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## Gender differences in beliefs of rural parents regarding academics and career of their youth (15-25 years)

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### Abstract

This study investigated gender differences in parental beliefs regarding academics and career of their children. The sample for the study consisted of 60 parents, 30 mothers and 30 fathers, who were selected from village Kharian of Jammu in JKUT whose children were in the age group of 30-70 years were studying above 8<sup>th</sup> class. Self-devised interview schedule used for data collection through home visits, keeping in view COVID-19 SOPs as issued by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir from time to time. Most of the parents were in their middle adulthood, were educated upto 12<sup>th</sup> class, mothers were mostly home makers and fathers held service either in governmental or private sectors. Majority of them aspired for their own education and career but due to poverty they had to leave education in between, for either jobs or marriage, and given a chance many of them would like to continue their education. Given their own outlook towards education and career, most of the parents had a positive attitude towards the education and career of their children, irrespective of their gender. Some differences in opinion were seen in their beliefs regarding career and the marriage of girls. Most of the parents wanted their daughters to take teaching as profession whereas for boys they preferred engineering and civil services. They believed that 21-25 years was the right age of marriage for girls, whereas for boys they believed that 25-30 years as the right age.

**Keywords:** Academic aspirations, career aspirations, parents, youth, parental beliefs, gender differences

### Introduction

National Education Policy 2020 has been adopted by India, and it is expected to give a new direction to the education and occupational avenues for the children and youth. The educational institutions of the country are gearing up to meeting the objectives of the NEP 2020, but parents too have an important role to play in the education of their children especially the secondary and tertiary levels, which play a decisive role in determining the future course of careers and life of the youth. Parental involvement in the education of students begins at home with the parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support, and a positive attitude about school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017)<sup>[11]</sup>. Parents aspirations for children are also one of the determining factors in child's education and career. Parents and families have a major impact on the success of the process of education and upbringing of children (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017)<sup>[11]</sup>. The present study has tried to understand parents' own aspirations for education and career and their beliefs about their children's education and careers and understand the gender differences in these. Lack of parental support and encouragement may lead to a child's low concept of ability, low interest in schoolwork and task-avoidant behaviours when facing difficulties and challenges in learning (Lerikkanen & Pakarinen, 2019)<sup>[21]</sup>.

Parents play an important role in not only the education but also in determining the career paths that the youth take. Gender stereotyping of careers can begin as early as during infancy, when parents buy toys for these little ones. A message is communicated by the type of toys they buy for their babies; This might lay a foundation for the choice of a career. For example, building blocks, cricket sets, cars and trucks are usually for boys, and dolls and kitchen sets or make up kits for girls. As more parents' stereotype Mathematics, Computer Studies and Engineering as naturally male domain, more and more girls develop fear for such subjects,

they underestimate their abilities in mathematics and science related subjects and overestimate the difficulty (Bian *et al.*, 2017)<sup>[7]</sup>.

The decision about career is a familial rather than an individual decision and depends on many factors like parents' education, aspirations, occupation, familial socio-economic status, their traditional occupations, ecological settings, etc. Khatri and Periwal (2020)<sup>[19]</sup> found that family members have a positive and significant influence on career decisions, irrespective of their gender. Majority of the parents considered higher education for their daughters as a significant indicator of better careers for their daughters.

Gender has influenced the life of individuals especially in countries like India, where son preference guided the parental beliefs regarding the child development. The MDGs and SDGs have focussed on Gender as an integral component of the Global Developmental Goals, and if we look at the position of India in Human Development Index, 132, and Gender Development Index, 127 out of 146 countries, it is not at all promising, and indicates that much more is still to be done. The promising findings are about the Gender Parity Index in tertiary or higher education, which in 2019-20 was 1.01 against 1.00 in 2018-19 indicating an improvement in the relative access to higher education for females (PIB, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021). The gender literacy gap was more evident in rural India, with only 66 percent of women aged between 15 and 49 years being literate, compared to over 81 percent of their male counterparts in the region (Rathod, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023)<sup>[34]</sup>. In fact, the LASI results indicate that higher education is related to cognitive functioning in later life, and women must achieve a higher level of education to have the same cognitive levels as aged men (Jain, 2022)<sup>[22]</sup>. Jain (2022)<sup>[22]</sup> further concludes that partial explanation to this can be attributed to the gender differences in educational achievement.

