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Education and Career Development of Girls

Abstract

The education of girls today is widely acknowledged as the most effective development investment, a country can make. Education transforms lives of girls, safer, is better nourished, experiences less discrimination, makes her own decisions and has control on her productive and reproductive life. Education helps girls to play a considering role in her community and society at large. Importance of career in case of women is hardly visualized. This paper examines the importance of girl's education and career development. In NEP 2020 Girls' education is part of the section on Equitable and Inclusive Education Learning for All. Provision of quality education to girls is a key strategy in attaining five of the Sustainable Development Goals. The vocational and career studies have largely been focused on male population, ignoring the female population. The paper points out that how gender affects career development of female and numerous challenges in girl's educational and career development. Increasing access to education and career for girls is expected to bridge the gap and bring about gender parity at all levels of representation.

Key Words: *Education of girls, Career development of girls.*

Introduction

Girls need to be educated because it is their Right, it is their basic entitlement. Education is 'sure way of giving them much greater power of enabling them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead. Educated girls will have skills, information and self-confidence that help her to be a better worker, citizen and a parent. Education transforms lives of girls, safer, is better nourished, experiences less discrimination, makes her own decisions and has control on her productive and reproductive life. Education helps girls to play a leadership role in her community and society at large. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (UN, 2010).

It is believed that provision of quality education to girls is a key strategy in attaining five of the Sustainable Development Goals. The education of girls today is widely recognized as the most effective development investment, a country can make. Women are the foundation of life due to their multiple and critical roles in the family. Their education therefore acts as a springboard for sustainable development, hence the best strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In NEP 2020 Girls' education is part of the section on Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All, clubbing girl's education as part of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). This approach did not emphasize the historical, structural barriers and treats girls as mere numbers. Their commendations that policy proposes remain generic, like providing bicycles and organizing cycling and walking groups to provide mere access to school. The transformative role of education in bringing gender equity in the society is totally ignored.

Gottfredson (1981) presented a career choice theory that appears to be relevant in discussing the reasons of males and females for selecting distinct career paths for themselves. Her theory draws on from the developmental aspect that highlights the role of gender role attitudes and one's own gender self-image in selecting a particular career. She put forth the notion that while growing up, children learn through interaction with the societal perceptions that which occupations and career paths are appropriate for males and females. This orientation to sex roles in relation to appropriate lines of work develops between the ages of 6 and 8. As children grow older and gain exposure of the social values as well as their own unique self, they narrow down their career options to those that match their own gender roles and eliminate those career choices that stand in contrast to their gender roles.

In our society both the boys and girls consider occupations in a sex-stereotyped fashion. The development of these career biases is the result

of role learning process which starts in early childhood. According to cognitive development theorists, after the 'sex-assignment' which occurs after birth, the next major event of sex-typed development occurs at the age of two or three years when the child develops self-categorization as girl or as boy. Not only that children look to other people to try to understand what it means to have the label "girl" or "boy" they strive for competence in being what they think they are supposed to be because of the label. Hence the "sexual-identity" becomes "sex-role identity". The result is that boys at all ages show strong preference for the male role and identify with work. So a boy develops his identity through work. His educational and career achievements are expected and pleased. For the girls it is different. At the earlier stages (3-6 years) they may show preference for masculine role in contrast with the feminine role as the children find masculine role more rewarding and stronger, but later on they adapt to feminine role for which they are rewarded. Thus, a girl's self-concept is not what she is or she 'should' be, but what the society wants her to be.

Career Development of Women

Importance of career in case of women is hardly visualized. A working mother is not visualized as working for satisfaction, she is perceived as earning for buying wellbeing for the family. Similarly, a single working woman is not appreciated as the society wants women to be married at the "right" age and have children too at the right age. This also makes girls more persuaded towards marriage than towards work-role orientation. Today, some of the women have started exploring beyond the traditional home making role. The learning process in role perception in woman is undergoing change and influencing the role expectations for women, which are becoming less definite. Today, women are in conflict with traditional thinking and learning, and with their new career development interests, aspirations and explorations.

The concept of gender role attitudes that have remained largely inflexible and conservative for people in this part of the world, gain special importance in regards to women's careers. It is observed that as women increase their activity in the occupational circles and aspire for careers, their gender role attitudes become more liberal and they shun the view of women as a stay-at-home housewife and that of a man as a sole breadwinner (Aziz & Kamal, 2009; Colaner & Warner, 2005; Ming, Ahmad, & Ismail, 2007).

