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Motives Behind Higher Education in Married and Unmarried Women

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Abstract

The present era has witnessed a revolution in education, especially with regard to women's education. There has been gender disparity in education down the ages and higher education has generally been the domain of males. In the post-Independence era, there was a growth in women's education but their enrolment in higher education sectors continues to be dismal. Since studies have found women's empowerment to be directly linked to higher education, the present research attempts to analyse the motives behind acquiring higher education in married and unmarried women and suggests solutions regarding how the imbalance can be redressed.

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Introduction

The present era is witnessing a nationwide awareness regarding freedom of expression among women. The major factor responsible for this impetus is the revamping of the educational sector. Today a woman is seen as successful almost in every field. The general outlook is that women enjoy a better status now as compared to the past. Educated women are now able to think critically, identify their strengths and take conscious decisions. The role of education in contributing majorly to women's empowerment cannot be denied. Education has expanded their mental horizons and given them the power to think precisely. Thus, a woman's role has been extended from being a mere homemaker to an architect of a developed society.

Educational Status of Women down the Ages

The study of Indian History shows that women in the ancient period, women had a dignified place in society and they participated equally in social activities. They shouldered the responsibility of maintaining the culture and religious atmosphere in addition to looking after the development of the family. They were eligible for Vedic Studies and even their Upanayana Sanskar (formal initiation into the study of

Vedas) was performed in that period. The author of some of the Vedic hymns were women, for example, Ghosha, Lopamudra, Apala, Vishvavara, Sikata, and Nivavari. The system ensured that even the poorest of the society received the benefits of education without any discrimination based on gender. With time, Vedic religious studies fell into the background, partly owing to the setback they suffered due to the development of other branches of knowledge in the Hindu community. Gradually, the status of women deteriorated and ultimately Yajnavalkya prohibited Upanayan altogether for women, declaring them unfit to recite Vedic mantras thereby equalling their status to that of Shudras (lowest class in the traditional Hindu caste system).

During the Mughal period, the education of women of lower classes was largely neglected. The colonial period saw the introduction of the Western system of education. This changed the meaning and content of education significantly. Formal education was open to all castes and religions and also to women, but its spread was extremely uneven.

Gender Disparity in Education

In India, education as a right has always been the privilege of the powerful, whether it is the higher castes, upper classes,

urban class, or men for that matter. Even after 75 years of independence, India is still plagued by the problem of housing the largest number of illiterate women in the world. Ironically enough, it is a fact that in almost every country, females have substantially more potential and contribute significantly more to the total developmental process of any society than their male counterparts.

Bridging the gender gulf in education has therefore been considered as a prominent issue of Indian democracy. Subsequently, specific measures were taken by several developmental plans and policies to bring parity between the sexes concerning women. The Indian Constitution assured the citizens of the country that there shall be equality of opportunity for women and children in the field of education and employment (Art. 6.1) and that no one shall be discriminated against based on sex (Art. 15.3.). These accounts of constitutional directives imply that the right approaches have been framed to give certain opportunities exclusively to women, to uplift them along with their male counterparts, and thereby provide them the social justice of which they are being deprived of since ages.

Higher Education and Development

A university education provides a man with clarity of views, opinions and judgments, and concrete training in developing them. The National Policy Education (NPE) (1986) characterises higher education as a crucial factor for survival, providing the Indian population with an opportunity to reflect upon critical, social, economic, cultural, moral, and spiritual issues. Rabindra Nath Tagore had a different view of higher education. He believed that "Higher education is that which does not merely give us information but makes a life in harmony with all existence".

Institutions of higher education have the main responsibility for providing individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills that are required for positions of responsibility in government business and profession. These institutions produce new knowledge through research and then disseminate that knowledge regularly.

According to the World Bank report of 1994, developed industrialised countries show higher enrolment in education vis a vis the low-income countries where enrolment in higher education is considerably lower. The UGC in its IX Plan document focuses on the new global emphasis on the market economy and promotion of sustainable development. This new emphasis demands a whole range of skills from graduates of humanities, social sciences, and commerce as well as the various professional disciplines.

Women and Higher Education

Higher education in India has progressed rapidly during the last 30 years. The increased rate of female participation in higher education is not only due to the increase in population but due to the change in social attitudes towards women.

Life in India is not as simple today as it was in the past. There are many complications and difficulties which confront the modern woman. Of these, the prominent seems to be the conflict between traditional Indian roles of wives, mothers, and career women. It is the responsibility of higher education in India that helps women to acquire and achieve a balance in these myriad roles. Consequently, the whole pattern of higher education has to change. Higher education should not merely equip a woman for her role in a profession; it should play the role of a path-finder and help to prepare the woman to make the best of her life.

