



Gender Disparities In Career Aspirations And Career Decision-Making: A Theoretical Study

¹Jeenti Malakar,

¹Research Scholar,

¹Department of Education,

¹Tripura University

Abstract

Career aspirations and choices are parts of a person's development journey influenced by factors, like societal expectations, education, culture, personality traits and work environments. This research delves into the reasons behind individuals diverse career paths based on their gender. It aims to offer insights, into the obstacles faced by genders in pursuing their career goals. Additionally, the study looks into how stereotypes and biases can impact career decision making highlighting how gender norms may influence and limit one's options.

Keywords: Gender Disparities, Career Aspirations, Career Decision-Making

I. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental aspect of individual's growth and progress has been always dependent on one's aspirations and decision making. Individual's professional aspirations and his/her decision making is a prime aspect in the progress of the society in particular and of the nation in general. Career aspirations is one such thing which aspires young individual to climb up the ladder of profession. It is totally about one's personal interest, choice and the set goals which allow the individual to encompass the type of profession he or she aspires to achieve. Followed by this is career decision-making which is equally important as it involves all those stages which is based on informed choices based on individual's preferences, skills and values. However, the matter of concern in this regard is marked by the sharp differentials, particularly along the gender lines. As we navigate an era advocating for equality, understanding the multifaceted factors influencing career choices is paramount. In embarking on this theoretical exploration of gender disparities in career aspirations and decision-making, this paper brings forth a narrative rooted in personal experiences and a commitment to unravel the intricacies of this pervasive societal issue.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This theoretical paper stands out in its exploration of gender disparities in career aspirations and decision making by pioneering an innovative approach. By incorporating a comprehensive theoretical framework that embraces interdisciplinary perspectives, this paper strives to provide a holistic understanding of the complex factors influencing career trajectories. This research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical insights and practical applications, offering insights that can inform policy interventions, educational reforms and strategies to overcome gender disparities by providing equitable landscape around the gender lines. This distinctive approach

positions this study as a trailblazer in advancing the dialogue on gender disparities in career aspirations and career decision-making, contributing valuable perspectives to the broader academic discourse.

III. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This theoretical research paper embarks on a distinctive journey to unravel the intricacies of gender disparities in career aspirations and the consequential decision-making processes. Moving beyond conventional analyses, we delve into the complexities of how societal, cultural, and psychological factors intertwine to shape the unique pathways that individuals of different genders navigate in their professional journeys. By adopting an inclusive lens that transcends traditional binaries, this research aims to redefine the discourse on gender disparities in career development, offering a nuanced perspective that reflects the contemporary dynamics of the workforce. There are multiple number of factors which influence career aspirations and career decision making ranging from individual factors, socio-cultural and psychological factors. Be it their self-confidence, locus of control or preparation; these multiple dimensions do affect the individual's career aspirations and career decision-making. Among all factors gender disparity is one such which is negatively correlated with individual's status and confidence. Bhandari et.al., (1997) focussed on female literacy thereby concluding that majority of women opt for only those programmes which are well suited to their own needs. Kindo and Astalin in their study also concluded that male and female differ in their career awareness. Bhasin (2007) focussed on the status of tribal women in India where the findings of her revealed that Gender disparities seem to be a perpetual condition in India. Monterio (2015) also marked differences seen across genders and streams of education. Edwards and Quinter (2011) found that availability of advancement opportunities and learning experiences are some strong factors which influence the career choices among students. Pattanayak and Naik (2014) study results indicate that factors like gender roles, socialization, parental expectations, and teacher attitudes along with the gendered occupational landscape in which they exist under the process of investigating the career aspirations and career development barriers of tribal students. Saleem (2020) showed that tribal residential school students have an above-average level of career aspiration and there exists a significant effect of gender and type of school while trying to find the level of career aspiration and the effect of gender and type of school on career aspiration of the students. Obura's (2012) results on gender and student's perceptions of career aspirations in secondary schools indicate that there was gender disparity in the career aspirations of secondary school students. Bibi, Akbar, Inamulla, & Sumbal (2022) concluded that there is a difference between male and female career decision-making self-efficacy along with a higher career decision-making self-efficacy in private schools than in government schools while investigating career decision self-efficacy among higher secondary students. Even if we call our Country India a democratic one where people talk about equality yet remains a significant difference across gender and streams of education. These problems need to get addressed, only then an equitable nation can turn into a reality.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This research involves a narrative review process, analysing theoretical perspectives, research studies related to career aspirations and career decision making.

