Father's Intercession in Career Choice Decisions of their daughters: A Narrative Enquiry

Abstract: 1811

For Subtheme:

3) Work-force Diversity & Inclusion and Cross cultural sensitization
    e) Race, language, religion, ethnicity

By

Himanshi Tiwari

Faculty: OB, HR Area

BIMTECH

Plot No. 5

Knowledge Park II

Greater Noida

UP 201310

Email: himanshi.tiwari@bimtech.ac.in

Mobile No: 9540282900

Father's Intercession in Career Choice Decisions of their daughters: A Narrative Enquiry

For Subtheme:

3) Work-force Diversity & Inclusion and Cross cultural sensitization
      e) Race, language, religion, ethnicity

Abstract:

Choosing a career is a crucial and significant milestone in one's life. It becomes even more critical when a woman makes her career choice decisions. India has rich history of women in positions of power but today it holds 87th rank in the Gender Equality Index. According to a study by McKinsey Global Institute, India can increase its 2025 gross domestic product (GDP), estimated at $4.83 trillion, by between 16% and 60% simply by enabling women to participate in the economy on par with men. Apart from an economic perspective, women have a strong case to be free to choose the career of their choice and contribute in the economic and social well- being of not only their own but of the society on broader grounds, to the fullest of their capabilities. This paper makes an attempt to highlight the influence that father or any other male figure in the family (in the absence of father) has on the career choice decisions of their daughters.

The paper follows an autobiographical approach to career counselling and aims to highlight the life-story of 25 girls who are pursuing their management graduation in national capital region of India. Narrative Enquiry method is used to understand how respondents/participants/interviewees construct meaning from within their system of belief, their attitude, values and ideas that shape sense of self identity.

Key words: Career Choice, Career Decisions, Gender & Career.

Introduction

The current status of women in India and in the Global arena asks for a transactional as well as transformational intervention at socio- cultural, political and economic levels. Researchers noted that understanding differences among women is critical for crafting policy and making public investments that meet their needs and expand their choices and opportunities.

India has a history of patriarchal social setting, where fathers and/or grandfathers are the decision makers and head of the family. With the change in time Indian males are also

following a heterosexual approach, contributing towards the gender equality not only at home but also on a broader level at their workplace leading towards a social, cultural and economic change in the country. Education and especially professional education is considered to be the gate pass for entering the workforce and contributing directly in the workforce of a country. Management education is a training field that prepares budding managers for future corporate world.

Research has indicated that balancing work and family is on the minds of college-age women long before they are married. At the same time, women continue to choose occupations that do not fully utilize their abilities and often fail to follow their original career goals. Sometimes a girl wants to study a particular stream but due to the prevalent genders role bias, the influences in her process of career choice act as barriers and she lands up choosing a more female oriented/dominated field like teaching, nursing or similar career choices. These might not be her true aspirations and might result in to choosing a field that is not suitable for utilizing her real potential optimally.

Interestingly, Management education in India has a feature of selecting specialization later, in the course of study. These specializations could be Finance, Marketing, Human Resource Management, Operations etc. Indian business schools also arrange to provide campus selection facilities to the students pursuing professional/management courses. It has been noticed by the schools and also highlighted by the recruiters that a tendency of being very inflexible in terms of location and job profile preference is common among female candidates appearing for campus selection process. This becomes a reason for giving preference to their male counterparts for the same locations and job portfolios, and female candidates loose a good job opportunity. This could also be deeply rooted in the phenomenon of gender role differentiation which finds a male candidate more suitable for plant job at an uncomfortable and remote location.

