

EXPLORING CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG WOMEN IN DAKSHINA KANNADA AND UDUPI DISTRICTS

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ABSTRACT:

Career aspirations play a significant role in determining not only the educational and professional development of young women, but also in shaping up their personal development. Therefore, without identifying the factors that influence the career aspirations of young women, it would be difficult to understand the path for gender equality and women's empowerment. The present paper, titled, Exploring Career Options and Challenges Faced by Young Women in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts is an attempt to better understand the various factors that affect the career aspirations of young women students. Primary Data was collected from students of various Government First Grade Colleges in the study area with the purpose of identifying the various factors influencing women's education and also their career aspirations. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was fit into the data which provides a clear framework for understanding the relationships among the various identified factors and more importantly helps in understanding the factors that strongly influence the career aspirations of young women.

KEYWORDS: Career aspirations, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, Educational development, Gender equality, Structural Equation Model, Women's empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts provide a fertile ground for a study of this nature. The twin districts which were undivided until 1997, have high literacy rates, diverse communities with distinct languages and culture, relatively higher economic development, a significant chunk of migrated population and a unique blend of urban and rural settings and as such offer a singular microcosm for understanding the career aspirations of female students studying in government colleges. Government Colleges serve a broad swath of socio-economic spectrum and thereby allowing us a valuable opportunity to understand the career aspirations of young women and the factors that influence it. It must be noted here that understanding the career aspirations doesn't just fulfill the academic curiosity, but a proper understanding of the factors surrounding the career aspirations is important to unlock loftier goals such as gender equality and the working women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2018).

Young women face significant obstacles during their educational journey. Parental Support, a key factor (Kaur, 2019), is influenced by societal expectations. Financial Constraints and lack of access to quality access resources can further hinder academic progress (Nayak & Mahesh, 2019). A young women's sense of control over the events in her life termed locus of control also impact their career aspirations significantly (Bandura et al, 2001). Self-efficacy, the belief of a person in their own ability to achieve a particular outcome, also influence academic engagement and career choices (ibid).

Societal influences play a key role in shaping career goals. Traditional norms and familial pressures can often prioritize marriage over professional pursuits (Ghosh & Roy 2017). Another key factor is the job

availability in the local economy because they force the young women to compare the realities of the employment market as against one's own lofty goals (natal and Mahesh 2019), a problem compounded by the lack of mobility that young women generally face in traditional families. Early Marriages, a key feature in certain communities, can further disrupt both educational goals and career aspirations.

The socio-economic background of the students plays a significant role in the educational attainment and career aspirations of young women. Daughters whose parents are highly educated tend to have higher career aspirations (Chakraborty and Mukherjee (2020) which could be attributed to greater parental support for pursuing careers. Similarly, the higher income levels of the parents correlate with better career educational and career opportunities since families with greater resources can better support the ambitions of their daughter (Govt of Karnataka, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to have a comprehensive understanding of the career aspirations of young women studying in government colleges and the various factors that influence them. The idea is to better understand these elements and their interplay with each other so that the policymakers and educators have a clear enough view of them and are thus able to design interventions and policies to dismantle the obstacles faced by the young women and help them achieve their full potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bourdieu's theory of social fields (Bourdieu, 1994b) conceptualizes career as a fight for a sequence of positions in one or more than one social fields. The interaction between personality and behavioural characteristics and one's vocational choices tends people to move into career fields that are congruent with their personal qualities (Boxford,

2021). Moreover, preferences concerning career settings may change over time: working in the more stable context of company world, accumulating experience in the world of work and growing responsibilities for family might on the one hand result in increased personal stability and more competencies to cope with external dynamics (Boxford, 2021). Further the Gen Z has well defined career expectations and career development plans but more likely the intrinsic and extrinsic factors determine their career aspirations (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

In India, secure attachment to mothers, but not fathers, was found to relate to self-esteem and career decision self-efficacy, which in turn predicted career aspirations (Bhatia et al., 2023). Gender disparities in education and employment outcomes in India, often attributed to unequal access and societal attitudes that limit women's aspirations and the importance of self-efficacy for actual education and employment outcomes is largely mediated through increased aspirations. (Roy et al., 2018). General self-efficacy significantly and positively predicts employability among financially underprivileged college students and students with higher self-efficacy exhibit better employability skills and outcomes (Wang et al., 2022). Family background determines the career aspirations of the students. Family social status and parental educational aspirations significantly impact teenage career aspirations, ambition, and educational performance. Moreover, adolescents from higher-income families tend to have higher career aspirations and better educational outcomes (Ashby & Schoon, 2010).

