

## **Parental Involvement in the Career Decision Making of Adolescent Girls**

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### **Abstract**

The current research is a qualitative outline of the shared narrative between adolescent girls and their parents to see how parental involvement influences their children. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews of 10 college-going adolescents and their parents (privileged= 5; unprivileged= 5) were taken. The study sought to identify and understand the positioning of adolescent girls in career decision-making within the family. Using content analysis, some of the major themes that emerged suggest that in contrast to their counterparts, underprivileged adolescent girls had lower aspirations due to limited opportunities which are further rendered inaccessible due to added restrictions (social, economic, etc.), and that these culminated from beliefs of inferiority. Such beliefs appear to be reinforced by lowered parental expectations of the success of their daughters. Consequently, a finding of particular interest indicated more female students hailing from the privileged section of the society agree with the educational and career-related goals specifically of their mothers. Thus, the obtained results reiterate the importance of parental, specifically the mothers' involvement in their daughter's career-related outcomes and hence bear some crucial implications for the fields of career counselling and public policy.

*Keywords: Adolescent Girls, Parenting, Career Decision Making*

### **Introduction**

Psychologists, Counsellors, and professionals have recognized beneficial parent involvement in the lives of the students. Parental involvement is regarded element of postsecondary education (King, 2009). However, in the present study, the aim is to examine the role of parents of both underprivileged and privileged sections of the

society, towards their girl children's education and career decision making.

It is noticeable that disparities in terms of reach to the educational system to all have always been there in India. After independence, in the democratic set up of governments lot of efforts has been continuously exercised to bring the majority into mainstream education. Research reports that the positive involvement of parents is beneficial for all students, it shows significant gains for minority and low-income students when parents support and consider their efforts (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

### **Theoretical Framework**

During the last two decades, a lot of information has been gathered in the Western literature. Rather than dismissing the Western models completely, it is possible to explore the extent to which these theoretical frameworks can be adapted to the Indian ethos. This review will provide a basis on which one can conduct a more clear and circumscribed study to see an impact of socio economic status.

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

This theory highlights the process that structures resultant expectations and goal setting behaviour (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). It has been suggested that these social cognitive mechanisms can influence environmental forces such as diverse socialization processes and through internalization of these forces (Lent et al., 1994). It is further argued that when limited opportunities are there, career guidance based on the traditional methods of exploration of interest and aptitude only may not be sufficient, though necessary. This perspective focuses on belief structures for a deeper understanding of clients.

### **Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making**

The Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (Mitchell et al.1979) investigates the impact on career decision-making. It was suggested by them that an outcome of the interaction among these factors, result in cognitive development and beliefs that lead to significant career development beliefs. These beliefs irrespective of their accuracy can influence individuals' career decision-making both positively and negatively (Krumboltz, 1979, 1994).

### **Socio-Economic Status and Career Beliefs**

Research in the Indian behavioural science highlights the role of some constructs like belief themes as identified in the Indian literature to have indirect bearing on career development. Research on future orientations have stated that higher SES

high school students' beliefs reflect a definite inclination towards making long term plans and proactive preparations for the future. Whereas lower SES groups tend to have short term view and absence of reflection towards systematic long term planning (Chandra, 1997; Misra & Jain, 1988).

### **Current Study**

The purpose researchers sought through present research is to identify and understand the positioning of adolescent girls in career decision-making within the family, for both underprivileged and privileged groups.

### **Method**

The study uses qualitative approach to understand the career related decisions of the final year undergraduate students and parents in Delhi.

### **Participants**

The study was carried out on 10 college-going adolescent girls (privileged= 5; unprivileged= 5) studying in under-graduate colleges of Delhi and their parents (both mother and father).

### **Measures used**

A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared by the researcher based on the review and random number of questions on career based decisional difficulties. The final draft of questions was anchored around-educational level of parents, professional background of parents, parental involvement, future aspirations, career decision making, and career choices.

### **Procedure**

The sample for the present study was selected by the purposive and snowball technique. Rapport formation was established with the participants and an informal interview was carried out with parents and their daughters also a brief was given regarding the aim of the study at the beginning of the interviews.

### **Results**

As stated above the current research is a qualitative outline of the shared narrative between adolescent girls and their parents on the impact of parental involvement on the career decision-making process of their children. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews of 10 college-going adolescents and their parents (privileged= 5; unprivileged= 5) were taken. Data analysis reveals the following trends in the

participants' responses.

When probed about educational level of parents it was observed that educational level of mothers of under privileged girls ranged from no education to school education. In contrast educational level of mothers of privileged girls ranged from school level to post graduation. Unlike mothers of under privileged section the educational qualification of fathers ranged from 9<sup>th</sup> standard to 12<sup>th</sup> standard. Educational qualification of fathers from privileged section was graduate to post graduate.

Similarly, when questioned about parental profession it was found that mothers of under privileged girls were home makers, farmer or worked in others homes to earn money. Fathers were reported to work as farmers, fruit vendors, drivers and field job in a courier company. Mothers of privileged girls were home makers, teachers and in government service whereas fathers worked as businessmen, executives in banks and other government agencies.