Despite social changes, a woman is still the centre of a good and well-balanced home. In some cases, women have the double responsibility of home and career. Though in many cases, they can discharge their duties in a very satisfactory manner, sometimes they are bound to neglect one side or the other. The credit lies in maintaining a happy balance between both. It is higher education that should equip a woman with the proper abilities to go through life without being burdened by its problems. In cases where the woman needs only to be a family woman and mother, highly professional and technical education may not be the right path. In such cases where they are unsuitable for the pursuit of higher education and professional courses- the curriculum should be so modified as to give them the basic idea and skills of life.

Growth of Women's Higher Education Post-Independence Period

The growth of higher education for women in India post-independence has been very gradual. Policy planners and educationists have realised that without promoting the education of this important section of humanity, growth coupled with the development of society cannot take place. Further, it has been realised that social change can occur only if both men and women are educated.

Keeping this fact in mind, governments-at the centre and state levels-have initiated several policies and programmes to encourage women's participation in all levels of education.

Some of the Important Steps Taken in this Regard are as Follows

1. Education is made free up to a higher secondary level in most states.
2. The government assists with boarding and hostel facilities for girl students.
3. Special Women Study Centres and Cells have been opened in select universities.

The opening of the Distance Education System and Open Universities have made higher education more accessible to women in urban areas, small towns, and even rural areas.

Statistically, data collected regarding girls' and women's education shows that during the last five decades, the participation of girls has increased in primary, middle, secondary, and higher education. Data collected for the number of girl's student enrolment in institutes of higher education (2000-2001), shows that girls have started participating in higher and professional courses. The emerging courses that girls are now entering are M.Com. B.Sc., (Hons.), B.A., B.E, B.Arch., M.B.B.S, and so on. This is an encouraging trend and is indicative of the fact that parents, especially from urban areas who have a relatively good socio-economic background, are keen to send their daughters to pursue higher education and professional courses.

Role of Higher Education in Women's Empowerment

The parameters of education for woman's empowerment range from enhancing self-esteem and confidence of women to build a positive image of women by recognising their contribution to society, polity, and economy. Women's studies are a critical input to promote a better understanding of women's contribution to the social process. Such programs aim to study and remove structural, cultural, or attitudinal causes of gender discrimination and it is hoped that they will empower women to achieve effective participation in all areas of national or international development.

General Objectives of Woman's Higher Education

The Education Commission concluded that in the modern world, the role of women goes much beyond home and bringing up children. They are now adopting careers of their own and sharing equal responsibility for the development of society alongside men. After considering all necessary points, the commission developed the general objectives of girls about higher education. They are:

1. To create the right attitude toward life
2. To impart useful knowledge for various aspects of life
3. To give practical training for life
4. To develop good personal habits
5. To inculcate a sense of social awareness and a spirit of service to society
6. To make a career

Statement of the Problem

This study is conducted to find out the motives/aims of Married and Unmarried Women regarding their higher education. This study involves all women, whether they belong to a Rural or Urban background.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the Present study are as Follows

1. To find out the motives of Married women behind pursuing higher education concerning the following:
Rural/ Urban Belongingness
2. To find out the motives of Unmarried Women behind pursuing higher education concerning the following:
Rural/ Urban Belongingness

Significance of the Study

Education has been regarded as a significant instrument for changing women's position in society. It does not only help in developing the personality and capabilities of individuals but also qualifies them to fulfil certain economic political and cultural functions and thereby improves their socio-economic status.

Delimitation of the Study

This study has been conducted in Lucknow city only. Regarding the rural sample, it is assumed that many of the women reside in rural areas but make temporary arrangements to acquire higher education in Lucknow city.

Review of the Related Literature

Bano Gulshan (2005) [7] a comparative study was made on the children of working and non-working women concerning their health, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, academic achievement, and socio-economic status.

Findings showed that

- i) Children of working and non-working women differ significantly in their emotional adjustment. The children of working women tend to be emotionally maladjusted
- ii) The children of working and non-working women are similar in health, social adjustment, home adjustment, academic achievement, and socio-economic status.

Sharma, Kshama (2011) in an article written for the newspaper 'Hindustan', Sharma cites the percentage of girls who successfully passed Class 12 in every session and elucidates upon the problems associated with higher education. The problems mentioned in this regard were: early marriage, the responsibility of household work, and lack of funds. The problem is worded in a question form "Kahan ruk jati hai ladkiya" (Why do the girls fall behind)?