Major barriers to women's career advancement include - Personal/family factors : Lack of family support, family responsibilities, work-life balance challenges, Institutional factors: Gender

stereotyping, lack of transparency in promotions, inequity in compensation, lack of encouragement from superiors, Societal factors: Social taboos, perception of women as secondary earners, Organizational factors like heavy workloads and lack of resources for research appear to be more significant barriers than family commitments, Distance to workplace and lack of supportive facilities like day-care centers are practical barriers for women(M, 2022) . Women choose lower-paying, more flexible jobs to accommodate family responsibilities and even when controlling for ability, gendered beliefs persist that affects the career choices beyond rational economic decision-making (Correll, 1990).

The career aspirations of young women in India have garnered increasing attention as societal norms evolve and women's participation in higher education and the workforce grows (Wolfers, 2021). In the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka, known for high literacy rates and economic vibrancy, young women face unique opportunities and challenges in pursuing their career goals (Dinesha, 2017). This literature review explores the career aspirations of young women in these districts, the barriers they encounter, and strategies to bridge the gap between their ambitions and actual outcomes. By synthesizing regional and national studies, the review identifies key themes, including educational attainment, socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and institutional support, while highlighting research gaps specific to Dakshina Kannada and Udupi.

Educational Attainment and Career Aspirations

Dakshina Kannada and Udupi are among Karnataka's most literate districts, with female literacy rates of 79.16% and 81.25%, respectively, in 2011, significantly above the state average of

68.13% (Dinesha, 2017). These high literacy rates, particularly in Udupi, which ranks among India's top districts, suggest a strong foundation for young women's career aspirations (Dinesha, 2017). Studies indicate that education plays a pivotal role in shaping career goals, with women in urban areas of these districts increasingly pursuing professional fields such as medicine, engineering, and management (Beaman et al., 2012). For instance, Mangalore University, established in 1980 to serve Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Kodagu, has been instrumental in fostering higher education, with a notable increase in female enrolment in STEM and management programs (Mangalore University, n.d.).

However, literacy and enrolment do not always translate into career success. Research on STEM fields reveals persistent gender gaps, with women in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi less likely to pursue engineering compared to biological sciences, reflecting societal perceptions of "suitable" careers for women (Smith et al., 2024). Beaman et al. (2012) found that exposure to female role models, such as women in leadership roles, can reduce these gaps by 20–32% in adolescents' career aspirations. In Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, where women's self-help groups (SHGs) and local governance initiatives like Kudumbashree have empowered women economically, such role models are emerging but remain underrepresented in high-status professions (Naik & Murari, 2025).

Socio-Cultural Norms and Gender Roles

Socio-cultural norms significantly influence young women's career aspirations in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. Despite progressive educational metrics, traditional expectations around marriage and family responsibilities persist, particularly in rural areas (Japaridze et al., 2013). Wolfers (2021) notes that

while women aged 25–34 in OECD countries are outpacing men in tertiary education, Indian women, including those in Karnataka, face pressure to prioritize domestic roles over professional ambitions. In Dakshina Kannada, with its diverse caste composition (e.g., 18% Billava, 12–14% Bunts), and Udupi, where Tulu is the dominant language, cultural practices often reinforce early marriage, limiting career exploration.