The contemporary gender role ideology holds that those times are far-gone when men were considered to hold the public sphere as the ultimate breadwinners for the family and women occupied the private sphere as the prime caregiver of the family. Khalid (2011) notes that factors such as urbanization, modernization, increased emphasis on higher education, migration, technological advances, media and subsequent exposure to other cultures are responsible for this dramatic shift in gender roles.

Career development is the process of choosing a career, improving skills, and advancing along a career path. It's a lifelong process of learning and decision-making that brings closer to ideal job, skillset, and lifestyle. The career development is a part of all round individual development. It has always been studied with reference to men, ignoring its concern for women, even in the developed countries where participation of women in labor force is significant. One reason may be that it is difficult to study career development in women. The traditional theories of career development have not taken into consideration the important elements of women's career development such as marriage, family and spouses' attitudes towards wives work, etc. The vocational and career studies have also largely been focused on male population, ignoring the female population, or just assuming that they "fit" the male behavior patterns. With women opting for higher education and having high career ambitions, perhaps more research is required to study what they are, what do they want from life as individuals, and as women

The gender affects career development of female in numerous ways as discussed below;

Role of Women as Home Maker

Traditionally, women have been home makers and not the bread winners. Even today most women are home makers and this role is exclusive. In career planning women are supposed to think of marriage and home making along with career, which is not demanded of men. The home maker role affect women's interest in joining the labor force, performance at work, and even stay in it. Thus career does not occupy a major position in the lives of women as it is in case of men. Many working women choose a job that will allow them the flexibility to manage their household duties and do not require them to put their career above family (Iverson, 2000). That is why the career development processes in both the sexes differ. There may not be significant sex differences in abilities and interests but differences are there in career aspirations and goals.

Gender Biases at Home

The feeling of difference between the boy and the girl is introduced of all in the family. Here, the Gender-bias begins from conception of a child. The uninvited and unwanted girl child who is devoid of proper food, love and care in comparison to the male child; whose education is of secondary importance and who is not allowed to play or participate in any activity except the household chores and sibling care, grows into a female adolescent with expected feminine behavior and marriage goals. Hence her physical, personal, social and emotional development is restricted. Girls in India bringing up do not prepare for higher education or vocational training or employment.

Place of Work

All the employers don't accept women as workers like men. They even hesitate to employ women. Women seeking employment is viewed as a future wife and mother who will have primary responsibility towards her home and family and not work. In comparison to a man she is less preferred in offering employment and is paid less. She is also not given required leave for home making and child rearing by employers other than public sector. Above all she has to suffer from sexual harassment at work.

Job Participation

Our constitution grants the right of equal opportunity with regard to employment to men and women without distinction. However, a large number of women are still without work. According to census data, the work participation of women has improved during the past decades. The type of work performed by women workers is one of the most important aspects to be considered from the point of view of their career development. Women are behind men in work participation. Women are generally engaged in unskilled work as agricultural or other labor. Their percentage is, however, more than men. Women are concentrated in community, social and personal services, which is the direct extension of their feminine role at home. In comparison to the picture of type of work performed by women, presented above, there is information on minority women which is valuable such as Civil Services, Administrative Services, Police Service and Foreign Service.

Educational and Occupational Aspirations

Women's attitudes towards career and their career aspirations are likely to be shaped in the early years of development. It is presumed that higher education, intelligence and better achievements stimulate the individual occupationally. However studies have shown that the women's attitudes towards career could not be linked with their intelligence, academic achievement and history of achievements in other school activities as is the case with the men. Men during their school/college days verbalize about their vocational goals and are found to be concerned with the extrinsic rewards of the work. They are also concerned about the future and prestige in careers while girls pursuing school education or even higher education hardly speak out their concerns for careers. At the most they talk about non-career type work which hardly speaks about their interests or aspirations. Even the achievers don't seem to be planning for higher level occupations. The situation is still worse for the girls from lower socio-economic background and other disadvantaged sections of the society. For these girls, the chances of pursuing higher education or career goals are much reduced even if they are highly intelligent or can excel educationally. In brief, it is the higher need for self-approval which is related to social approval in the role of wife and mother which determines women's concern for marriage and family and not the career.

