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Occupational Aspirations of Women in the Modern Era

Dr Indira Barman¹, Aabid Ali Rather²

Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology, I E H E, Bhopal, M.P, India¹

Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, B.U. Bhopal, M.P, India²

ABSTRACT: The study of the women career perceptions and settlements has always been an alarming social argument particularly since the world experienced the industrial establishments. Ensuing to which, women have progressively become more involved in the employment sector after the 2nd world war. The remunerated service of women has moved from chiefly conventional female-oriented occupations to extra non-traditional and formerly male-oriented vocations. The participation of women in the workforce has attracted the world to study and explore more and more about them for their career aspirations. Occupational aspirations are inclined by the factors such as sexual category, socioeconomic status, race, parent livelihood or occupations, education level, and parental prospect or expectations. Notwithstanding the novel efforts to increase the participation of women in sophisticated educational training and highly esteemed specialized fields, both the genders are still rigorous in varied professions and educational courses, moreover women are still underrepresented in many high-status professional fields predominantly those linked with physical science, business, engineering and applied mathematics. Several factors, varying from absolute inequity to the procedures associated with gender role and socialization, add to the gendered outlines of instructive and occupational preferences. This study presents an overview of women's contribution in the workforce and the development of their occupational advancement and aspirations in the present age.

KEYWORDS: occupation, women, modern, aspirations, career

I. INTRODUCTION

History has experienced at various times, working women were portrayed as depraved and unfeminine matters of pity. Some of the detractors accused working women of being careless mothers. Commonly, women employees were not taken seriously by their bosses, colleagues, or society (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). But the conditions of women career aspirations are gradually changing towards a good positivity now. Girls and women are demonstrating ever-increasing educational success relative to boys (DiPrete and Buchman 2013; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997), and are breaking in increasing numbers into higher occupational echelons and the typical preserves of privileged men. Recent weeks saw the appointment of Jacinda Arden as prime minister of New Zealand, who becomes at the same time the world's youngest head of government. Does this indicate a point of transition where current generations of young women will begin to equalize their status with their male contemporaries and gradually replace the older male order, at least in the Western world? The answer is not clear. In the UK case as in many other Western contexts, women's participation in employment has shown dramatic increases over the last few decades; and there is clear evidence on the educational success of women across all levels. There is also a consensus that returns to education in high-skilled labour markets remain substantial, despite negative impacts of the 2008 Recession on entry-level graduates (Hills et al. 2013). At the same time, there is considerable evidence of persistent gendered labour market inequalities in part fostered by occupational segregation, as well as by inequalities within broader occupational groupings.

An aspiration is a strong need for high achievement and it is influenced by family background, and the ways in which family interacts, communicates, and behaves. It arises due to social context of class, caste and gender. Students are affected by gender role socialization, parental expectations, and teacher attitudes. Adolescent girls are the most economically vulnerable groups. Adolescent girls usually lack access to financial capital and have more specific opportunities to gain the education, knowledge, and often lack social support, and community social norms create restrictions to their economic advancement. Having a career posed challenges for women due to their family responsibilities (Valdez & Gutek, 1987). Women were expected to perform duties as wife and mother, in addition to fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Some women experienced feelings of guilt or selfishness if they put their career interests first (Heins, Hendricks, & Martindale, 1982). Because women's work and family demands were simultaneous, these demands had a significant impact on women's careers (Valdez, & Gutek). As stated by Heins et al.,



“Achieving professional status may be more difficult for women than for men” (p. 455). Despite their increasing numbers, women have tended to enter the workforce in lower-status, lower-paying jobs, and remain clustered in a limited number of conventional careers (Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, 2005). Low-paying traditionally female careers, including administrative support, sales, service, nursing, teaching, social work, and clerical jobs, reflected society’s persistent attitudes regarding stereotypical occupational roles for males and females (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Sellers, Satcher, & Comas, 1999; Stephenson & Burge, 1997; Watson, Quatman, & Elder, 2002). Because women’s career choices were restricted, their earnings lagged behind their male counterparts with comparable education and experience (Farmer, 1985; Stephenson & Burge). Income earnings have been found to increase with educational level and years employed (Day & Newburger, 2002). However, women earned roughly two-thirds the incomes of their male counterparts. This discrepancy in income was partially attributed to the disparity between traditionally male and traditionally female occupations. For example, women are less likely to be employed in science or engineering jobs, as these are considered traditionally male occupations. However, females who are employed in these jobs earn roughly 20% less than their male counterparts (Graham & Smith, 2005). Factors narrowing women into traditional role occupations included social and familial influences, a lack of awareness regarding nontraditional options, an unwelcoming environment in many male-dominated fields, discrimination within career fields, high turnover rates for women, and less seniority in given occupations. These factors also contributed to earning gaps between men and women (Stephenson & Burge).