V. SELECTION PROCESS

Selection for review is done in accordance to career aspirations, career decision making and related topics and terminology. To simplify the review process, a minimum number of research articles and journals are solicited.

VI. OBJECTIVES

- To explore the different factors that contribute to gender disparities in career aspirations and career decision making.
- To provide a holistic understanding of how multiple dimensions influence career aspirations and decision making.
- To find out the probable solutions to overcome gender disparities in career aspirations and career decision making.

GENDER DISCREPANCIES AND VARIOUS FACTORS IMPACTING CAREER GOALS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The differences, in gender play a role in shaping the career aspirations and choices of individuals in ways. These variations stem from a combination of cultural and institutional elements that lead to experiences based on ones gender. Let's delve into how gender imbalances affect career aspirations and decision making;

- Social expectations related to gender roles often dictate which professions are seen as suitable. For instance traditional norms might discourage women from pursuing careers in male dominated fields like engineering or dissuade men from entering caregiving roles.
- Cultural stereotypes prevalent in society create gender images linked to professions influencing how individuals perceive their own abilities and ambitions.
- Biases within systems can guide individuals towards or away from subjects based on their gender. Stereotypes suggesting that certain fields are more appropriate for one gender can limit options and shape career goals accordingly. (Makarova & Herzog, 2015) found that in comparison to males, female students had more diverse career aspirations though more inclined toward care giving careers. It is also argued that girls tend to have lower perceived self-efficacy for careers with a strong masculine gender construct orientation, like science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) careers due to gender stereotypes which has played a role of associating men with science and women with humanities (Nduta, 2020).
- The level of gender diversity within environments can impact how individuals view their abilities and the variety of career paths they consider available, to them. Kang, Hense, Scheerso, & Keinonen (2019) confirmed that females preferred subjects such as biology, and males favoured physics and chemistry.
- The media often portrays professions as suitable, for a specific gender reinforcing gender stereotypes. These portrayals can influence how individuals perceive what is achievable or acceptable based on their gender identity.
- When successful individuals breaking gender norms are not prominently featured in the media it can give the impression that certain careers inaccessible for people of a gender.
- The fear of confirming stereotypes linked to ones gender can affect confidence and performance discouraging individuals from pursuing career paths.
- Personal beliefs about competence shaped by expectations can impact how confident individuals feel about pursuing and persisting in careers.
- Discriminatory practices in hiring and promotions can hinder career progression for some individuals perpetuating gender gaps in industries and professions. The workplace culture plays a role in either promoting inclusivity or reinforcing gender stereotypes. The absence of diversity and inclusion efforts may create an environment for those challenging gender norms. The gender disparity in career aspiration has been attributed to the stereotypical beliefs about what field each gender is found to be successful (Maarike et al., 2016; Lane et al., 2011 & Nosek et al., 2009)
- Societal norms related to caregiving responsibilities can influence career choices for women. Balancing family obligations, with career goals presents challenges that influence decisions regarding career paths and advancement.
- Expectations related to balancing work and personal life based on gender can impact career goals and choices as people manage norms regarding family obligations.
- Discrepancies, in pay due to gender can shape how individuals perceive the recognition of their efforts in fields influencing their career aspirations.
- Obstacles hindering access, to and progress in leadership roles can impact individuals' ambitions.

- Eagerness to pursue careers involving leadership duties.

Suggestive measures to eradicate gender disparities influencing career aspirations and career decision-making

1. Inclusive Curriculum Design:

- Propose the development of educational curricula that consciously challenge gender stereotypes and provide diverse role models across various fields. This could involve integrating case studies, guest lectures, and learning materials that showcase successful individuals breaking traditional gender norms.

