling and type of schooling,

2. Abject poverty, and

3. Social and traditional responsibilities /expectations. (TOI, Dec. 16, 2005)

Another survey of "Master card Worldwide4 women Index" deduced that in India the workforce ratio in unconventional fields such as management, BPO and private sectors is very low. There are only 12 women are working as managers in comparison of 100 men. In other countries this ratio is 78 to 85 as per 100 men. (Amar Uzala, 17th March, 2009). These reports raise few serious questions about female education which cannot be ignored,

1. If girls are reflecting outstanding academic performance at school or college level then why they are not moving to industry or job in the same ratio of their performance?

2. If they don't want to do the job then why they are acquiring the higher education?

3. What are their educational aspirations and which factors play the determining role and affect the educational and vocational aspirations of females?

Though child rearing practices are culture specific yet one thing is common in all cultures that they have different expectations from boys and girls. In India a boy is considered to become a provider and protector of the family while girls are expected to become a good housekeeper, cook, mother and caregiver to all the family members. It reflects the predominance of the social and traditional role to be performed by women in Indian society. If education is preparation for adult life then needless to say that these gender based expectations from boys and girls definitely have effect on their aspiration and goal setting behavior up to a great extent.

Dasgupta, Satadal, Nagarjuna, 1972 studied, *factors in educational aspiration- a study of educational aspiration of high school seniors in prince Edward Island Canada* and found that female's aspirations was found significantly influenced by family factors than males. Marini, Margaret Mooney & Greenberger, E., 1978 revealed that social role perception affect the educational ambition of girls. Kristine J. Kleinjans 2001, studied *can social norms explain gender differences in educational aspirations;* found that social norms and culture significantly influence the aspirations of individuals. In Indian context educational aspiration of the girls with social correlates is less researched area. Most of the studies done in the area focused on the psychological, economic and physical aspects only (Holmes, Valerie L. & Esses, Lillian M., 1988; Li, Peter S. et al., 2007; Strand, Steve & Winston, Joe, 2008). Social aspects are generally neglected and in the name of social context mostly socio-economic status, family background and parental education are taken into account (Conolly, Paul & Healy, Julie, 2004; Alloway, Nala et al. 2004, Daniel, Kasomo 2009).

Review of available literature clearly shows that apart from the schooling factors the family and social factors have significant influence on the educational aspirations and vocational preferences of the girls. Hence, it is important to interrogate that what is the role of societal expectations from women and girls in the process of education? How does it shape the career choices of the girls and affect the educational process? Social context of education provides valuable insight for deeper probe of educational problems such as, lower work participation of women and less enrolment of women in higher education particularly in vocational courses. Thus, the present study had been undertaken to assess and analyze the educational and vocational aspiration of girls and it is an attempt to get into the social correlates or factors responsible for the shaping of girl's educational and vocational aspirations.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study the educational aspirations of undergraduate girls.

2. To analyze the perceived conflict between educational aspirations and future social roles and coping strategies adopted by girls to minimize the conflict.

3. To study the vocational preferences of undergraduate girls in relation to societal expectation from them.

Method used for present study-

It is a qualitative study and data has been gathered through in-depth interview technique.

Sample: A sample of 34 girls pursuing B.A., B.Sc., B.Com course (session 2008-09) studying in the six colleges of Varanasi was selected through purposive sampling technique. In the sample 27 girls were Hindu, 06 were Muslim, and 01 girl was Sikh. Caste composition of the sample was 17 General, 06 OBC, 03 SC, and 01 ST.

Tools used for the present study

To study the social correlates of educational aspiration of girls, researchers developed a semi structured interview schedule. It comprised five themes for inquiry and has twenty items. These themes are-

A- Reasons for getting higher education and educational aspirations,

B- Discrimination faced,

C- Vocational preferences in relation to societal expectations,

D- Conflict between Career and future Social roles,

E- Career and sharing of domestic responsibilities

The content validity of the tool was established by seeking the opinion of the experts in the area of gender studies, women's education and education.

Data analysis and Interpretation: A theme wise qualitative analysis has been done to fulfill the purpose of the present study.