The education system has made major strides to close the gender gaps in student performance, but girls and boys remain deeply divided into careers which are being made much earlier than commonly thought. India's average literacy rate is 77.70%, male literacy level in 2021 stood at 84.70% and female literacy at 70.30% (According to NSO report, 2021). 129.2 million girls worldwide are out of school, including 32.3 million girls of primary school age, 29.9 million girls of lower secondary school age, and 67 million girls of upper secondary school age (UIS Fact Sheet, 2019). Girls and boys remain deeply divided in career choices, which are being made much earlier than commonly thought (OECD report, 2015)<sup>[27]</sup>. In India, 17% of 25–34-year-old women had a tertiary qualification in 2019 compared to 22% of their male peers. The present study indicates that the disparities in science and mathematics performance may not be due to poor reading and comprehension skills of girls, but possibly due to the differences in aptitude between the two genders, and/or social and cultural factors including stereotypical ideas related to the role of men and women in society, among others (Bhagat and Vijayaraghavan, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. Combination of individual (Interest and self-efficacy) and contextual factors (parental support and role models) influence the decision to select and pursue higher studies in STEM (Maji *et al.*, 2023)<sup>[22]</sup>. With reference to findings about STEM, at the end of the leaky pipeline women may not be able to find a place because of reasons such as marriage, childbirth or child-care, lack of family support, gender discriminatory policies, gender-blind institutional structures, etc. Women enrolment in entry-level professional certificates have gone up from 22% in 2019 to 30% in 2021 (The Indian Express, 2021). In the employment

sector men in India stood at 67% in 2022, an increase from the previous participation of 64% in 2021. A fluctuating trend emerged in the participation rate of this segment of India's workforce since 2016. Meanwhile the participation at work for women in the country dipped from around 36% in 2021 to a little over 33% in 2022 (Kanwal, 2022)<sup>[17]</sup>. Young women are less likely to be employed than young men, particularly those with lower levels of education. Only 22% of 25–34-year-old women with below upper secondary attainment were employed in 2019 compared to 94% of men in India. This gender difference is larger than the average across OECD countries, where 43% of women and 69% of men with below upper secondary attainment are employed.

The purpose of this study was to understand gender differences among the perception of parents regarding career and academics of their children. This will help in understanding the reasons for the lesser participation of females in higher education and careers, from an indigenous perspective, of parents.

### Objectives

1. To understand the aspirations of rural parents of Jammu, regarding their own education and career.
2. To study parental beliefs regarding higher education and career of their children aged 15-25 years.
3. To understand if any gender differences exist in parental beliefs regarding education and career of their children.
4. To provide suggestions based on findings.

### Research Methodology

**Locale:** The sample for the present study was selected from the rural area of Kharian village situated at Tehsil Marh in Jammu district of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. It is located 12 km towards west from district headquarters. People of Kharian are simple and speak Dogri language. With 150 households only, the total population of Kharian village is 560 (289 males and 271 females). The literacy rate of Kharian is 75% for males and 50% for females. There are a total of 5 schools located in Kharian of which 3 are private and 2 are government.

### Sample

The sample consisted of 60 respondents, 30 fathers and 30 mothers, in the age-group of 30 to 70 years belonging to the village Kharian, Tehsil Marh of Jammu District, JKUT.

### Criteria for sample selection

**Age:** Only those parents were selected who had at least one child in the age group of 15-25 years.

**Children's education:** Only those parents were selected whose children were studying above 8th class.

**Residence:** Only those families who were permanent residents of village Kharian were selected

**Sampling Technique:** The sample was randomly selected from the village after considering the above criteria, to match the sample.

### Tools Used For Data Collection

**Interview Schedule:** A detailed interview schedule was devised to collect information from the parents consisting of the following.

**Demographic profile:** It contained questions related to general information regarding parents such as Name, Gender, Age, Education Qualification, Number children, Family

Information. Since parents' own achievements have a significant influence on their offspring, parents were also asked about the beliefs related to academics and career, prevalent during the time they were young.

**Beliefs about education**

This section contained questions related to parental beliefs about their sons' and daughters' education.

- Level of education preferred for their children.
- Educational stream considered good for their children.

**Beliefs about Career**

This section contained questions related to parental beliefs about the careers of their sons and daughters like:

- Careers they consider good for their children.
- Role of family in the career decision of the Children.
- Discussion with children regarding the career choices.

**Beliefs about age at Marriage:** -Since the age at marriage is a determinant for education, and career, especially for daughters, this section contained questions related to parental beliefs about marriage of their sons and daughters. This contained questions like:

- Right age at marriage for boys and girls.

**Data Collection**

Most of the data was collected through home visits, after the lockdown period of COVID 19, keeping in view COVID-19 SOPs as issued by the Government of India, and Government of Jammu and Kashmir from time to time. The purpose of the interview was explained to the respondents and confidentiality was maintained.