Nebolisa, Anozie (2008) [8] an investigative study was made on the academic performance of African-American women and men at historically black colleges and universities. The purpose of the study was to compare study skills and other factors among African-American students. The findings revealed that African-American women consistently outperformed African-American men in study skills and self-efficiency.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The present study is taken as quantitative research as well as qualitative research. This is a descriptive study that can be classified under the survey method.

2. Variables

Variables are the conditions or characteristics that the experimenter manipulates, controls, or observes. Variables are mainly divided into two categories: Independent variables and Dependent variables.

In the present study, the independent variables are;

- i) Marital status
- ii) Rural /Urban belongingness

The Dependent Variables in the Present Study are

- i) Motives for higher studies/ the forces which influence women to pursue higher studies.

3. Population and Sample

The population sample for the present study was 84 female students pursuing their higher education at different Universities and Degree Colleges in Lucknow city. The students were from undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral studies, technical courses, medical courses, engineering courses, or various other professional courses.

4. Sampling Procedure

Due to the limitation of time, incidental and purposive sampling technique is used to collect the data. It is a kind of non-probability sampling that is based on taking only what we can get.

5. Tools and Technique

In the present study, a self-constructed tool (which is an open-ended questionnaire) was used to find out the data of female students pursuing higher studies.

6. Procedure: Data Collection

For the collection of data, first of all, a good rapport was established with respondents. Then they were given instructions in brief wherein the purpose of the present study was made clear to them. They were assured that their names would be kept confidential. After the submission of the responses, a very short interview was also taken regarding the response they had provided against the aims of the study that they were pursuing.

Analysis of Data

The response sheets were collected from 84 female students. First of all, based on primary information, the sample was divided into 2 groups i.e., Married and Unmarried women. Then, in both categories, further divisions were made based on students' belongingness i.e., Rural and Urban. After the division of samples, their responses were analyzed and tabulated in table form. Table No. 1

Table 1: Presents the Rural/Urban Education Ratio of Married and Unmarried Women

Married Women		Unmarried Women	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
10	22	16	36

Analysis and Interpretation

The interpretation of the result is done in terms of objectives formulated for the study. The results are displayed as:

Objective 1

To find out the Motives of Married Women in pursuing Higher Education concerning Rural and Urban belongingness. Table No. 2

Table 2: Presents the Motives of Education for Rural/Urban Married Women

Marital status	Married Women	
Belongingness	Rural	Urban
Sample Size	10	22
Total Responses	21	70
Number of Motives	05	08

a) The Motives for Pursuing Higher Education from Married Women of Rural Belongingness are as Follows

1. To be self-dependent
2. To get a good job
3. To earn money and provide financial support to the family
4. To educate their children
5. To improve the standard of living

Almost every woman responded that being self-dependent was the chief motive of their higher studies. After completing their higher studies, they would get a job in most cases, thereby fulfilling the goals of the study and acquiring economic independence. Most respondents wanted either to get a job or to run their own business/coaching centres through which they would be able to earn money, and thus improve their standard of living. In rural India, a girl child is seen as a major liability and parents want to get rid of her as early as possible by marrying her to a boy who is not even necessarily employed. After such marriages, women face many monetary problems, which is why all women have responded that being self-dependent is the chief motive of their higher studies. Some married women responded that after getting higher education, they would be able to bring up and educate their children in a better way. They wanted to utilize their knowledge in higher education for the progress of their family in every aspect.

b) The Motives for Pursuing Higher Education from Married Women of Urban Belongingness are as Follows

1. To be self-dependent
2. To achieve a respectable position in society
3. To get a good job
4. To achieve a good position in a career
5. To get more knowledge
6. To add more to her qualification
7. To prove herself
8. To create a balance between the inner world and outer world

The motives for pursuing Higher Education from Married Women of Urban belongingness are 8 in number which shows that they have responded more positively than the rural married women. This may be due to either more awareness regarding the aims of education or the easy accessibility of higher education. The analysis of the motives given by Urban Married Women depicts that most of the women are pursuing higher education with the goal of self-dependence and achieving a good position in their careers and society. Although these women also wanted to get jobs for the sake of being independent but the word 'good job' reveals that they are not as needy as the rural-based women, to earn money. Some women have given their motive as the desire to prove themselves. They wanted to prove themselves against male members of the family who generally think that women should do only household work. Very few women responded that they wanted to continue higher studies just for making a balance between their home life and social life.