Problems in Making Vocational Choice

There are several contingency factors and difficulties which women face in making career choices. The girls receive little orientation towards career choice while the question of career choice is emphasized for boys. Parents, teachers and significant others are more likely to emphasize salary and status in boy's career choice while for girl's emphasis on career is even missing. The options open to girls are considerably more restricted than for men and they are forced to consider their role as a home maker before making career selection. The girls have few opportunities for vocational training and higher education. Very often girls wait for marriage before choosing or joining any job as marriage and husband's home takes priority over-career. Although, approximately all types of courses and occupations are open to women, they frequently lack awareness of these opportunities and the financial support for their education and training. Above all, girls also lack information about their abilities and interests, and awareness of skills in them which are the motivating factors to make career decisions. Most of the girls, still believe that girls are weak in science and mathematics and they are better in social sciences and home science subject. The girls also lack positive role models to identify with and develop their career potential.

Environmental Factors

The career development in girl is also largely determined by parental attitudes, economic conditions at home and the cultural opportunities. It has been found in various research studies that girls from the better socio-economic backgrounds and especially having educated parents (at least father) relatively opt for higher education. Working mothers who derive satisfaction from their work and home are also known to be acting as source of inspiration for their daughters. The girls who are exposed to strong role models at home or in their near environment have positive attitude towards their career.

Societal Factors

Many societies are strongly sex-biased. The expectations of family, neighbors and other social groups form a girl of 'traditional women' who has no sense of Men. She is subservient, committed home maker, obedient wife and daughter-in-law, and a sacrificing mother. She is submissive, soft spoken, reserved, shy, docile, and tolerant and does not resist husband and his family for atrocities committed by them. If otherwise, then she is labeled as home breaker and uncultured. All these biases severely hinder the process of career development of girls as the girls prefer to be obedient home makers rather than decision makers and career oriented. Also, different kinds of cultural norms, values, stereotypes deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions that promote male privilege constitute the most fundamental barrier to women's career development (Tlaiss, 2014).

Poor Self-Image or Self-Esteem

As mentioned earlier, the girls are treated in many societies with specific behaviors, attitudes and expectations. The discriminatory treatment which a girl receives prior to her birth through her childhood and till her death is the best indicator of formation of self-image in case of girls. Often, a girl is not preferred even prior to her birth, treated as unwanted after birth; neglected in nutrition, health and education; treated as helping hand at home and even outside from her childhood; suppressed, neglected throughout her life and treated as sex-object, she develops a poor image of herself. Life discrimination against girls is prevalent across all cultures, castes and socio-economic strata. Development of poor self-image or low self-esteem is a strong psychological barrier in individual development. Family reasons as well as organizational demands become detrimental to both working women and their organizations that fail to tap the full potential of experienced women, thereby becoming less productive themselves (Sekarn, 2000).

Working vs. Non-Working Women

With respect to career development, women can be broadly classified into working women and non-working women, the latter being either totally devoted to marriage and family life, or holding some non-career type jobs as and when required. The working women could be further divided into two categories: one who plans to work but in feminine occupations and the other who aspire to enter traditionally masculine occupations. The first type of working women work outside their homes but in the female dominated occupations or in accepted work settings. They seem to have favorable attitude towards home and family and integrated home, family and career. This group is generally successful and characterized by feminine personality traits.

Conclusion

A wealth of research over the last few decades has established that the benefits of female education are substantial. Psacharopoulos (1985) reviewed research from 61 countries and concluded that the rate of return to the educational investment on women exceeds that of men, particularly in developing countries. According to the study, the average return for all levels of education combined was 15 percent for women as compared to 11 percent for men. Heinz et al, (1982) note that the social returns to female education are high and exceed the returns to male education: female education improves children's health, reduces the number of unwanted births and causes women to want smaller families. The potential for more 16 productive labors, better health and slower population growth all argue for more investment in female education. Without education, it is difficult for women to exercise their other rights and meet their aspirations: adequate livelihoods, negotiating power in marriage, participation in

political decision-making, and a fair chance in the modern economy for their children. According to the Population Council (2009), in addition to helping girls and women fulfill their aspirations as individuals, educating girls also has well documented benefits for the broader society. These include increased economic productivity, improvements in health, delayed age at marriage, lower fertility, increased political participation, and generally more effective investments in the next generation. While there are many other possible interventions to achieve these social goods, girls 'education is the only one which impacts all of them simultaneously.

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