2. Intersectional Career Guidance:

- Advocate for a more nuanced approach to career counselling that considers intersectionality, acknowledging the unique experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities. Career guidance programs should be tailored to address the specific challenges faced by individuals at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

3. Corporate Transparency and Accountability:

- Encourage greater transparency in corporate practices, including salary structures and promotion criteria. Implement measures that hold organizations accountable for addressing gender disparities, with consequences for those failing to make progress in achieving gender equity.

4. Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs:

- Propose the implementation of mentorship and sponsorship programs within organizations, ensuring that individuals from underrepresented genders have access to guidance, networking opportunities, and advocacy for career advancement. Emphasize the importance of cross-gender mentorship to foster mutual understanding and support.

5. Flexible Work Policies:

- Advocate for and develop workplace policies that promote flexibility, acknowledging and accommodating diverse caregiving responsibilities. Encouraging both men and women to take advantage of flexible work arrangements can contribute to breaking down traditional gender roles and expectations.

6. Organizational Culture Shift:

- Promote a cultural shift within organizations that actively challenges gender stereotypes. This could involve targeted training programs, awareness campaigns, and leadership initiatives that prioritize diversity and inclusion, fostering an environment where individuals feel empowered to pursue diverse career paths.

7. Gender-Neutral Recruitment Practices:

- Call for the adoption of gender-neutral recruitment practices to eliminate biases in hiring processes. This might include anonymizing resumes during the initial stages of recruitment, implementing blind interviews, and providing diversity training for hiring teams.

8. Parental Leave Policies for All Genders:

- Advocate for comprehensive parental leave policies that are not gender-specific. Encourage organizations to offer parental leave that supports individuals, regardless of gender, in balancing their professional and caregiving responsibilities.

9. Promoting STEM Education for All:

- Develop initiatives that encourage individuals of all genders to pursue education and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. This could involve targeted outreach programs, scholarships, and mentorship opportunities to address the gender gap in STEM professions.

10. Community Engagement and Grassroots Initiatives:

- Support grassroots initiatives and community engagement programs that challenge traditional gender norms and promote equal opportunities. These initiatives could include workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns focused on empowering individuals to make informed career decisions.

11. Policy Advocacy for Equal Representation:

- Advocate for policies that promote equal representation of all genders in leadership roles. This might involve supporting legislative measures that require companies and institutions to achieve a certain level of gender diversity at the executive and board levels.

12. Research and Data Collection:

- Call for increased research and data collection on gender disparities in various professions. This could involve collaborative efforts between academic institutions, government agencies, and private organizations to regularly assess and address gender imbalances in the workforce.

Conclusion

It's important to grasp the impact of gender differences, on career goals and choices to create strategies and rules that support gender equality in the workplace. Tackling these differences involves a strategy that questions stereotype, fosters diversity and breaks down obstacles in education work environments and society, as a whole.

References

- Adragna, D. (2009). Influences on Career Choice During Adolescence, *Psi Chi Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Vol 14(1), pp. 3-9
- Arhin, B. (2018). Relationship between career aspirations and study behaviors among second-year distance learners of the University of Cape Coast, *African Educational Research Journal*, 6(3): 173-180
- Arora, R. (2016). Academic Achievement of Adolescents about Study Habits, *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. Vol 3(2), 47-54
- Bibi.W., Akbar, H., Inamulla, H.M., & Sumbal (2022). Career decision-making self-efficacy among higher secondary school students, *Webology*.Vol (19), 7090-7109
- Gangber, D., Ansari, S., and Shrivastava, A. (2021). Relationships between career aspirations and self-confidence among higher secondary students, *International Journal of Applied Research*.,7(2). <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2021.v7.i2b.8243>
- Pattanayak, M.B., and Naik, P.K. (2014). Career Aspirations and Career Development Barriers of Tribal Students in the Salboni Block of Jangal Mahal. *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*. Vol (2), 3. 655-668
- Pal, S. and Sarkar, P. (2022). A Comparative Study of Career Aspiration Level Between Tribal and non-tribal Students in Patulia Gram Panchayet of North 24 Pargana district in West Bengal. *Agpe The Royal Gondwana Research Journal*.Vol (3), 3, page: 87-96
- Ram, M. (2018). Career Decision-Making of Secondary School Students about their Self-Esteem. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Review*. 7(4), page 901-914.