Objective 2

To find out the Motives of Unmarried girls behind pursuing Higher Education concerning Rural Urban belongingness. Table No. 3

Table 3: Presents the Motives of Education for Rural/Urban Unmarried Women

Marital Status	Unmarried Women	
Belongingness	Rural	Urban
Sample Size	16	36
Total Responses	36	85
No. of motives	05	08

a) The Motives for Pursuing Higher Education from Unmarried Girls of Rural Belongingness are as Follows

1. To be self-dependent
2. To get a job
3. To help parents financially
4. To acquire further studies
5. For being a good person for the country

Analysis of the motives given by rural-based unmarried women shows that almost all of them wanted to be self-dependent and expressed a desire to be independent economically. Despite expressing strongly that they don't want to depend on anybody for their expenditure, it is evident that the number of rural-based women pursuing higher education is very less and the main reason for this is the financial problem. The girls wanted to earn money either by doing jobs or running their businesses. Often, they wanted to earn money for helping their parents economically, as the money was required for their studies as well as marriage. Some of the girls wanted to go further in higher studies. A few of them responded that they wanted to get higher education to be useful citizens of the country.

b) The Motives for Pursuing Higher Education from Unmarried Women of Urban Belonging are as Follows

1. To get a respectable position in society
2. To be self-dependent
3. To get a job
4. To go for research work
5. To be more knowledgeable
6. To have better prospects

7. To be a good administrator
8. To get fame by doing some special work

A total of 8 motives were given by urban-based unmarried girls. They indicated that their first preference was to get a respectable position in society. Their second motive was given as the desire to be self-dependent and the third was to get a good job. Many of them responded that they wanted to go for research work. These girls expressed that since their parents were highly qualified, so they also wanted to follow them and have a respectable degree. Many of them replied that they were pursuing higher education to enhance their knowledge and to have better prospects. They also replied that they wanted to be good administrators and opined that girls can be better administrators because of their sincere nature and intelligence. Some also wanted to be famous by doing some extraordinary work for society.

Findings and Discussion

The Findings of the Study are as follows

Motives of the Married Women Pursuing Higher Education, Belonging to the Rural-urban Status are as Follows

1. To be self-dependent
2. To get a good job
3. To achieve a respectable position in society
4. To go for research studies
5. To achieve a good position in a career
6. To gain knowledge
7. To make a balance between home life and social life
8. To educate and guide their children in future
9. To establish her identity
10. To prove her capabilities
11. To earn money and provide financial support to the family
12. To improve the standard of living
13. To add more degrees through higher qualification

Motives of the Unmarried Women Pursuing Higher Education, Belonging to the Rural-urban Status are as

1. To be self-dependent
2. To get a job
3. To earn money and help parents financially
4. To go for research work
5. To have better prospects by developing life skills
6. To be a good administrator
7. To be an educationist
8. To get fame by doing some extraordinary work for society
9. To be a good citizen of our country

Conclusion

The present study is conducted to find out the motives of the women who are pursuing higher education. The chief motives given by Married and Unmarried women were mainly 'to be self-dependent', 'to get a job for financial security', 'to achieve a respectable position in society', 'to achieve a position in career', 'to have the knowledge and to utilize this knowledge in different fields'. When all the above motives were studied deeply, the situation that emerged is that in the present era, well-educated women of any section, whether Married or Unmarried, or from Urban or Rural backgrounds, all wanted to be self-dependent and establish their own identity. The eagerness to establish their identity in society, gain self-dependency, and be a knowledgeable person indicate that women today are having the real sense of higher education.

The General Objectives for Women's Education Already Decided by the Policy-makers are as Follows

1. To create the right attitude towards life-individual and social
2. To impart useful knowledge for various aspects of life
3. To develop good personal habits
4. To give practical training in life
5. To inculcate a sense of social awareness and a spirit of service to society
6. To make a career for the future.

It is evident from the results that almost all policy-makers objectives were given as the motives for higher education by the women considered in the sample for the study. Women expressed that they wanted to do a respectable job, to run their businesses, to be administrators and educationists, and ultimately to be good citizens of the country.

The motives given by the women under consideration differ slightly as their needs differ from each other. The women of urban belongingness gave their motives mainly as being self-dependence, to improve and utilize their skills for earning their livelihood on their own and thereby to get self-satisfaction.

The findings show that women are progressing continuously towards having more and more knowledge but their requirements and expectations from higher education are that it should provide them with careers through which they not only earn their livelihood but also get the sense of living graceful lives.

Suggestions

Every research work is done with the purpose that its findings might be utilised for the betterment of humankind as well as for society. This study conducted to find out the motives of women pursuing higher education could be useful for the Government, for educational planners and policymakers, and of course for society as a whole.

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