Qualitative studies highlight that young women in these districts aspire to careers in teaching, nursing, or banking—fields perceived as stable and compatible with family life (Naik & Murari, 2025). However, aspirations for leadership roles or unconventional fields like entrepreneurship are tempered by gendered stereotypes. For example, Chugh and Sahgal (2007) argue that role theory explains women's underrepresentation in leadership, as societal expectations dictate behaviours deemed appropriate for women, such as nurturing rather than assertiveness. In Udupi, where Yakshagana and other cultural traditions thrive, women's participation in public spheres is increasing, yet career aspirations remain constrained by familial expectations (Udayavani, 2022).

Economic Constraints and Financial Inclusion

Economic factors play a dual role in shaping young women's career paths in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. These districts are economic hubs, with Dakshina Kannada known as the "Cradle of Indian Banking" due to its historical financial institutions (Dakshina Kannada, 2022). However, access to financial resources for education and entrepreneurship remains uneven, particularly for women from marginalized communities like Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), who constitute 11% of Dakshina Kannada's population (Dinesha, 2017). Research on financial

inclusion underscores that women's access to banking and microfinance is critical for career advancement, yet studies specific to these districts are scarce (Naik & Murari, 2025).

SHGs have been transformative in Karnataka, empowering rural women through micro-entrepreneurship and skill development (Naik & Murari, 2025). In Udupi, SHGs have facilitated women's entry into small-scale businesses, such as handicrafts and food processing, but these ventures rarely scale to high-growth enterprises due to limited capital and market access. For young women, economic constraints often necessitate choosing careers with immediate financial returns, such as clerical jobs, over long-term investments like medical or engineering degrees (Beaman et al., 2012).

Institutional and Policy Support

Institutional support is critical for bridging the gap between aspirations and outcomes. The establishment of Mangalore University and government initiatives like the "Pusti" scheme, which rewards school development in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, have strengthened educational infrastructure (The Hindu, 2025). However, career guidance and mentorship programs for young women are limited, particularly in rural taluks like Sullia or Karkala (Smith et al., 2024). Beaman et al. (2012) demonstrate that policy interventions, such as reserving leadership positions for women in village councils, enhance girls' aspirations and educational attainment, a model applicable to Dakshina Kannada's nine taluks.

Nationally, India's National Gender Policy (2015) aims to close gender gaps in STEM and leadership, but implementation in Karnataka's coastal districts lags due to inadequate awareness and resources

(Smith et al., 2024). Programs like Anganwadi centres in Dakshina Kannada, which support early childhood education, indirectly empower young women by reducing domestic burdens, yet they do not directly address career development (Mangalore Today, 2021). The lack of targeted vocational training and job placement services in these districts exacerbates the mismatch between aspirations and opportunities.

CHALLENGES AND RESEARCH GAPS

1. Gap Related to Career Aspirations:

Existing studies focus on women's empowerment through self-help groups in Karnataka (Nail and Murali, 2025). Moreover, the influence of regional factors, especially university programs in shaping the aspirations remains unexplored (Beaman et al., 2012; Nail & Murari, 2025). The studies on district-specific data will give more understanding on the diversity in career goals among women, which can plan educational policies as per the need in the area. There is a significant lack of research proposing and evaluating strategies to align young women's career aspirations with opportunities in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. While mentorship and vocational training are recommended broadly (Smith et al., 2024), no studies explore their feasibility or impact in these districts, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas where access to such programs is limited (Naik & Murari, 2025).

2. Gap Related to Barriers to Career progression

The present studies highlight the commonly known gender and economic constraints as

barriers for Indian women (Chugh & Sahgal, 2017; Smith et al., 2024). Some studies have identified social, cultural and economic factors influencing the career progression of young women in Dakshina Kannada & Udupi. But impact of social factors and financial barriers as a challenge for women in the Dakshina Kannada district is not documented (Dinesha, 2017). More studies on factors influencing career aspirations among young women is demanded for a better understanding.

3. Gap Related to Regional Contextual

Influences:

Recent studies provide literacy data (Dinesha, 2017) but have not explored how cultural practices like yakshagana or community norms shape career aspirations. There is a lack of context-specific research on how regional factors can be leveraged to support the career path of young women.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the career aspirations and the factors influencing their career aspirations
2. To identify the challenges faced by young women in reaching their career aspirations.
3. To Investigate Regional Contextual Influences: To explore how the unique socio-economic and cultural context of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi (e.g., high literacy, banking heritage, Tulu-speaking communities) shapes young women's

career aspirations and the challenges they encounter.