**Data Analysis**

After analysing the results, the data was systematically tabulated according to exhaustive categories. Qualitative analysis was done for open ended questions and for close ended, percentages were calculated. Chi square test was used to understand gender differences in parental beliefs.

**Results and Discussions**

**Background information of parents**

**Table 1: Age of the respondents**

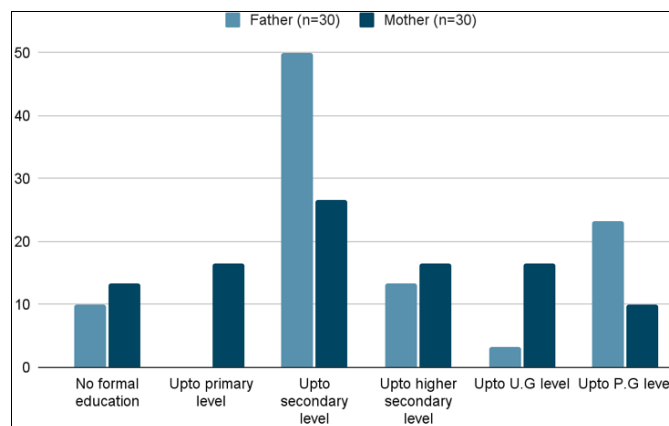
Age group (in years)	Mothers (n=30)		Fathers (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
30-39	8	26.6	3	10
40-49	16	53.3	13	43.3
50-59	6	20	12	40
60-69	0	Nil	2	6.66

Table1 shows that majority of the respondents were in the age group of 40-49 years (53% mothers and 43% fathers) whereas 40% of the fathers 20% of the mothers were in the age group of 50-59 years.

**Table 2: Educational qualifications of parents**

Educational Qualifications	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
No formal Education	3	10	4	13.3
Upto Primary level	0	Nil	5	16.6
Upto Secondary level	15	50	8	26.6
Upto Higher Secondary level	4	13.3	5	16.6
Upto U.G level	1	3.33	5	16.6
Upto P.G level	7	23.3	3	10

Table. 2 reveals that among the respondents 50% of the fathers had studied up to secondary level, 23% had studied up to Post graduation level, whereas 27% of the mothers had studied up to Secondary level, and only 10% of them had studied upto Post-Graduation.

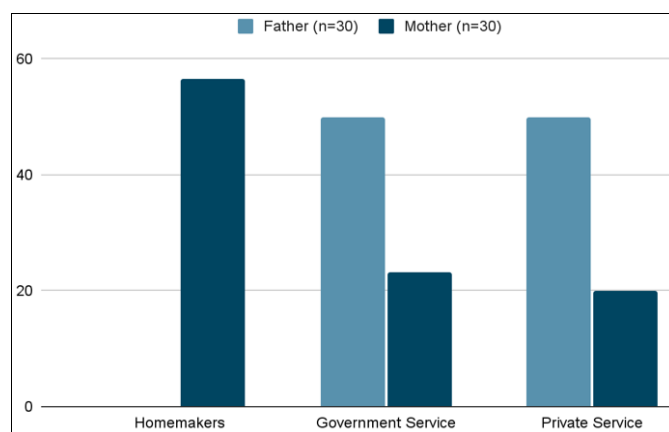


**Fig 1: Educational qualification of parents**

**Table 3: Occupation of parents**

Occupation of parents	Father(n=30)		Mother(n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
Homemakers	0	Nil	17	56.6
Government Service	15	50	7	23.3
Private Service	15	50	6	20

Table 3 shows that the majority of the mothers (57%) were homemakers, and 50% each of the father's worked in the government or private sectors, respectively.