Defining Career:

Labour', 'Employment', 'Job', 'Vocation', 'Career' and 'Occupation' are some of the words, used interchangeably for 'work'. The definition given by Cambridge Dictionary defines 'Career' as *'the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially those related to that person.'* A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position (British Online Dictionary 2014). Oxford Dictionary defines 'Career' as *'the job or series of jobs that you do during your working life. So it is an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress.'* Career has both subjective and objective aspects. The subjective aspect refers to individuals' career satisfaction and job satisfaction, while the objective aspect is linked to promotions, salary and hierarchical position. Prior research suggests that women prefer the subjective aspect of career to objective aspect and tend to set rather low goals in the career context. Further, it has been suggested that to succeed in careers, women should prove their credentials by seeking and having more educational experiences than men (Ng et al., 2005; Lämsä and Hiillos 2008). Besides this, at the early career phase, a dynamic process plays significant role in the way through which every individual tries to learn and adjust in the new and demanding organizational role that is aligned with his/her individual role (Chao, G.T 2012). A well planned and well-designed intervention is quite necessary to help students/ early career people (both men & women) understand their careers effectively and to act as the mentor for other workers also in developing their own career (Canannan, G. A. 2006). The Greenhaus et al. model (2000) focuses on the individual as the one who needs to make a decision, a need that leads to a career search and into a process of setting career goals, developing strategies and tactics to

fulfil them, making progress, and all these form a process that requires career evaluation. In 2012, Greenhaus and Powell introduced the term "family-related work decision" to refer to career decisions which are strongly guided by family reasons, such as deciding to work part-time for the care of children or declining a promotion because it may complicate work-family management (Greenhaus & Powell, 2012). Two years later, Greenhaus and Kossek (2014) argued for the use of a slightly broader work–home perspective on careers, which recognizes the interdependencies between individuals' careers and their broader home context, including both people's family and their other non-work roles and settings, such as their friendships, community and leisure roles (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Research has indicated that balancing work and family is on the minds of college-age women long before they are married. At the same time, women continue to choose occupations that do not fully utilize their abilities and often fail to follow their original career goals (Abele, A.E., & Spruk, D. 2009)

The concept of career anchors also offers valuable insights in understanding diversity in career preferences and contemporary career patters (Rodriguez & Guest 2010). Schein (1978) regards career anchors as a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic personal values and an evolved sense of motives and needs (as they pertain to the career) that influence a person's career related decisions. These self-perceived talents and abilities, values, motives and needs represent the person's career identity or self-concept (Schein 1978, 1990, 1996). A person's dominant career anchor reflects a major career related concern that forms an integral part of his/her basic self-concept. This concern becomes an overriding issue at every stage of the person's career and serves as an internal driving force when making career decisions (Schein 1990).

Purpose of Research

The paper makes an effort to identify intercession of father or other dominant male figure in the family (most probably grandfather) that affected the formative process of self-concept development, thereby playing a crucial role in making career choice decisions by women who are pursuing that post graduate diploma in business management. Precisely it intends to explore the role of fathers in the selection of educational streams which both directly and indirectly affects the career choice of their daughters. It so explores how do women construct work identities and draw on particular culturally specific career anchors when making career decisions.

Methodology

A reflexive researcher does not simply report facts or 'truths' but actively constructs interpretations of his or her experiences in the field, and then questions how those interpretations came about (Hertz 1995). The paper tries to understand the process of career choice decisions of women management graduates and bring forward the role of father or any other dominant male in the family like grandfather (in the absence of father or otherwise) in career choice decisions of their daughters. The purpose of the study was such that convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling method was suitable. Unstructured Interviews were used as the main method of data collection as a mechanism through which the meanings of behaviours, events and choices in people's life can be conveyed in a natural

flow of a conversation (Patton 2002). For this purpose the paper follows an autobiographical approach to career counselling and aims to highlight the life-story of 35 girls who are pursuing their management graduation in national capital region of India. In-depth interview method was used as narration tools to bring forward the forces that guided them in choosing their career among the options available and how have they finally landed up for studying management education at their post-graduation level. The conversation during in- depth interviews allowed for the triggering of memories, reflection on experiences, elaboration of ideas and clarification of responses (Rubin & Rubin 2005)

For the purposes of this study the author recruited a sample of 35 girls by using work contacts and personal network. The average time of conducting interviews of 35 girls was one and a half to two hours. The place was decided within the campus of their Institutes as per the availability and comfort of the respondents. The majority of the participants were comfortable in speaking English and Hindi though owing to vast geographical and cultural diversity of India, they were from diverse geographical and cultural background. Many of them were pursuing different courses like Retail Management, Insurance Business, International Business, Human Resource Management, Marketing Management etc, having management as a common ground.