4. To explore and analyse the factors determining the Career aspirations among women students.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to only the women students between the age group of 18-25 years from the Government colleges of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. Hence it is limited to the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi jurisdiction.

METHODOLOGY

The study has used both primary and secondary source of data collection. A sample size of 439 girl student respondents was collected from the Government colleges of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. A structured questionnaire was administered and the data was collected. The data was coded and analysed using SPSS software. Secondary data was collected from various journals, books, reports and online sources.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This study is limited to the semi-urban and rural students of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts
2. The analysis done and the conclusion arrived at are based on 439 respondents which may or may not be biased.
3. The respondents are between the age group of 17 to 25 years only. Basically, the students pursuing their under graduation and post-graduation and considered for the study.

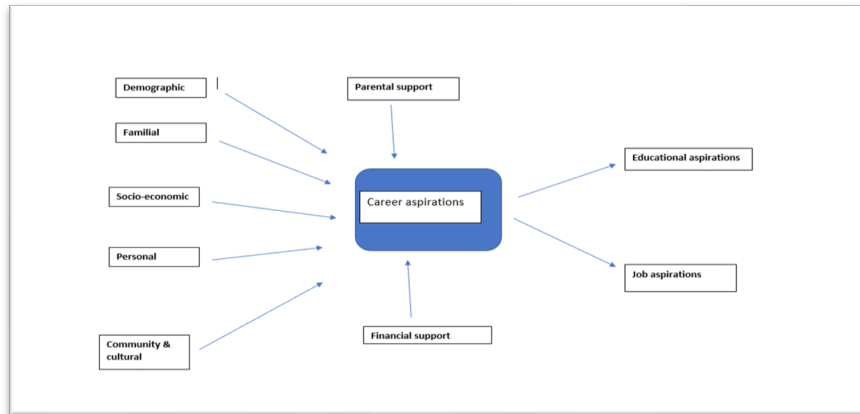


Fig 1: Proposed Model based on the Literature Review

source: literature review

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic analysis: The study provided the following information based on the data collected.

		Count	Column N %
Age	17 - 20	218	49.8%
	21 - 23	220	50.2%
Marital Status	Married	4	0.9%
	Single	435	99.1%
Qualification	UG	194	44.2%
	PG	245	55.8%
Parental Education Levels	Illiterate	17	3.9%
	Below SSLC	180	41.0%
	SSLC	102	23.2%
	PUC	39	8.9%
	Graduation	74	16.9%
	Post-Graduation	27	6.2%
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹10,000	31	7.1%
	₹10,000 – 20,000	109	24.8%
	₹ 20,000- 30,000	127	28.9%
	₹ 30,000- 40,000	108	24.6%
	More than ₹ 40,000	64	14.6%
Purpose of education	Gaining Knowledge	77	17.5%
	For a degree certificate	19	4.3%
	Earning a job	340	77.4%
	Getting better matrimonial matches	3	0.7%
	No specific purpose	0	0.0%

Table 1: Demographic Analysis, Source: Survey

The above data on the personal profile reveals that 48.8% of the respondents are of the age group of 17-20 years and 50.2% of the age group 21-23 years. Among the respondents 44.2% were undergraduate students and 55.8% Post graduate students. 41% of the respondents' parents were with the qualification below SSLC, 23.2% with SSLC qualification. A very less percentage of 3.9% were illiterates. 77.4% respondents intended to earn a job after graduation.

	Frequency	Percent
Marriage decisions taken at home	56	12.8
Higher fees in colleges	110	25.1
Lack of support from home	131	29.8
Parental/ Household unwillingness to send girls to hostels	28	6.4
Intrinsic (Own) Motivation	57	13.0
Convenience with transportation and proximity to the colleges	25	5.7
Co-Education system in the colleges	8	1.8
Gender discrimination	24	5.5
Total	439	100.0

Table 2: *Obstacles for Women's Education*, Source: Survey

The major obstacle for women's education with 29.8% was lack of support from home, 25.1% was higher fees at the institutions, with the least of 1.8% being co-education system in colleges.