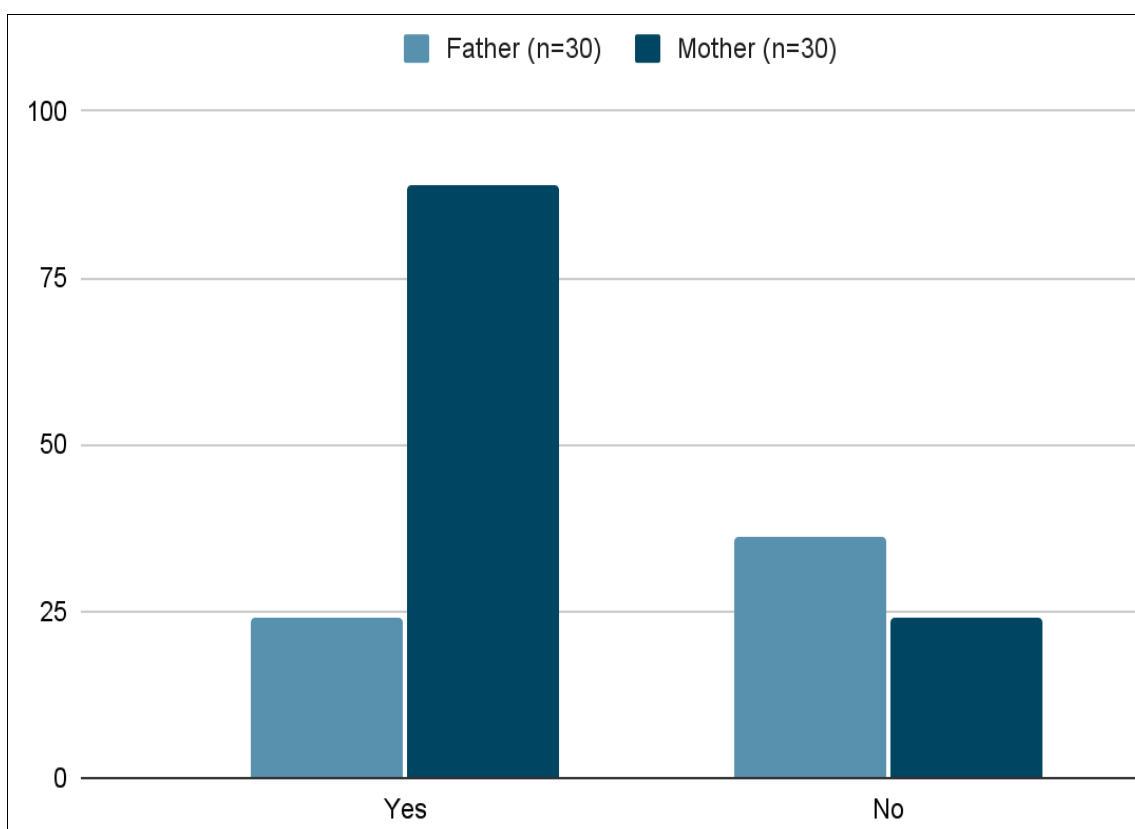
**Fig 2: Occupation of parents**

**Parents self-aspirations for education and vocation**

Table 4 indicates that 83% of the fathers and 70% of the mothers had aspired for higher education, when they were young, but the educational level of mothers suggests that most of them could study upto Higher Secondary level, and some of them up to graduation. Fathers could reach their expected educational levels. Poverty was cited as the reason for not being able to achieve the aspired levels of education or careers. Mothers' (56.6%) aspirations about their education had remained unfulfilled, and they would continue to strive for bettering their education if they had a chance, whereas 37% of the fathers would also like to continue their education given a chance (Fig 3).

**Table 4:** Aspiration of parents regarding their higher education

Responses	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
<b>Did you aspire to get higher education?</b>				
Yes	25	83.3	21	70
<b>Were you able to fulfil your aspirations?</b>				
Yes	17	56.6	13	43.3
No	13	43.3	17	56.6
Reasons for not being able to fulfil the aspirations	Father (n=13)		Mother (n=17)	
	f	%	f	%
Poverty	8	61.5	7	41.17
Family problems	5	38.46	1	5.88
Early marriage	0	Nil	4	23.52
Societal issues	0	Nil	5	29.4
If given a choice, will you continue your education now?	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
No	19	63.3	13	43.3
Yes	11	36.6	17	56.6



**Fig 3:** Parents wish to continue education now if given a chance.

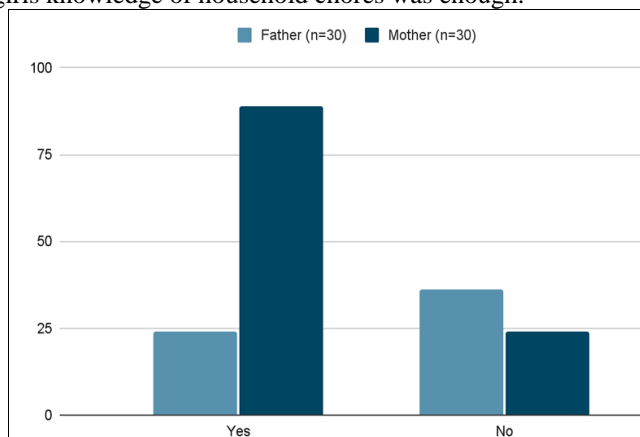
**Table 5:** Beliefs regarding education and career of girls when parents were young