When asked about parental Involvement in the girl child's future plans, it was found that among the under-privileged group parents on the whole reported that they are unable to contribute much due to lack of information and leave everything on their daughter's as quoted by a father "*hamevahatakpahuchanekarastanahimaloom, bus kuch ban jaye*". Their intention is that they want them to become something so that they can lead a better life. They also reported that "*hum sara din kamkartehai, takiinka pet bher sake, baatkabkare*" due to limited resources and time they were unable to spend much time with their daughters.

Even when underprivileged girls were enquired they said their parents are hardly aware of anything, they just say "*padh lo kuch ban jao*". "*Zindgiaasannahihai, sahi se karnapartahai*". Discipline in life and ability to face the difficulties was emphasised by nearly all the parents in both the groups. Parents played a better role among the privileged group. Most of the parents and children reported that they spend good time with children on weekends, if not during the busy schedule during the week. Mothers of the privileged group surpassed fathers in discussing the future of their daughter's carrier as reported by the girls of the group.

In line with the parental responses, female students of the privileged group reported that they always received parental support in form of taking interest, monetary facilitation and guidance. As reported by a girl from privileged group

“firm belief of my parents and agreement in my decisions since school time has helped me a lot”. Whereas their counterparts had to convince their parents for the decisions they have to make and at times had no one around to guide for their future. On the whole it was reported that, they received very little support from their parents due to lack of awareness on the part of parents.

When probed about future aspirations, parents on the whole wished for a happy future of their daughters. Parents under privileged group said, “*Kuchker le Zindgi me to acchahai*” i.e., they hope if they become something it will be good, “*pata nahi kya banegi par to rahi hai*” yet they were not clear what and how.

Few girls of the underprivileged group said, “*mother works from house to house, idon’t want to do that*”, few reported that “*ma ki tarah shadi kerlenge*”. Parents of the privileged group reported that they will support them in whatever they want to become. An interesting aspect was observed in the privileged group that girls whose mothers were working beyond home were influenced by the carrier of their mothers and wanted to pursue the carriers of their own choice. They looked up at their mothers as role models. Whereas girls from under privileged section were not very clear with their future role, due to limited resources as reported by a girl “*mai teacher banna chahti hoo, pata nahi ban paoongi ke nahi bahut paise lagte hai*”.

Furthermore, when enquired about assistance in career and academic decisions, again parental assistance was reported less among underprivileged group in contrast to their counter parts as reported by both parents and their daughters. Underprivileged girls reported that when their parents are not aware how they can help us. Yet a participant said my mother takes me to the place here she works for some guidance at times. Girls from the privileged group reported that their parents discuss about their future course of action and carrier plans from time to time and ask them to enquire about the details and other possibilities from resourceful people, internet and other sources.

Additionally, when asked about realizing career goals- The common theme reported by the girls of both groups was, they focused on the current work in hand. The contrast emerged with respect to social interaction, i.e., privileged girls reported that they interact with their parents, seniors, extended family, and teachers about the same whereas the underprivileged group was not able to realize it. When asked that why they don’t talk to their teachers or seniors some of them reported under confidence and others never felt the need. Self-reflection and concern about the

current performance and the perceived gaps in the acquisition of future goals were also reported by the privileged group in contrast to their counterparts.

Few girls from the privileged group said, *“We have to be in a career for the rest of the life, so we want to be sure what we want to do, “we talk to our teachers and other resourceful people before taking any call”*. An underprivileged girl said, *“I am doing the course of a beautician side by side as I want to become one”*.

Similarly, when probed about their career choices- girls of the underprivileged group were totally self-directed in comparison to the privileged group who reported self- direction along with external guidance from parents, family, seniors and teachers along with self- exploration. When probed further it was reported that lack of awareness among people in the proximity and non-availability of funds lead to limited career choices for the underprivileged girls. Underprivileged girls reported *“ab to shadi karenge”*, the other said *“abhi patanahi kahi job ker lenge”* yet another said, *“I want to be a teacher per don’t know hopayga ha nahi”* one was sure she wanted to be a beautician. The privileged group reported that parental guidance along with personal choices played a major role, as a girl reported *“my mother is a government officer and I want me to appear for civil services and preparing for that”* another one said, *“as a child I wanted to be a doctor but now I am perusing commerce and planning to be a chartered accountant”*.

Finally when asked about career decisions- self direction rather than parental involvement was found to be true for both the groups, *“aajkal ke baccho ko jyada pata hai”*. Despite the similar responses the associated reasons for both the groups were not found to be same. The underprivileged group reported *“kismet mai hoga to ban jayenge”* that is they are banking on fate. Also, lack of awareness on the part of parents was reported as the key feature that they were making the decisions on their own. Whereas girls of the privileged group, were taking their own decisions while seeking information from all possible platforms including parents. Another interesting finding was that girls of the privileged group whose mothers were working beyond home had set their mother’s level of education and choice of career as benchmarks while making their career decisions, *“my mother is a government officer and I want me to appear for civil services and preparing for that”*, *“not very sure what I’ll be doing, but definitely I will be working, my mother is also working”*.