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The modern era is likely to be a good sponsor of developing the expression of feminism in terms of equalizing the political, economic and social rights of the women where their occupational aspirations get more and more opportunities for the best possible exposures and outcomes. The career aspiration of women at small age has a sure effect on the preferences of occupation at their later years. Their career decisions are generally made and to be achieved and directed by the parents who also acts as the most imperative source and motivations for the achievement of occupational goals for the girl folk. However, their present level of occupational aspirations depends upon their future career decisions. The proper decision making depends upon the level of occupational maturity and occupational aspirations of the women in the present age. The present research is an attempt to study how modern occupational aspirations of women have gained new outlooks and changed the perceptions of the societies regarding them. The research shows what correlation exists between the educated women and their aspirations of participating in the workforce or employment sectors.

III. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS

The earliest cases of women working outside the home date back before the Industrial Revolution. Women commonly assisted their husbands with maintaining the family or acted as a business partner, although they often received no pay. If they were paid for their work, women earned less than their male counterparts (Nieva & Gutek). Eventually, women began extending their work outside the home in the form of domestic and other jobs such as clerical workers. The integration of women into the workforce was a slow process and was often viewed unfavorably by society (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Although some women were beginning to experience life in the workforce, they were frequently regarded as temporary employees. Their jobs were expected to take second place next to marriage and childbearing (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Tinklin et al., 2005). By the middle of the nineteenth century, more women became involved in teaching, nursing, and clerical work. These jobs were perceived as feminine, and society deemed them appropriate for single women (Nieva & Gutek). In 1890, less than 3% of married women worked outside the home. By 1900, 25% of all women were participants in the labor force. This percentage gradually rose over the next decade, and by 1910, nearly 7.5 million women worked outside the home. These numbers remained fairly stable until the beginning of World War II (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). The onset of World War II sparked a sharp increase in labor participation among women. In addition to the typically female-oriented jobs, women were hired for skilled jobs and union jobs, positions which were previously unavailable to them (Nieva & Gutek). Following World War II, women continued to enter the workforce in growing numbers, regardless of their marital or parental status (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al., 2002). Labor market participation among women increased from 30% in 1950 to more than 50% in 1980 (Astin, 1984; Farmer, 1985; Stephenson & Burge, 1997). By the late 1970s, nearly 50% of all married women and 40% of all women over age 16 were working (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). However, they still viewed employment as secondary to their domestic responsibilities (Tinklin et al., 2005). In 1990 approximately 57 million adult women ages 16 and older were in the paid workforce (Rainey & Borders; Watson et al.). Despite a brief stall in the early 1990s, women’s workforce participation rates were on the rise once again by 1994 (Hayghe, 1997).

By the mid-1990s, approximately 46% of the American workforce was female (Stephenson & Burge, 1997). Such large numbers of working women defied the traditional stereotype of the stay-at-home housewife and breadwinning husband, which characterized only 7% of American families in the mid-1990s (Jalilvand, 2000; Stephenson & Burge; Tinklin et al., 2005). An estimated 48% or approximately 72 million of the labor force will be comprised of women by the year 2005 (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Stephenson & Burge; Tinklin et al.; Watson et al., 2002). In fact, Fullerton, Jr. (1999) projected a continued rise in women's workforce participation through the year 2015. Nieva and Gutek (1981) credited the increase in women's employment rates to more favorable attitudes toward working women, longer life expectancies, changing marriage patterns, and improvements in and acceptance of birth control methods. Today, there is no longer much question whether women will participate in the workforce. In addition, working women are no longer considered deviations from the norm, but rather they are the norm (Rainey & Borders).

IV. IMPEDIMENT IN THE PARTICIPATIONS

By the opinion of Brown & Barbosa; Stephenson & Burge, 1997). Swanson and Woitke acknowledged barriers could be overcome, although successfully conquering a barrier depended on the type of specific barrier and the individual's personality. Wanson and Woitke (1997) indicated barriers partially explain the gap between the abilities of women and their achievements, or these barriers could explain the inhibitions of women's career aspirations. Barriers are significant factors in the career development process, and the onset of such barriers frequently begins when women are children. Barriers are reinforced throughout women's schooling, college, and work, and they become more complex over time. Women often perceive barriers and role conflicts as obstacles in their career development process (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Brown & Barbosa, 2001; Luzzo & McWhirter, 2001; Stitt-Gohdes, 1997). Common barriers faced by women included sex-typing of occupations and sex discrimination, both of which women felt they were unable to control (Stitt-Gohdes). Inadequate occupational skills, poor academic achievement, and lack of transportation were also found to be major reasons women failed to succeed in the workforce. Childcare was another issue women saw as a potential barrier to career success (Brown & Barbosa; Stitt-Gohdes). Despite these perceptions by women, findings from recent studies revealed that females showed an interest in a greater number of careers and exhibited more gender-role flexibility in their career aspirations than males (Francis, 2002; Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000).

V. WOMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Women have progressively become more involved in the employment sector after the 2nd world war. The remunerated service of women has moved from chiefly conventional female-oriented occupations to extra non-traditional and formerly male-oriented vocations. We have seen major shifts in the participation of women in the work force over the last 30 years. By and large, the evidence indicates that women benefit from such participation both financially and psychologically. However, women have tended to enter female-dominated occupations and professions. Why? The work summarized in this paper suggests that given the socialization history of most women, and given the integrated lives many women want to lead, this choice is both reasonable and predictable. In addition, most women know that women in male-dominated occupations often face discrimination and harassment on their jobs, as well as more subtle forms of disapproval from their colleagues, friends, and relatives. The anticipation of these kinds of negative experiences can also deter women from selecting male-dominated and excessively time-consuming occupations. More equitable treatment and more family-sensitive social policies and supports would likely facilitate women's willingness to consider a wide variety of occupational choices.

Gutek and Larwood (1987) defined a career as "a series of related jobs within an organization or different jobs within various companies" (p. 9). Career development refers to the many jobs a person holds, and it should represent progress, whether through increased recognition or salary, or the respect one receives from colleagues. The more a person's career progresses in this manner, the more he or she will be judged successful (Gutek & Larwood). Career aspirations represent an individual's orientation toward a desired career goal under ideal conditions. More simply stated, career aspirations "provide information about an individual's interests and hopes, unfettered by reality" (Hellenga, Aber, & Rhodes, 2002, p. 200; Rojewski, 1996). Adolescence would be an ideal time to study the career development of young women, as many changes occur during this time that strongly influences the formation of career aspirations and preferences (Watson et al., 2002).



VI. INFLUENCING FACTORS OF WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Researchers examine such factors to determine their role in career behavior and how they affect individuals' career decisions (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). In recent years there has been an increased awareness of the impact of socioeconomic status, race, gender, and on the career decision-making process and career development (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997). Gender influences. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) stated, "Gender is clearly one of the most powerful of all influences on vocational behavior" (p. 63). In the past, fewer occupational choices were available to women due to factors such as sexism, discrimination, and limited education. Studies on gender and career aspirations in the 1970s revealed girls had more restricted career aspirations than boys, and girls often opted for a narrow range of occupational categories (Looft, 1971a; Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Additionally, Heins et al. (1982) reported that families often encouraged the educational and career aspirations of male children but not those of female children. Thus, not only did sex differences in career aspirations develop early in childhood, girls appeared to learn quickly that certain adult statuses were available to them, reflecting societal sex-role expectations (Looft, 1971b). Recent studies refuted earlier findings and asserted that females demonstrated an interest in a greater number of careers and displayed more gender-role flexibility in their career aspirations than males (Francis, 2002; Mendez & Crawford, 2002). Jones and Womble (1997) revealed that female secondary students had more positive attitudes toward work than males. However, Watson, et. al. (2002) noted adolescent females were more conflicted between their future careers and commitment to marriage and family. Occupational status and educational level of parents. The occupational status and educational level of females' parents have had a significant impact on their career aspirations and career choice (Burlin, 1976). Wahl and Blackhurst (2000) indicated children's career aspirations were more closely related to parental occupations. Among adolescent females in particular, career choice was strongly influenced by the mother's occupation (Burlin; Wahl & Blackhurst). The mother's occupation was credited with impacting children's aspirations because children often attended work with their mothers and were more likely to know what their mothers did for a living. Likewise, Burlin (1976) deduced career choices and aspirations in females were significantly predisposed by the mother's type of work. In an early study of college women, Burlin determined daughters of working mothers chose a life pattern comparable to their mothers more often than life patterns comparable to their fathers. Burlin's findings reiterated the importance of mothers as role models in the development of their daughters' career goals and aspirations. Similarly, Signer's and Jones and Womble (1998) found that students whose mothers completed either a two-year or four-year postsecondary degree had higher perceptions of work and career-related issues. Women's education gains in the workplace. Research supports the idea that the more education a woman receives, the more likely she is to engage in paid employment (Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Schiffler, 1975). Increases in post-secondary enrollment among females have been the result of changing roles and expectations of women in society and a growing interest among women in professional careers (Bronstein, Black, Pfenning, & White, 1987; Tinklin et al., 2005). Over a 31-year period from 1970 until 2001, women have steadily become the majority of the undergraduate population in degree-granting institutions in the U.S. (Peter & Horn, 2005). Even though women's enrollment in postsecondary education is expected to comprise 57% of the undergraduate population by 2013, their incomes continued to be lower than their male counterparts. This is especially true for men employed in fields that are traditionally less female-oriented, including mathematics, science, and engineering (Peter & Horn, 2005). While men earned the majority of professional and doctorate degrees, women earned more degrees than men overall (Troumpoucis, 2004). A woman's educational level has also been a strong predictor of the number of years she will be employed. With more women choosing majors that require continuous employment, women are extending their participation in the workforce (Nieva & Gutek). In addition, women themselves have tended to associate a postsecondary degree with success and increased salary, thus perceiving a greater payoff to pursuing postsecondary education than men (Troumpoucis, 2004). Race. Race refers to a subgroup of individuals who share a distinct combination of physical attributes and genetic origin (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). Results of studies examining the effects of race on career aspirations have been mixed (Mau & Bikos, 2000). Hellenga et al. (2002) noted that previous research typically found African Americans to possess lower career aspirations than their European American counterparts. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) supported this notion, stating African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans exhibit considerably lower educational and occupational outcomes than Caucasians. Further studies asserted people from minority groups, especially those from lower class backgrounds, had more limiting factors influencing their career aspirations compared with Caucasian persons from lower class backgrounds (Farmer, 1985; Gottfredson, 1981). In contrast, a study conducted by Arbona and Novy (1991) determined there were no ethnic differences with regard to their career aspirations. Socioeconomic status. Although few studies exist regarding effects of socioeconomic status on career choice, researchers agree socioeconomic status influences career choice (Gottfredson, 1981; Sellers et al., 1999). Mau and Bikos (2000) cited previous findings showing a positive association between a family's socioeconomic status and aspirations. Youth from higher socioeconomic statuses were more likely to be knowledgeable of and choose professional occupations (Sellers et al.).



