

Social Freedom and Occupational Aspirations as Correlate of Adolescent Girl's Empowerment

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to study the relationship between occupational aspiration, social freedom and girl's empowerment on the 200 adolescent girls of Panipat district, Haryana. Three standardized tools viz; Women Social Freedom Scale, Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Scale and Occupational Aspiration Scale were used for the study. It was observed that rural and urban adolescent girls possessed same level of social freedom and occupational aspiration whereas the urban girls felt significantly more empowered in comparison to rural girls. Further, significant positive correlation was observed between social freedom, occupational aspiration and girls' empowerment. Multiple regression results indicated that social freedom, occupational aspiration and location have predicted 6.8% variation of girls' empowerment. Out of these three variables, location (rural or urban) was emerged as the most significant predictor of adolescent girls' empowerment. The results of the study have helped in the understanding that the rural and urban adolescents differ in empowerment and the conditions of urban area favours empowerment of girls. Although, adolescent girls of both areas experience below average level of social freedom, means the girls' freedom and occupational aspiration still need consideration in 21st century India, like any other developing country of the world.

Keywords: Adolescent Girls, Social freedom, Occupational Aspiration and girls' empowerment.

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Girl's empowerment, gender equality and equity are key terms in debates and talks about the changes required in the relationship of men and women. Empowerment is the power to think and act freely, exercise choices, ability to reach to the full potential and act as equal member of society. In true sense, it is difficult to measure empowerment and it can be understood with the help of some indicators which include personal, social, economic and political aspects. The indicators also include strength, confidence, right to make decision and power to control one's life etc. In India, gender disparity manifests itself in various forms in India and most obviously can be observed from the trend of declining female ratio in population even after 70 years of independence. In order to address the gaps between genders across the country, Indian government established *Ministry of Women and Child Development* in 2006. Even the year 2001 was celebrated as "Women empowerment year" by India. But the situation has not improved and there is a long way to go. Girl's empowerment is very crucial at the adolescent stage because it can help them in realizing their capabilities to the fullest. Adolescent girl's empowerment means when a girl

realizes her capabilities and utilizes opportunities for their development.

Adolescent girls are the most economically vulnerable groups and lack access to financial capital and get limited opportunities for education and employment. Although, female literacy rate has improved over the years; still Indian females are under-represented in various employment segments. In India, the role of women is considered as home maker rather than bread earner. Various studies have shown that girls are still lagging behind in almost every field of employment. Even in the age of globalization the women status in India has been secondary to men and they have remained the victims of inequality, suppression and injustice (Singh, 1006). UNICEF (2011) highlighted that girls during late adolescent period are at greater risk of negative health outcomes, like depression and this risk is often multiplied due gender discrimination and abuse. Even in *Millennium Developmental Goals*, women empowerment has been recognized as vital issue. Women can be made empowered with employment and employed women are better on social, democratic and hedonistic aspects in comparison to unemployed women (Pandey and

Singh, 2008). Menon (2017) emphasized that Indian government must recognise women empowerment as most critical and sensitive issue and educated girls should play proactive role.

Adolescence is viewed as the time of role exploration and refinement of educational and occupational choices. Even during adolescence, educational and occupational goals are thought to develop (Gottfredson, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Occupational aspiration of adolescents was found to inform occupational expectations (Beal and Crockett, 2013). Adolescents have to stay not only well informed but also should be able to look for their future occupations to fit into the change in the occupational structure and economic environment. Secondary school student face many challenges while preparing for the future (Schaefer & Meece, 2009). Johnson & Mortimer (2002), described that although marital plan affects the educational attainment of both the gender but negative effects are greater for females.

Female occupational aspirations are influenced by many factors like gender, socioeconomic status, educational level and parents' occupation and expectations also influence the career aspirations (Domenico and Jones, 2006). Occupational aspiration is expressed as the aspiration related to career-related goals which offer significant impetus for future success in the area of education and career. Occupational choices play important role in the life of a person and decide the social status, life style, mental and physical health (Ohiwerei and Nwasu, 2009). Aspiration is the desire of achieving high in life. It is influenced by many background factors like family and friends. Girls are also influenced by female role models as well as that of their female parents/guardians and other female relatives and family friends. As per Cooper, Arkelin and Tiebert (1994) views aspiration is the hope and ambition which is influenced by both interpersonal and interpersonal factors. Mother-daughter relationship and agentic characteristics contribute significantly in deciding gender role attitudes (Rainey and Borders, 1997).