## **Discussion**

Influence of the family plays a major role in career decision making of adolescent girls; hence it is noteworthy for researchers and practitioners to develop effective career interventions for a diverse population. Pertaining to the objectives of the present study, the emerged themes that differentiated between the underprivileged and privileged groups are discussed. Also, an effort was made to explore and examine the effect of parental involvement, their education on the adolescent girls' locus of control, need for achievement, and career planning as part of career decision making.

Parental support-parents who are busy in meeting the means to end were hardly able to contribute time to their children. They hardly spent time at home, even fights within home was reported due to financial constraints. Majority of them said given a sound financial background we wish to provide better facilities to our children. Parents and children of the privileged group reported stable and close-knit relationship with children.

They were ready to support their children in terms of financial assistance, time, and resources. The girls also emphasized that their parents support and encourage achievement and promote autonomy in decision making. The support in the underprivileged group was very limited. The freedom was limited due to constraint resources and dearth of information of parents. Available funds were insufficient was cited as one of the reasons the indecisiveness on the part of an underprivileged girl. Ability to face the hardships and discipline was a common factor that emerged in both groups. Most of the girl participants from both the groups did not feel any pressure to establish identity separate from their mothers and only few girls from the underprivileged group felt it.

The connected identity mitigates the early experiences of coping with the environment independently, which Hoffman (1972) claims is critical in the development of competence and self-confidence. Stein and Bailey (1973) reach similar conclusions. Some concomitant features of the practices in the families of highly achievement-oriented females are moderate punitive, high demands on the child and acceleration attempts by the mother.

### **Parental Education**

Educational qualifications of the parents seemed to be a contributing factor that also

differentiated the two groups in a major way. Lack of knowledge on the part of parents created a hindrance as reported by underprivileged group. Whereas, higher level of parental education facilitated the discussions with respect to career pathways among the privileged group. They further promoted the girls to make enquires and discuss with resourceful people. The same was also reported by one of the participants of the underprivileged group.

### **Locus of Control**

An individual should control one exercises, that is to say whether they are controlled internally or externally. As stated in the result section, most of the girls of the underprivileged group had external locus of control. Many reported that if luck supports them, they can become something. It was also noticed that heir parents are unable to guide and with the limited knowledge of possibilities they are taking decisions as per the situation of family.

Few of them were very clear and had enrolled themselves in the professional training of the career of their choice. Among the privileged group it was observed that girls were sieving the information from all possible resources and taking their decisions on their own. They reported that they are working hard to materialize their goals in the present so that they can opt for the career of their preference.

Need for achievement is a psychological need which is used to explain individuals' inclinations. Murray (1938) claimed that individuals whose need for achievement is high show a desire to do things as rapidly and as well as possible to overcome obstacles, to accomplish high standards, to outshine themselves and surpass others. Upon successfully demonstrating their talent, these individuals are said to experience increased self-regard. Among the privileged group, need for achievement was perceived to be high in contrast to the underprivileged group. Most of the girls of the privileged group reported persistence in the execution of their work, which was not the case for many in the underprivileged group.

### **Career Planning**

Most of the participants of the privileged group reported that they wish to pursue self-chosen occupation, they strongly identified with their parents, perceived their mothers as role models which was not true for most of the girls of the underprivileged group. Waterman (1982) found that this knowledge could be due to ambitious parents who were supportive and encouraging in relation to their



occupation. In the detailed analysis carried out on individual subjects, we found that most of the subjects reported their parents being ambitious for them.

Other research on future orientations have stated that higher SES high school students' beliefs reflect a definite inclination towards making long term plans and proactive preparations for the future. Whereas lower SES groups tend to have short term view and absence of reflection towards systematic long-term planning (Chandra, 1997; Misra & Jain, 1988).

### **Career Decision**

Within the privileged group girls were reported to be interactive with their parents along with the significant others, yet the final call was taken by themselves. Among the underprivileged group the decisions were more externally driven with lower role of parents and significant others and higher contribution of availability and chance or luck factors. Similar results were reported by Misra and Jain (1988). In a study Ojha (1996) also examined pertaining beliefs to self-worth among low SES working children found that their self-esteem and confidence to express or even acknowledge their talents was low. The above findings thus reiterate the outlook that parental support does facilitate the career decision making process and being part of the underprivileged group does influence the career decision making of the adolescent girls.

### **Conclusion**

As discussed and reported by the present and previous researches, there is a paradigm shift in our conceptualization of how parenting influences girls' career decision making process. To that extent the current practice of distinguishing counselling from career counselling needs to be reviewed, as this would help us develop a more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to (or alternatively hinder) the career or vocational choices made by girls, to provide better assistance. Consequently there is also a need to construct theoretical perspectives that better suit the eastern cultures. Furthermore, at a practical level parents and children need to be encouraged to collaborate and actively participate in career decision making process for which intervention programs need to be advocated. Finally, from the research point of view social network analysis and other novel methods of inquiry can be employed.

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