VII. PROPOSITIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL LEARNING

A set of issues accompanied the renewed interest in gender equity, including attitudes and stereotypes, sexual harassment, equity and males, learning and communication styles, and accountability. The most important issue, however, appeared to be that of how gender equity could be achieved (Robin, Flansburg, & Eisenberg, 1992). Women's occupational choices require a broad view of the options and roles available to women. Occupational choices are not made in isolation of other life choices, such as the decision to marry and have children, and the decision to balance one's occupational behaviors with one's other life roles. It is clear that many high-achieving girls and women experience a conflict between traditionally feminine values and goals and the demands of traditionally male-typed highly competitive achievement activities. But many women resolve these conflicts in ways that appear to benefit both their physical health and the quality of their lives. The cost they pay for this resolution is often seen in their wages, their rate of advancement, and the stress they experience because society does not provide the types of services, supports, and employment policies that recognize and support the importance of their dual roles and that reward their accomplishments and competencies appropriately (Crosby, 1987, 1991; Eccles, 1987; Epstein, 1988).

Despite the fact that women represented almost half of the workforce in the 1990s, they were still clustered in 20 of 400 occupational categories and 70% of female secondary CTE students were preparing for low-wage jobs (LeBrenton & Loevy, 1992). These statistics, coupled with the findings of research on self-esteem and identity formation, mandates included in the Carl D. Perkins Act, motivated renewed emphasis on the creation of an environment in which individuals consider career options and make career choices based on their abilities rather than on stereotypes and expectations (Nash, 1991). CTE has been traditionally characterized as gender biased in favor of males (Wonacott, 2002). Unfortunately, gender bias has still been evident in CTE in areas such as program enrollment, level and quality of classes available in traditionally male and traditionally female CTE programs, and wages earned by female versus male graduates. Such disparities have limited females' access to the benefits of CTE (Wonacott). An annotated bibliography of 15 print resources for vocational educators interested in accelerating gender equity in education and work was published regarding issues related to gender equity in career and technical education (Kerka, 1993).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The women have proved more and more involvement in the employment sector after the 2nd world war. The remunerated service of women has moved from chiefly conventional female-oriented occupations to extra non-traditional and formerly male-oriented vocations. Women's career aspirations have evolved steadily during the twentieth century, resulting in their increased workforce participation rates. A multitude of factors have influenced and inhibited women's career aspirations and career development over the years (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). The types of careers women choose and factors influencing their choices are relevant issues to examine, especially since most research reveals women continue to work in lower-paying, traditionally female-oriented jobs (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al., 2002). Continued research on the lifelong processes of women's career aspirations and career development is necessary to explain their unique occupational paths (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Schoon, 2001). Of equal importance is the need to study female adolescents in the early stages of career development, as aspirations are often crystallized during this time (Hellenga et al., 2002; Rainey & Borders). It is necessary to continue studying the career interests and career development processes of women, as they will remain an important sector of America's workforce (Gutek & Larwood, 1987). Gaining insight into career aspirations and career interests may also be useful in expanding career options available to young women (Rainey & Borders).

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