Occupational aspiration and empowerment have been found to be closely associated with social freedom. It can be defined as the women's desire to be free gender specific

roles which create hindrance and give them low status in the society. Adolescents often ask for freedom, independence which actually means social freedom (Pickhardt, 2014). Bhusan (2014) pointed out that adolescence is the stage of life when the demand for freedom changes and increases. Bhushan (1981) described social freedom as freedom from parental and husband' control, social rituals and taboos, marriage boundations and economic equality. According to Gore (1977) Indian women subordinate her desires in joint family. Women usually have to bear many constraints and high cost of economic change and adjustment in this era of globalization (Mukherjee, 2004). Traditional rites and values related with women are widely accepted in even rural areas of India (Jacobson, 1977). Now days, girl all over the world, have been converted into more cognisant minds about their rights. Educational and vocational opportunities have given them the courage to revolt against traditional norms. Girls are performing non-traditional roles and showing new outlook towards life. Educated and empowered women are not ready to accept inferior roles and wages than males and claim equal opportunity in true sense in all walks of life. The present era is the age of women where men and women enjoy equal status in developed countries. Even in India, the condition of girls has improved significantly both at the work place and at home. During last few years, society has shown changed attitude towards women and has given importance to their education and career. Even men have realized the value of working women and their contribution towards family upliftment as a whole. The government of India declared 2001 as the years of *Women's Empowerment (Swashakti)* and National Policy for the empowerment of girls came in 2001. Various provisions have been made in Indian constitution for ensuring security and equality to the women. These days, girls are not only limited to kitchen but are doing good jobs and providing economic security to their family. But comparatively, few women have managed to attain the top executive position or decision making position in the legislature. Majority of women live a life of enslavement and do not possess any social freedom for taking their decision.

Purpose of the study

After realizing the importance of occupational aspiration, social freedom and empowerment in the life of adolescent girls, this research work was planned. Adolescence is the most influential period of making important decisions and unique developmental phase with respect to future orientation. Occupational aspirations plays critical role in the development of adolescent's career and in indentifying educational opportunities. Social freedom is an important aspect of girl's life, therefore needs attention. In this study an effort has been made to study of empowerment of adolescent girls in relation to locale, occupational aspiration and social freedom. The literature highlighted the importance and these variables and it was observed that this area is important but less explored, hence this research was undertaken.

Research objectives

- (1) To compare the social freedom, occupational aspiration and girl's empowerment of adolescent girls on the basis of location.
- (2) To find out the correlation between social freedom, occupational aspiration and girl's empowerment among adolescent girls.
- (3) To ascertain the contribution of social freedom, occupation aspiration and location on adolescent girls empowerment.

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey method because the variables under study had already occurred and information regarding these was collected. Multi stage random sampling was used for collecting data from rural and urban areas in Panipat district. The questionnaires were administered by researchers themselves. The purpose and significance of collecting information from them was explained and doubts related to statements were cleared. It was also made clear to them that the information collected would be kept confidential and utilized for the researcher purpose only so they could give their response freely. Three research tools were used in the study in order to generate data.

1. **Women Social Freedom Scale:** This scale was standardized by Dr. L.I. Bhusan and is based on the five dimensions of Women's social freedom: 1. freedom from control or inference of parents and husband, 2. Freedom from social taboos, customs and rituals, 3. Freedom from concerning sex and marriage, 4. Economic freedom and social equality. This scale contained 24 items and possessed good reliability ($r > .75$) and validity.
2. **Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Scale:** this scale was formulated and standardized by Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Dr. Alpana Singh. This scale was based on the seven dimensions namely; Power and Entitlement, Autonomy and Self Reliance, Decision Making, Participation, Capacity Building, Social, Political and Legal Awareness and Exposure to Information Media. The reliability of the scale was found to be .71 and construct and content validity were also determined. This scale had 71 total statements based on five point Likert scale.
3. **Occupational Aspiration Scale:** This scale was framed and standardized by J.S. Grewal. It was based on eight statements and its reliability came out to be .84.

Results

It is evident from Table 1, social freedom scores for both rural adolescent girls ($M=13.06$, $SD=3.24$) and urban adolescent girls ($M=13.41$, $SD=3.65$) did not differ significantly ($t=.72$, $p=.5$). This means the girls of both rural and urban area had same level of social freedom. Although, the mean value for both rural and urban social freedom score has shown that they possessed below average level of social freedom. The results related to occupational aspiration also indicated the same trend, as the occupational score for rural girls ($M=49.39$, $SD= 7.2$) and urban girls ($M=50.79$, $SD=7.8$) did not differ ($t=1.32$, $p=.19$). Further, rural and urban adolescent girls were compared with respect to girl's empowerment. There was significant difference in the empowerment level of rural girls ($M=195.24$, $SD=23.1$) and urban girls ($M=206.18$, $SD=26.5$), $t=1.6$, $p=.0002$.