Societal Beliefs	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
<b>Regarding girls' education</b>				
Not interested in educating a girl child	17	57	17	57
Wanted to educate girls but financial condition was a barrier	10	33.3	11	37
Lack of facilities were a barrier	3	10	1	3.33
Wanted to educate girls but culture and society prohibited them.	0	Nil	1	3.33
<b>Regarding career of girls</b>				
No objection with career of females	27	56.6	15	50
Had no vision regarding career of girls felt girls and believed that females were good for household chores only	13	43.3	15	50

Majority 53% (Table 5 and Fig 4) of mothers and fathers, each, said that when they were young, the society was not interested in educating the girls, whereas 33% fathers and

37% mothers said that financial conditions worked as a barrier for girls education. Regarding the career of girls 56.6% of the fathers and 50% of the mothers said that at their

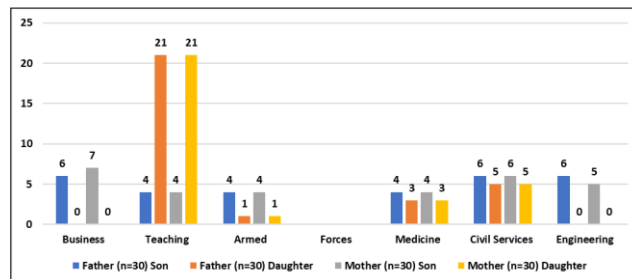
time parents had no objection, whereas 43.3% of fathers and 50% of mothers mentioned that there was no vision regarding the career of girls at that time, and it was believed that for girls knowledge of household chores was enough.



**Fig 4:** Societal beliefs regarding education of girls when the parents were young.

(97%) believed that their children should study till post-Graduation.

Fig 6 shows that majority of the mothers and fathers, 70% each, believed that teaching was the best career option for daughters, whereas 20% each of fathers and mothers believed that Civil Services and Engineering (17% mothers) were the best career option for their sons. Mothers (17%) also considered Civil Services as best career option for their daughters.



**Fig 6:** Career preferences of parents

**Table 8:** Opinion of parents regarding importance of career vs education

Parental Opinion regarding Career vs Education	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	Son		Daughter	
	f	%	f	%
Education	12	40	12	40
Career	7	23.3	6	20
All of these including marriage and household chores	11	36.6	12	40

Table 8 shows that 40% of mothers and fathers of sons' and daughters', each, believed that education was more important for children (both male and female), though 40% each of the fathers and mothers also believed that both education and career were important for the girls along with marriage at the right age and knowledge of the household chores.

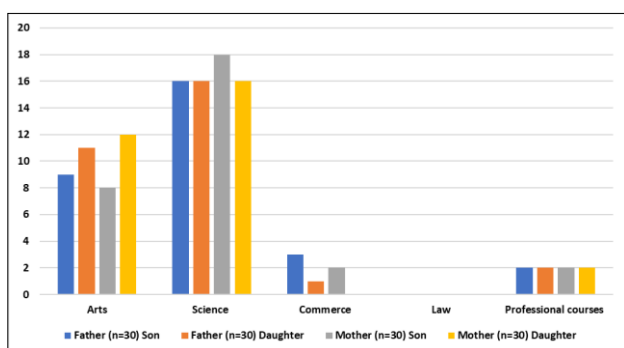
Majority of the fathers (70%) and mothers (63.3%) considered poverty (Table 9 and Fig 6) as a barrier to the educational attainment of girls, whereas 16.67% fathers and 13.3% mothers considered marriage, dowry, lack of female teachers, culture, poverty etc. as the barriers in the educational attainment of girls. No significant differences were observed in the opinion of fathers and mothers ( $\chi^2= 2.21, p<0.6969$ ).

**Table 9:** Parental beliefs about barriers to girls' education

Barriers to girls' education	Fathers (n=30)		Mothers (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
Marriage	1	3.33	3	10
Culture	0	Nil	1	3.33
Poverty	21	70	19	63.3
None of above	3	10	3	10
All the above including dowry and lack of adequate number of female teachers	5	16.6	4	13.3
$\chi^2$	2.21, p < 0.6969			

**Role of parents in education and career of children**

Regarding parental role in their children's education, Table 10 reveals that the majority (93%) of the mothers and fathers believed that their role is in providing independence, physical, financial, and emotional support. Regarding the career of children, 53% each of mothers and fathers believed that family should provide physical and financial support, and 47% each believed that they should provide guidance, moral



**Fig 5:** Parental choices regarding educational stream best for their children

**Parental beliefs regarding education and career of their children**

**Table 6:** Parents beliefs about education stream best for their child

Stream of Education for children	Father (n=30)				Mother (n=30)			
	Son		Daughter		Son		Daughter	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Arts	9	30	11	36.6	8	26.6	12	40
Science	16	53.3	16	53.3	18	60	16	53.3
Commerce	3	10	1	3.33	2	6.66	0	Nil
Professional courses	2	6.66	2	6.66	2	6.66	2	6.60

Table 6 shows that both fathers (53% each of sons' and daughters') and mothers (60% of sons', and 53% of daughters') believed that Science was the best stream of education for their children, and 27% mothers of sons and 40% mothers of daughters, 30% fathers of sons and 37% fathers of daughters believed that Arts was the best stream for their children, irrespective of their sex.