	Total		
	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Interest/ Motivation	439	4.4	.7
Parental/Household Support	439	4.2	.7
Financial Situation	439	3.7	.9
Proximity of the college to one's home	439	3.6	.8

Table 3: *Major Factors Affecting Women's Education*, Source: Survey

The above table shows that Interest and motivation influences the highest with mean score of 4.4 and parental support with a mean score of 4.2.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control on completion of Education and further education	439	1	5	3.64	1.109

Table 4: *Control on education and future career planning*, Source: Survey

The above table indicates that on average with a mean score of 3.64 (SD of 1.109) indicate a **mean score of 3.64** (SD = 1.109) believe that completion of education and further education are moderately to highly under their control.

	Frequency	Percent
No	86	19.6
May be	12	2.7
Yes	341	77.7
Total	439	100.0

Table 5: *Career Aspirations*, Source: Survey

The above response table shows that 77.7% of the women students have career aspirations and 19.6% have no career aspirations.

Challenges	Mean		Standard Deviation	
Lack of Interest/ Motivation	3.3		1.1	
Lack of self confidence	3.4		1.0	
Lack of Parental/Household permission	3.2		1.0	
Marriage plans by parents	3.5		1.2	
Parental unwillingness to allow your relocation for job purpose	3.4		1.0	

Table 6: *Challenges for Career aspirations*, Source: Survey

The major challenges faced by women students on career planning is led by marriage plans by parents with a mean score of 3.5. Lack of self-confidence and parent's unwillingness for relocation for job purpose score 3.4 and lack of self-interest has a mean score of 3.3. all the above factors become equally important for the women to think beyond and reach their career aspirations.

	Total		
	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Interest/ Motivation	436	4.4	.7
Parental/Household Support	438	4.2	.8
Financial Difficulties in the Household	436	3.7	1.0
Availability of job near one's home	438	3.7	1.0
Community Attitude towards women working	438	3.8	.7
Work life balance	429	3.8	.9

Table 7: *Factors affecting Women's Career opportunities*, Source: Survey

The above table indicates that interest/motivation and parental support influences the highest with mean score of 4.4 and 4.2 respectively, whereas the other factors moderately influence the career opportunities having a mean score at 3.7-3.8 range.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	186	42.4
No	170	38.7
May be	83	18.9
Total	439	100.0

Table 8: Gender bias (male sibling given more freedom and opportunity in pursuing a career)

Source: Survey

42.4% of the students have agreed that their male siblings are given freedom to choose their career compared to them, whereas 38.7% have disagreed to the statement.

		Job aspirations					
		No		May be		Yes	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Age	17 - 20	54	24.8%	8	3.7%	156	71.6%
	21 - 23	32	14.5%	4	1.8%	184	83.6%
Marital Status	Married	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	100.0%
	Single	86	19.8%	12	2.8%	337	77.5%
Education	UG	53	27.3%	9	4.6%	132	68.0%
	PG	33	13.5%	3	1.2%	209	85.3%
Parental Education Levels	Illiterate	3	17.6%	2	11.8%	12	70.6%
	Below SSLC	32	17.8%	5	2.8%	143	79.4%
	SSLC	22	21.6%	2	2.0%	78	76.5%
	PUC	4	10.3%	1	2.6%	34	87.2%
	Graduation	19	25.7%	2	2.7%	53	71.6%
	Post Graduation	6	22.2%	0	0.0%	21	77.8%
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹10,000	8	25.8%	0	0.0%	23	74.2%
	₹10,000 – 20,000	22	20.2%	5	4.6%	82	75.2%
	₹ 20,000- 30,000	30	23.6%	3	2.4%	94	74.0%
	₹ 30,000- 40,000	11	10.2%	2	1.9%	95	88.0%
	More than ₹ 40,000	15	23.4%	2	3.1%	47	73.4%

Table 9: Demographic variables with Job aspirations, Source: Survey

Job aspirations with	chi square value	d.f	p	
Age	9.258	2	0.010	Sig
Marital Status	Fishers exact test	.	0.560	NS
Education (current)	19.375	2	0.000	HS
Parental Education Levels	Fishers exact test	.	0.372	NS
Monthly Family Income	Fishers exact test	.	0.168	NS

Table 10: Analysis on the Association between demographic variables and career aspirations

The association between age and the career aspirations is significant. The association between the parental education level and the career aspirant is not significant and there is no association between income level and career aspirations.