Table-1

Theme– I: Reasons for Getting Higher Education

Reasons of getting higher education	For economic self dependency	88 %
	For knowledge	03 %
	Don't know	09 %
Suggestion for the course selection:	By father and brother	71 %
	Self chosen	29 %

The respondents were asked that why they are getting higher education, as high as 88 percent of the girls told that they were pursuing the higher education as it will help them in becoming economically independent. These girls seem to have aspiration and want to have their own career. Whereas 9 percent girls told that they are not interested in studies and they are studying without any vision or ambition and it is time-pass for them, and it seems that they do not have proper motivation and aspiration neither for education nor for the job. Only one respondent told that she is getting higher education for the sake of knowledge. This particular respondent is SC and belongs to rural area and she found it quite prestigious and honorable to study for the sake of knowledge than for economic reasons.

It is evident from the table that fathers and brothers have major role in deciding the course of study for girls. Only 29 percent of the girls told that they have selected their course by their own choices. While only one girl told that she has taken advice of her mother for selection of the course.

When respondents were further asked regarding the satisfaction from the chosen course, 82 percent girls told that they are satisfied with their course of study as it will lead them towards their goal. Most of the girls have the notion that graduation is compulsory before moving to professional courses. Whereas, 10 percent girls told that they are not satisfied with their course as it doesn't match with their ambitions and future expectations and 8 percent of the girls were partially satisfied with their courses as they have forced to opt present course of study due to some economic crisis or unavailability of desired course in their own city. It seems that these girls have educational aspiration but don't have proper means to fulfill it.

Table-2

Theme II: Discrimination Faced in the Family

Discrimination faced	Faced	12 %
	Not faced	88 %

When respondents were asked if ever they have faced any kind of discrimination in their family, 88 percent girls out rightly denied but when they were further interrogated most of them told that parents always like to send their sons for professional courses while daughters are usually suggested to take admission in any degree course available in nearby colleges which itself is the evidence of discrimination within the family, as one of the respondent stated,

"No, there is no discrimination in my family……….. I wish to take admission in B.Tech., but it is not possible due to economic reasons, as my parent could not bear the expenses for both of us (her brother was also preparing for the same) therefore, they suggested me to do B.Sc."

12 percent girls were very vocal and clear about this and told that yes, they faced discrimination in education of sons and daughters in terms of selection of courses, mobility for studies, and economic support from their families.

Table-3

Theme III: Vocational Preferences in Relation to Societal Expectations:

Job Preferred	Conventional jobs such as teaching and nursing etc.	76 %
	Unconventional jobs such as air-hostess, receptionist etc.	24 %
Nature of Job Preferred	Official	62 %
	Business	27 %
	Field work	11 %
Teaching and nursing as best job options for girls	Yes	73 %
	No	27 %

When the girls were asked about their vocational preferences 41 percent girls told that they want to become teacher as they have the notion that teaching is a respected and safe career option for the girls. It shows their longings to prove them socially desirable. These girls have the career aspiration which is motivated by their social background.

17 percent girls were interested in administrative jobs and they are highly aspiring for taking a career. 8 percent girls have shown preference for the managerial job and want to make their own identity through their work. 5 percent girls want to become lawyer and 5 percent of the girls wished to become engineer but they are not studying the needed course and it seems that they have a misleading or confused career aspiration and have not planned their career yet. A miss-match between career demands and chosen course is apparent. Fashion-designing, air-hostess and psychiatrist as career option were chosen by one girl each. Two out of these three girls belong to Muslim families.

When these girls are further queried about the reason of choosing the particular career, 61 percent girls told that they have chosen the particular career due to their own interest, which reflects their aspiration for having a good career.

While 30 percent girls' consideration for choosing the job was power and money. They want to have such kind of jobs which can bring them power & money. Only one girl wanted to do something different that is why she has chosen unconventional job for her i.e. air-hostess. A total 6 percent of the girls didn't state any particular reason for selecting jobs.

In the lieu of above responses when they were asked that which kind of job such as; office jobs, field work or business they would prefer to do. A total 62 percent of the girls told that they would prefer the official jobs as it is honorable, has fixed time duration, and safety. These girls think that office jobs are easier and demand less energy in comparison to field work and business and they can easily perform their domestic responsibilities with office jobs.

Business was the choice of 27 percent girls. They preferred it over office and jobs which demand filed work. These girls think that self employment will give them autonomy to work and flexibility of time and they would be able to manage their home in a better way. It seems that accomplishing domestic responsibilities is a major concern for young girls while choosing career option, as it was a major reason given by the girls for choosing office jobs as well as business.