**Table 7:** Parents beliefs regarding level of education best for their children

Level of education	Father (n=30)				Mother (n=30)			
	Son		Daughter		Son		Daughter	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Upto U.G level	1	3.33	1	3.33	2	6.66	2	6.66
Upto P.G level	29	97	29	97	28	93.3	28	93.3

Table 7 shows that most of the mothers (93.3%) and fathers

and social education.

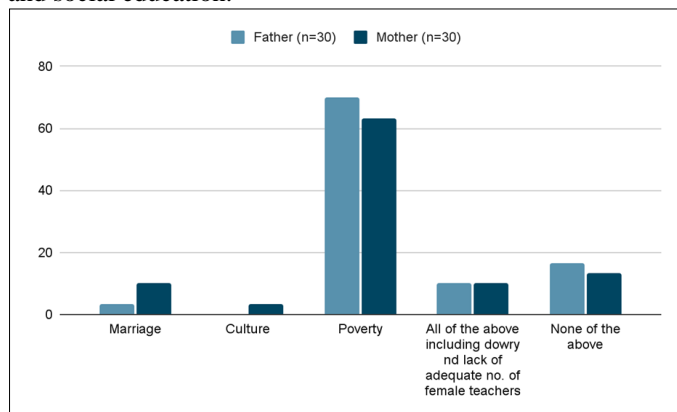


Fig 6: Perception about barriers to girls' education

Table 10: Role of parents in education and career of children

Role of Parents	Father (n=30)		Mother (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
<b>In Education</b>				
Provide independence, physical, financial support, encourage, monitor, and guide them.	28	93.3	28	93.3
<b>In career</b>				
Provide physical, financial, and mental support	16	53.3	16	53.3
Provide guidance, moral and social education	14	46.6	14	46.6
Both above	5	17	4	13.3

Table 11: Discussion with children regarding career choices

Discussion with children	Father (n=30)				Mother (n=30)			
	Son		Daughter		Son		Daughter	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	20	66.6	20	60	20	66.6	18	60
No	10	33.3	10	30	10	33.3	12	30

Majority of the mothers and fathers discussed career choices with their children, though 30% of mothers of daughters didn't do so.

Table 12: Parental beliefs regarding right age at marriage of boys and girls

Age at marriage	Mothers (n=30)		Father (n=30)	
	f	%	f	%
<b>For Boys</b>				
21-25	0	Nil	1	3.33
25-30	26	86.6	25	83.3
30-35	4	13.3	4	13.3
<b>For Girls</b>				
18-21	1	3.33	1	3.33
21-25	15	50	15	50
25-30	13	43.3	13	43.3
30-35	1	3.33	1	3.33

Most of the mothers (87%) and fathers (83%) believed that for boys (Table 11, Fig 7) was the right age at marriage 25-30 years, whereas for girls they believed (50% of mothers and fathers) 21- 25 years as the right age of marriage.

Table 12: Parents beliefs about traditional familial occupation

Can children follow Traditional occupation of the family?	Father(n=30)				Mother(n=30)			
	Son		Daughter		Son		Daughter	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	30	100	27	90	30	100	27	90
No	0	Nil	3	10	0	Nil	3	10

$\chi^2$	0.573138, p < 0.5
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Majority of the parents believed that their sons and daughters could follow the traditional familial occupations, like agriculture, is they wished, and no significant differences were observed among opinion of both parents ( $\chi^2= 0.573138, p < 0.5$ ).

**Discussion**

Parents play a vital and decisive role the life of their children, especially in collectivist cultures like in India. They determine the level of education or training that their children would achieve deciding from their own experiences, the knowledge about work and different occupations. Parents not only motivate their children but also help them in the decision-making process (Chandran, 2021) [8]. Sex differences have been of interest to scholars since long, and much of the review indicates that they do exist, especially in education and career related domains of youth, especially in developing and the developed nations. The beliefs of parents, shaped by their family, community, and culture, ultimately result in the decisions they would take regarding their children's education and career and many a times the daughters may have to face the brunt of these in the form of early marriage, consequent in leaving her education in between, and reducing her chances for education and employment. Education and employment are believed to be tools of empowerment and emancipation of women, but societal pressures may still act as barriers to these.