Structured Equation modelling (SEM) – Path Analysis

Under Structured Equation Modelling (SEM) efforts were made to find the relationship between all these parameters together simultaneously. The analysis is given below

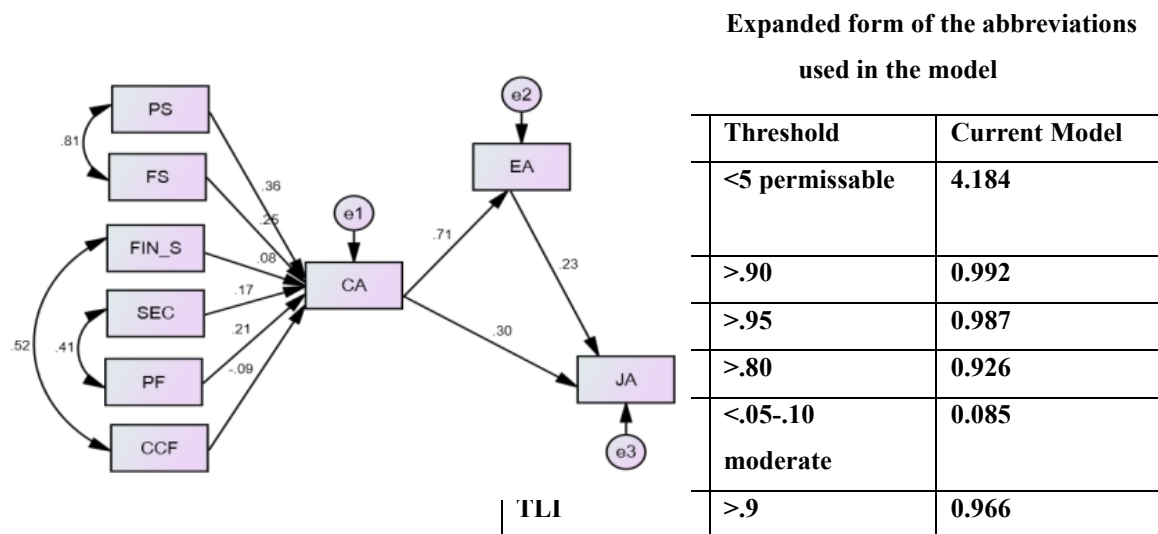


Fig 2: SEM -Path Model

Source: Compiled using Survey Data

Standardized Regression Weights

	Estimate	P VALUE
CA <--- PS	.362	.000
CA <--- FS	.247	.000
CA <--- FIN_S	.079	.058
CA <--- SEC	.169	.000
CA <--- PF	.212	.000

CA <--- CCF	-.088	.075
EA <--- CA	.706	.000
JA <--- CA	.296	.000
JA <--- EA	.228	.000

Model Fit Analysis

Analysis of Model fit indices showed that all the indices are at the permissible level. It shows that the model is fit and impact of one parameter on the other can be considered. SEM analysis can be taken into consideration for the study. SEM analysis showed that Parental support (PS) has an impact on Career aspirations, Family support (FS) showed that financial resources provided greater flexibility to pursue educational and Career aspirations. Although the Beta is positive, the relationship between Financial Support (FIN-S) and career aspirations is not significant with p value being 0.058. Financial support alone may not substantially improve the Career aspirations. Socio-economic condition (SEC) significantly contributes to reaching the Career aspirations. Personal factors (PF) have a significant positive influence on Career aspirations, indicating that motivation, self-confidence contribute to career aspirations. Community and Cultural factors (CCF) had a negative relationship with Career aspirations (Beta value is -0.088) and has no statistically significant effect on career aspirations (p value is > 0.05). Career aspirations have the strongest relationship with Job aspirations (JA) in the model and Career aspirations significantly influence Educational aspirations (EA) among the students. The Beta values of .296 showing the effect of Career aspirations on Job aspiration and beta value of .228 showing the effect of Educational aspirations on Job aspirations the details prove that the model is completely verified and model has been accepted with Structured Equation Modelling (SEM)-Path model.