Table 1

Comparison of social freedom, occupational aspiration and girl's empowerment on the basis of location among adolescent girls (n=200)

Area	Group	N	M	SD	t – value	p-value
Social Freedom	Rural	100	13.06	3.24	0.72	0.5
	Urban	100	13.41	3.65		
Occupational Aspiration	Rural	100	49.39	7.2	-1.32	0.19
	Urban	100	50.79	7.8		
Girl's Empowerment	Rural	100	195.24	23.1	1.6	0.002
	Urban	100	206.18	26.5		

Table 2 describes the association between occupational aspiration, social freedom and girl's empowerment. Correlation coefficient between occupational aspiration and social freedom ($r(198)=.199$, $p<.01$) was found to be significant and positive. This indicated that occupational aspiration increases with social freedom. Association between occupational aspiration and

girl's empowerment was also estimated and significant positive relationship was established ($r(198)=.149$, $p<.05$). Correlation coefficient between girl's empowerment scores and social freedom ($r(198)=.171$, $p<.05$) indicated positive and significant relationship. Hence, all the three variables under study have shown positive relationship with each other.

Table 2

Correlation matrix between Occupational Aspiration, Social Freedom and Girl's Empowerment

		1	2	3
Occupational Aspiration	Pearson Correlation	1	.199**	.149*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005	.035
	N	200	200	200
Social Freedom	Pearson Correlation	.199**	1	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		.015
	N	200	200	200
Girl's Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	.149*	.171*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.015	
	N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Model summary given in Table 3, indicated that occupational aspiration, social freedom and location predicted 6.8% of variation in the scores of girl's empowerment. The hypothesis which stated that there is joint contribution of occupational aspiration, social freedom and location in predicting girls empowerment was retained at $R=.278$, $R^2=.068$, $F(3, 196)=5.8$; $p<.001$. The result displayed in Table 4, revealed that the unstandardised

regression weights (B) ranged from .347 to 10.091. The t-observed value for each of the predictors showed 1.464 (occupational aspiration), 2.016 (social freedom) and 2.89 (location). Location emerged as most potent predictor to girls' empowerment followed by social freedom. However, occupational aspiration did not happened to be the significant predictor for girl's empowerment

Table 3**Regression analysis summary on correlates of girl's empowerment of adolescent girls**

Regression Analysis		Analysis of Variance				
R	Sources	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig.
.287 ^a	Regression	10590.508	3	3530.169	5.860	.001 ^b
R ² .082	Residual	118080.672	196	602.452		
Adjusted R ² .068	Total	128671.180	199			
SE 24.54						

Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Aspiration, Social Freedom, Location

Dependent Variable: Girl's Empowerment

*.05

Table 4**Coefficient table of Occupational Aspiration, Social Freedom and Location to the prediction of Girl's Empowerment**

Variable Description	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Significance
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	154.446	13.169		11.728	.000
Occupational Aspiration	.347	.237	.103	1.464	.145
Social Freedom	1.038	.515	.141	2.016	.045
Location	10.091	3.488	.199	2.893	.004

Dependent variable: Girl's Empowerment

Discussion

The study was conducted to evaluate the occupational aspiration, social freedom and girl's empowerment among adolescent girls with respect to their locale. It is clear from the above results that adolescent girls showed same level of occupational aspiration and social freedom in both rural and urban areas. This is an interesting fact that the situation in regard to social freedom and occupational aspiration has not changed yet. Perhaps, it may be due our treatment that we offers to the girls have not changed yet in both regions. However, urban girls had shown significant better girl's empowerment in comparison to rural girls. It may be due to the fact that adolescent girls at urban areas get more opportunities, hence feel more empowered. Correlation matrix had shown that all these three variables are significantly associated with each other. This clearly indicates the importance of considering the social freedom and occupational aspiration aspects in improving the girls' empowerment. Multiple regression was carried out to understand the relative contribution of occupational aspiration, social freedom and location in determining girl's empowerment. It

was found that 6.8% of variation in the scores of girl's empowerment is attributed to occupational aspiration, social freedom and location. Out of these, location had been identified as the most potent predictor of girl's empowerment among adolescent girls. This significantly states that rural girls need more attention than urban.

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