The present research was an endeavour to understand the beliefs of parents, living in rural area of Jammu in JKUT, regarding education and career of their youth, from gender perspective. Majority of parents were in the age group of 40-45 years, i.e., Middle Adulthood. The fathers were mostly engaged in the Government or Private sectors, whereas the mothers were home makers. There was a wide variation in the educational and work status of fathers and mothers. Most of the parents (both mothers and fathers) had aspired for higher education themselves, when they were young, but whereas fathers could reach their expected level of education, mothers could not, mostly due to poverty, and the beliefs held by their parents at the time when they were young, when early marriage of girls was preferred, and her knowledge of the household chores was preferred over education. Given a chance, the mothers were still ready to improve their educational status.

Though most of the parents themselves were not able to attain higher education they wanted their children to study till post-Graduation, regardless of their gender, a result supported by Amin, Rashid, and Ahmad (2019) [2] in Pakistan also. They considered that Science was the best stream of education for their children, both sons and daughters. Most of the parents believed that the girls should be employed. Poverty was believed to be a major barrier in the educational attainment of girls. There were no significant differences in parental beliefs about the education and career of their children in the rural area of Kharian where this study was conducted. Yadav and Yadav (2016) [37] also found that the parents had confidence in their daughter's academic achievement, hence they preferred STEM subjects (Statistical, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics) for them, so that they also acquire career choice and entrepreneurial skills. Parents have a lasting positive impact on students' interest in STEM careers (Yean and Chin, 2019) [5]. Encouragingly parents are engaging themselves in discussing the choice of subjects for their children. Gender does not seem to be a barrier in educational and career

attainment once the children are able to win the confidence of their parents.

Literacy rate in Jammu is 83.45, female literacy being 77.13, as per 2011 Census (<https://jammu.nic.in/demography/>). State/UT wise estimated female Worker Population Ratio (WPR) (in per cent) according to usual status for age group 15 years and above for year 2019-20 for J and K was 33.1% as against all India figure of 28.7% (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 14th March 2022). Parents in Jammu have understood the value of education and career for children, and quite often the mothers are found saying that, “*sahada te kuch baneya naye, par bache jinna chaan padi len*” (We could become nothing, but the children may study as much as they want). During mate selection also the parents want educated brides who will be able to look after the household and children better, and the employed bride is welcomed by most of the families in Jammu. The rural parents in the present study were not in favour of early marriage of their children and considered the right age of marriage for girls as 21 to 25 years and 25 to 30 years for boys. Yadav (2017) also found that parents believed 25 years as the ideal age of marriage for girls as by this age girls can complete post-graduation, get a job, and become financially independent.

Rural parents of Jammu considered higher education as an indicator of better career for their daughters, though Sekhar and Jayaraman (2021) [35] concluded that due to some misconceptions regarding education many parents were not willing to permit their girl child to go for higher education. Onoyase (2019) [29] found that parents in Sokoto State, in Nigeria, had unfavourable attitude toward female-child's secondary education. The attitude towards girls' education is still not favourable in the developing and the underdeveloped countries, though the SDG 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. UN Women (retrieved on 03.08.2023) reports that as compared with 10 million boys 15 million girls are out of primary school right now, and higher numbers of girls often drop out of secondary school due to early pregnancy and the expectation that they should contribute to household work.

Parents often perceived no serious type of fear related to education, but sometimes they believed that their daughters could be less responsive to family (Raouf *et al.*, 2016). Majority of respondents in the present research considered poverty, marriage, dowry, lack of female teachers, cultural beliefs as barriers in educational attainment of girls. Yadav and Yadav (2016) [37], Kaur and Kaur (2020) [18], Akinkahunsi (2019) [1], and Oyediran and Oyewole (2021) [30] have reached similar findings on parental confidence over their daughters' academic abilities, but also list factors such as early marriage, cultural beliefs, religious practices, caste system and lower economic status as barriers in some cases. The effect of lack of education or drop out leads to a vicious cycle of early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, child exploitation, poverty, and ill health from which the girls are unable to pullout.

Mothers had more positive towards schooling and education of their daughters than fathers, and factors such as cost of marriage, preference for education of sons, gender stereotypes and home responsibilities played a vital role in deciding about the educational opportunity of the girls among underprivileged communities (Kaur and Kaur (2020) [18], Oyediran and Oyewole (2021) [30] from their research on Atiba local Government Area, Oyo state, concluded that 70% of the respondents accepted that girls are discriminated upon the boys, even when they have same qualifications, and 60%

of the respondents believed that the religious belief of parents contribute towards the training of female children.