The standardized coefficient of **0.362** indicates a strong positive influence of parental support safety on career aspirations being the strongest predictor among the other variables. Students having parental support are more capable of reaching their career aspirations. Individuals who feel secure and supported are more capable of adapting to career challenges.

These findings suggest that **career aspirations act as the central mediating construct in the model**, linking personal, social, and financial factors to educational and job-related aspirations.

The SEM results confirm that the proposed model demonstrates **good overall fit and strong explanatory power**. Parental support, family support, social environment, and personal factors significantly enhance career aspirations, while financial skills and community and cultural challenges do not exert significant effects. Career aspirations emerges as the most important determinant of educational and job aspirations, highlighting its critical role in shaping future career outcomes.

KEY FINDINGS

In the present study, the SEM analysis explains the relationship among the factors determining the career aspirations among young women.

1. Significant predictors of Career Aspirations: The SEM shows that Parental Support is the most powerful predictor with a beta = 0.362, $p < 0.001$, which indicates how parental support becomes a major

determinant to reach their career aspirations. Family support also shows a significant influence on career aspirations with a $\beta = 0.247$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that family support also has great influence in reaching their career aspirations. Personal factors ($\beta = .212$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrate that self-motivation and self-confidence also reinforce aspirations. Finally, social environment exhibits a significant influence on the career aspirations among young women.

2. **Non-significant Predictors of Career Aspirations:** Two of the identified factors—Financial Support and Community & Cultural factors have failed to meet the threshold for significance level at 5%. Financial support with $p = 0.058$ implies that financial support does not notably influence the career aspirations among young women. Similarly, Community & Cultural factors, with a negative β (-0.088) and $p = 0.075$, display a statistically insignificant relationship with Career Aspirations.
3. **Downstream Aspirations and Major Outcome Relationships:**
 - a. **Career Aspirations to Educational Aspirations:** This pathway represents the strongest structural relationship identified in the entire model ($\beta = 0.706$, $p < 0.001$), proving that the young women who are highly adaptable are predominantly inclined toward exploring education and self-reliance.
 - b. **Career Aspirations to Job Aspirations:** Exhibits a robust, statistically significant positive

path ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that greater adaptability directly raises standard employment ambitions of young women.

- c. **Educational Aspirations to Job Aspirations:** Displays a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.001$), which reveals that interest in education and standard employment goals of the young women actively complement and reinforce one another rather than creating a career conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study shows a striking gap between ambition and opportunity for young women studying in the government colleges of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of the Karnataka State of India. While educational advancements in the region have cultivated exceptionally strong career and entrepreneurial aspirations, such ambitions are actively hindered by socio-cultural constraints of the region, familial restrictions on mobility which is typically placed on young women, and a lack of support at home.

The structural model proves the importance of a foundation of parental support and financial security on a young woman student's career aspiration. Ultimately, higher literacy rate is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition in translating the high aspirations of the young women students studying in government colleges into actual workforce empowerment. In order to achieve actual workforce empowerment of women, targeted institutional interventions—such as context specific guidance by local mentors and financial relief—coupled with a

concerted effort to shift conservative community attitudes toward women in the workforce.

Young women in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi exhibit strong career aspirations, driven by high literacy rates and access to educational institutions like Mangalore University. However, socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and limited institutional support create significant barriers to realizing these ambitions. While SHGs and policy interventions show promise, targeted efforts are needed to address gendered stereotypes, enhance financial inclusion, and provide mentorship. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies and qualitative insights specific to these districts to better understand and bridge the gap between aspirations and outcomes.

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