To study the narration of the interviewed women Nvivo software is used. Narrative inquiry was used as a tool for analysing the qualitative data gathered through these in-depth interviews. Narrative inquiry allows us to hear how individuals construct meaning from within these systems of belief; their attitudes, values and ideas that shape sense of self, identity. NI moves between the internal and external world of the storyteller, across time, within their environments (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Major results

Parental, especially father's /grandfather's influence on the career choice decision making of the girls is not static or one time phenomenon. Rather it is a continuous and on-going exchange of ideas, thoughts and family values between these male figures and their daughters. The career choice decisions start shaping right after completion of 10th standard when the girl child decide to choose between a defied stream of subjects like, Science, Maths, Biology, Commerce etc. as all of these subjects have a definite path towards a more or less finite field of career. Once a girl completes her graduation her opinion and voice sometimes become stronger and she is able to put forward her choice in a stronger and more influential way as compared to when she was in her early days of choosing the field to study. But this is the time by then she has also developed a self-concept and has imbibed certain gender role as well. The paper investigates the career choice experience of an often neglected yet important constituency in previously disadvantaged individuals.

Most of the respondents were deeply involved and candid in telling their career autobiography. At times the discussion even shifted to their family values and dominant culture prevailing in the clan.

One of the respondents recalls the days when she was pursuing her coaching for preparation of Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) for Engineering, and responds:

"Those were the most painful days of my life. I was living away from my parents for the first time and was devoting 12-14 hours of a day in struggling to prepare for a career that I never wanted to start. They (my parents) wanted me to prepare for engineering for a secure future but my passion was Hotel & Food Industry. I somehow managed to get admission in a decent Regional Engineering College and waited for the day when I could start my post-graduation in the field of my choice. But Hotel Management was something that had deep rooted prejudices in my parents mind. They again forced me to do full time Masters in Business Education and decided Human Resource Management as my specialization. The reason was same. They believe that HRM is a suitable and confortable field for girls. I know, I will never be allowed to purse Hotel Management. But Now I have plan B; I will work for 4-5 years to collect my finances and then start a Dhaba (Road Side Restaurant) of my own. No official degrees and diplomas are required for that. That will be my day. The name of my Dhaba will be "FREEDOM".

Respondent No. 17

The pain and helpless is clearly visible in the words of this 23 year old girl, who is not been able to study something that could lead her to wards choosing a career of her choice. She is the only child of her parents and her mother is well educated lady with MSc (Maths) as her post-graduation credentials. Father is a Mechanical Engineer working at a reputed Maharatna Company of the country. Hotel management was considered a reputed and serious course by them as both of them have studied very technical and analytical subjects. They have forgotten that their daughter has an identity of her own with very different and contradictory interest from her parents.

Another respondent has something similar to share.

"We are two sisters. My elder sister is a medical student and is the gem of the family. Both my father and grandfather are engineers. We are actually a family of engineers, my male cousins, uncles; all are either engineers or pursuing any field of engineering. When I asked my parents to allow (?) me to study Commerce during my Intermediate, they were in real shock. But my father's response was a jolt for me. He clearly said that I have to study Maths and prepare for engineering which is the only field of study for me. They even asked questions about how can ideas like studying commerce can come in my mind when everyone in the family is an engineer. My elder sister was given a grace because she had dreams to be a doctor which is a very noble and ideal career for girls. My grandfather was so blunt to me that if I wish to pursue anything else than engineering, I need to change my 'Surname'. This is a clear message of non-acceptance or rejection from some of the significant people of my life. That time, I had a wild feeling that had my elder sister been a male child she would have fulfilled the aspirations of my father and grandfather to have a third generation of proud engineers and I would have probably been relieved from the duty of doing this."