Parental factors have been related to the education and career decisions of the children. Studies have found that rural, lesser educated parents have less positive attitude regarding the girl's education and career, though the rural parents, in the present study, had lower levels of education still they believed that their sons and daughters should be better educated, at least till post-graduation. As per 2011 Census report the literacy rate for rural females of J and K was 53.36 percent and it was 70.19 percent for urban females, marked increase from the 2001 Census (36.7% and 61.9% at rural and urban level), especially for rural females (Bhat *et al.*, 2016) [5]. The attitude of parents towards the education of girls must be one of the reasons for this increase. Results of Devi (2020) [9], Rafi and Rehman (2018) [32], and Egbo (2017) [12] support the findings of this study that there was significant influence of parent's level of education, socio-economic status, and occupational background on student's career choices. Gupta (2019) [14] and Bedanta (2020) [3] found that urban and educated parents were more positive towards a girl child's education than rural parents. Though in the present study they were lesser educated, the rural parents showed no biases towards the education of male children, whereas Devi (2020) [9] and Bedanta (2020) [3] found that parents with higher educational qualifications had positive attitude towards the education of girls.

The rural respondents of the present study believed that teaching was the best career option for their daughters, whereas in case of sons they believed that Civil Services and Engineering were the best career options, though they did not have any significant gender biases regarding education and career of their children. Islam, Grossman, and Begum (2013) [15] also found that there was no systematic inherent bias in parental attitude towards children of a specific gender, and Khatri and Periwai (2020) [19] found no gender difference in the guidance provided by parents, though they concluded that the family members positively significantly affected the career decisions. Bhatia *et al.* (2020) [6], on the other hand, found significant gender differences in career decision making causality and stability.

Children respect their parents' wishes even today and may follow the career paths chosen by them, and even when they are reared outside India these values remain ingrained to some extent. Two first-generation Indian-Australian women were influenced by their parents' values as well as their own internalised pressure to gain parental approval (Freya and Southcott, 2018) [13]. Fathers' influence on career decisions was significantly more than the mothers, though the influence of both parents was significant (Kumar, 2016) [20]. From literature review, Nawabi *et al.* (2019) [26], found that parental influence on career decision making was significant and as a result the children may explore diverse paths or the path that they think their parents would approve. Results of positive influence of parents were also found by Devika and Lasitha (2019) [10], and they conclude that the children's academic and career achievement will be high if the parental support and monitoring there. Further, parents' level of education, employment, beliefs and expectations, and the parent-child connections had positive outcomes on career choices of adolescents. Children of educators indicated a slightly greater parent influence on their career choices than the children of non-educators (Tillman, 2014) [36]. Parents have no reservation about their children following the family's traditional occupation. In a study by Olaosebikan, *et al.* (2014) on

adolescents, 48.36% of the respondents agreed to parents influencing their career choice. and 21.5% of the respondents agreed to the influence of parents' line of business on their career choice. Parents with high educational background had adolescents who made more professional career choices, while adolescents whose parents had low educational background made more of business career choices (Mbagwu & Ajaegbu, 2016)<sup>[23]</sup>.

Parents have a significant influence over their children's educational and career paths, and the parents in the present study discussed the career options with their children, and were supportive of their education, showing no significant gender bias.

### Recommendations based on Findings

1. Since parents play an important role in the education and career of children, they should be involved by the schools, colleges, and Universities, so that a healthy partnership and home -education continuity is built where the information is shared, and the pupil does not face situations of apprehensions and harassment that may lead to Mental Health issues, leading to serious consequences.
2. Parents must build a healthy and supportive relationship with sons and daughters, so that they may be able to have healthy interactions regarding any issue, and the parents and children must respect each other's views, without creating any unhealthy situations at home.
3. Parents must not hold unrealistic expectations, and children must not set unrealistic goals under pressure. Each child has unique capabilities and should never be compared with another child, sibling, neighbour, or peer. This may create friction in the parent child relationship and may cause disintegration of family later in life.
4. To be successful in today's world the children need to be made independent, the scaffolding as proposed by Vygotsky, must be removed. For this parent must involve their children, irrespective of sex, in all tasks like household chores and decisions, financial matters like billings, banking etc, transport related issues so that they don't feel lost when they move to other areas for education, health related like consultation with doctors, purchase of medicines, reading necessary information before purchase, etc. This will smoothen their transition from education to career.
5. Parents must educate themselves about the educational and career promotion activities of the Government of India, and the loan schemes of Banks. There is a lot of emphasis on skill education these days. The awareness may also be spread through the panchayats and other grass root level agencies in rural areas.

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