Only 11 percent girls have chosen jobs which require field work as their option. They said that field jobs are thrilling, exciting, and are free from the monotony of conventional jobs. All these girls belong to the higher socio-economic status and to urban area.

Finally the respondents were asked about the problems which they perceive in unconventional jobs such as air-hostess, receptionist, and BPO etc. and 91 percent respondents told that girls have to face so many problems in unconventional fields such as teasing, ill treatment of customers and mental as well as sexual exploitation by authorities. They also feel the lack of safety in such jobs. Besides this, people and society don't have very good notion about the girls doing such kind of jobs. As a girl told, "Yes, people think that girls who are doing such jobs are poor, less intelligent, and helpless…. therefore easily available to satisfy their (employer's) illegal and unsocial desires."

Table-4

Theme - IV: Conflict between Career and Future Social Roles:

Will do the job if there is need only.	No	97
	Yes	03
Husband and familial consent for job.	Necessary	77
	Not Necessary	23
Double standards for women success.	Having Consent	84
	Not agree	16

To study the perceived conflict between career and future social roles of girls the respondents were firstly asked would they like to do a job if they are in need only, 97 percent girls told that no, they will do the job for self satisfaction and for shaping their own identity rather than only to fulfill their needs.

But when the girls were asked, do they think that husband's and family consent is necessary for the job. 77 percent girls told that yes, their job should be acceptable to their husbands and family; otherwise they will leave their jobs. As told by one of the respondents,

"Yes, career is important but living happily with husband and family is more important otherwise my parents will be sad due to me."

Opinion of a Muslim girl is also significant, "No, I will not choose a job without the permission of my husband". She narrated an incident about her teacher, "Once my teacher told me that she had waited for twenty years to get her husband's permission for job and she is happy now…..she is my ideal."

It means that most of the girls don't aspire for career independently; familial especially husband's consent or approval has the decisive role in the vocational choices of a girl. The perception of the future social roles is one of the decisive factors in career planning, selection and consistency of women in job (S.N. Dasgupta, 1972).

Only 23 percent girls were confident and told that nobody has the right to take decision about their career. They can decide best about their jobs. All of these girls belong to urban background of higher socio-economic status and have working mothers. Only one girl belongs to rural background.

When the girls were questioned that, do they agree with the statement that teaching and nursing are the better professional options for girls than other, 73 percent girls told that girls have the natural and god-gifted attributes as patience, caring nature, sensitivity and emotional understanding which is required in these jobs. Therefore, girls can do better in these areas. They also prefer it as best job option because it is respectable and in this job they will get enough time to manage their family. They consider it safe also as working hour is fixed and they have not to bother about night-shifts and outings, transfers etc.

When the girls were inquired about there opinion towards double standards to measure women's success i.e. of being successful at home and office both, 84 percent girls justified it. When the girls were further probed they told that this is not good but society expects it from us. Further they wished that these measures should by applicable for boys also. Only 16 percent of the girls think that these double measures for women success are not justifiable as women have same strength as men.

Table-5

Theme - V: Career & Sharing of Domestic Responsibility:

Shouldering double responsibilities		Ready to shoulder	85
		Not ready	15
Preference between career and child care responsibility.		Child care	74
		Career	26
Acceptance of compulsory motherhood		Compulsory	85
		Not Compulsory	15

When the girls were asked about their readiness of shouldering double responsibilities at home and office, 85 percent girls told that they will shoulder both of the responsibilities without any problem as they have the ideal image/role of women as a multi-tasker and home maker. An urban Hindu girl says,

"I am strong enough to shoulder my responsibilities and I do not need any kind of help from the others in my work."

When the girls were asked about the participation of male members in domestic works, 50 percent girls told that the male members of their family don't help in any kind of domestic works. These girls don't find this unusual or unethical. A girl reveals her thoughts in these words.

"If my mother, sister and I are there then why they (father and brother) should do the domestic works".

20 percent girls told that male members of their family usually do not participate in any kind of domestic works. They do some works only in urgent conditions such as during mother's illness or absence. 30 percent girls told that yes their father and brother help in all kind of domestic work. Most of these girls belong to the families where mother and father both were working.