Respondent No.5

The girls also revealed that once she started studying engineering, she somehow started liking the subject. Her interest gradually developed for Civil Engineering, but was again forced to pursue Electronics and Communication as it offers a more female friendly and flexible work environment, where she can devote time for her future family and gender specific roles.

Compared it this Civil Engineering is a harder and more masculine field that requires typical physical hard work form the job incumbents. This is a unique example of giving freedom of choice from a very limited pool of alternatives. At one instance the family is asking the girl to pursue engineering as she is the only available child out of two girl child who has all the obligations to fulfil the dreams that a male child would have fulfilled and on the other hand is not allowed to choose a field of engineering (Civil Engineering) that is considered to be a male dominant career.

These examples highlight unique prejudices, stereotypes, and gender role specifications in our society leading towards preparing a pool of talent that has dichotomous interests and confused identities.

Implications

The paper highlights that gender role differentiation is found as an influence and barrier in the phenomena of selection of field of study and even specialization. The findings of this paper can expect to benefit the female management graduates by providing career counselling and guidance to the future manager in managing her own career and life. By sound focus on their own understanding of their real potential and willingness to explore not so safe, not so comfortable, but even challenging locations and challenging assignments within the chosen specialization can contribute and motivate them in their search for a drive or anchor into their careers in particular and life in general.

Limitations & scope for Future Research:

For future research an action research model to provide a framework that could provide a real-time counselling to these girls before they appear for their campus selection process and could help them reveal the bias and prejudices that a budding female manager should resolve and settle, before entering into the job market, is intended. A narrative analysis might be an alternative to develop the analysis later. The results could be utilized as a base document for Educational Institutions for streamlining their Career Counselling and Guidance Centres. Though there are very few examples in India where Centres for higher Education are providing counselling and guidance facilities to its student's especially female students. A detailed analysis of genders stereotypes and male influences in the career choice decisions of girls could also serve as a guiding literature for junior high schools and intermediate schools for framing guidelines that gender inclusion in all the streams of education. This might lead to improved enrolment of girls for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics), and also Humanities thereby creating a more diverse and holistic talent pool for the country.

Key References

1. Abele, A.E., & Spruk, D. (2009). The longitudinal impact of self-efficacy and career goals on objective and subjective career success. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 74*, 53–62.

2. Canannan, G.A. 2006. Anticipatory socialization. Teoksessa Greenhous, J.H., Callanan, G.A. & Godshalk, V.M. 2010. Career Management. 4. ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 20-21.

3. Chao, G.T. 2012. Organizational Socialization: Background, Basics, and a Blueprint for Adjustment at Work. The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Psychology, Oxford University Press 2012.

4. Greenhous, J.H., Callanan, G.A. & Godshalk, V.M. 2010. Career Management. latest. ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

5. Hertz, R., & Imber, J. B. (1995) Studying elites using qualitative methods. London, England: Sage.

6. Heikkinen, Suvi Lämsä, AnnaMaija (2017). Narratives of spousal support for the careers of men in managerial posts. Gender, Work and Organization, 24 (2), 171193.

7. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/10/25/economic-gender-gap-has-widened---and-will-last-until-2186/

8. Lämsä, A.-M., & Hiillos, M. (2008). Career counselling for women managers at mid-career: Developing an autobiographical approach. *Gender in Management, 23*(6), 395-408.

9. McKinsey Global Institute, "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in India" (2015).

10. Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Statistical Year Book India 2015,

11. Rainey, L. M., & Borders, L. D. (1997). Influential factors in career orientation and career aspiration of early adolescent girls. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 44,* 160-172.

12. Schein, E. H. (1996), Career anchors revised: Implications for career development in the 21st century, The Academy of Management Executive Vol. 10, Issue. 4, 80-88.