Thus, most of the girls are of the opinion that domestic works are the primary responsibility of every woman and they are also justifying of not sharing domestic responsibility by men. It shows that girls still lack the critical awareness and are not able to challenge the dominant notion of feminine responsibility. It seems that they are not aware of complexities they have to counter with in fulfilling double standards for success. Perhaps this is due to the reasons that all of these girls going to be the first generation of working women and never countered with real situations. This fact may be substantiated by the response of those 11 percent girls whose mother is working and these girls told that they expect the help from their husbands as well as from other family members in all kind of domestic works as bearing double responsibility would not be easy for them (J. Kleinjans, 2001). On the issue of motherhood 85 percent girls told that, motherhood is the most important role and duty of every women and women can't be complete without motherhood. These girls also think that this duty should be performed by every woman naturally.

15 percent girls told that motherhood is not compulsory for them but they think that society does not pay respect to those women who are not capable of having their own children. Therefore it becomes compulsory in order to get social recognition.

Further when these girls were talked of taking break from their jobs for child – care responsibilities, 74 percent girls told that yes, they will take break from their jobs for proper care of their babies. As motherhood is the most important identity of every women and if someone is not a good mother all her success becomes meaningless. One of the girls expressed her opinion in these words, "A woman's success lies in being a successful mother".

While 26 percent girls told that motherhood and career both are equally important for them and they won't take any kind of break without some urgent reasons, all of these girls are from urban area except two who belong to rural area.

Findings of the study: -

Results revealed that educational aspirations and vocational preferences of the undergraduate girls are largely determined or shaped by their social context. The major findings of the study are as follows

Result shows that educational aspirations and vocational preferences of undergraduate girls are found to be shaped and directed by the expected future social roles (of 'mothers', 'wives' and 'homemaker') and related societal expectations from them.

With reference to objective two it was found that girls perceive the conflict between career and future social roles. The coping strategies are mainly seeking family's especially husband's consent for job, choosing such type of jobs which allows more time for domestic responsibilities, showing non compromising attitude towards motherhood and child care responsibilities.

Working status of mothers is found to be positively associated with the educational aspirations of girls. The vocational preferences of under graduate girls were found to differ on the basis of mother's working status; those girls who belong to families where mothers were working preferred the vocation of their choice and interest and have somehow realistic expectation from themselves. It means that their vocational choices are less influenced by traditional social roles of women.

Conclusion:-

Apart from the schooling factors, the family and social factors direct, promote and inspire the educational aspirations and vocational preferences of the girls. Result of the present study shows that social roles and domestic responsibilities dominate the career choices and educational aspirations of girls. In present study most of the girls preferred the career or vocations which have compatibility with their social roles and domestic responsibilities, hence trying to avoid or minimize the conflict between career aspiration and social roles.

Thus from present study it can be concluded that though girls are having a high level of educational and career aspirations but expectations to perform social roles and domestic responsibilities tend to lower their participation in workforce, and lessen the opportunities of their success.

The future social roles of girls as mothers and wives remains accentuated in the educational years through curriculum and pedagogical practices hence having higher education does not seem to help them to redefine their social roles and domestic responsibilities. Because of these, women are at a disadvantage resulting in lower educational and vocational aspiration and low representation in work force ratio.

Father's occupation, education, caste, residence and schooling of girls do not have significant association with educational aspiration of girls. Working status of mothers is an exception which has effects on educational aspiration and the notion of sharing of domestic responsibility. In spite of having variation on above aspect all girls of the sample studied confirm the predominant notions of women's work and motherhood. It means future social roles to be performed by young girls are the single most dominant factor which shape their educational as well as vocational aspirations.

Implication:

Future Social Roles to be performed by woman in a societal context determine women's educational aspirations and career choices up to great extent. Thus social structure is the root cause of the less participation of woman in workforce. Increased girls' access to higher education does not translate into increased work participation. It means that there is no linear relationship between the increased access to education and increased participation in workforce.

The present study shows clearly that education has failed largely to deconstruct various notions of 'motherhood' and 'domestic responsibility' which still play decisive role in shaping the educational and vocational aspirations. So it is the need of hour to provide an alternative pattern of socialization to our young generation. The system of education in general and educational planners, administrators and teachers in particular, must respond towards these needs. It requires transformation of values relating to notion of 'work', 'women's work', private vs. public spheres etc. The system of education should propagate new values which is sensitive and helpful to achieve the goal of establishment of gender just society. Besides this creation of a highly responsive support structures within and outside of the family, is crucial to increase participation of women in workforce, detrimental for nation's development.

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