

Original Article

The Influence of Gender Norms on Career Choices among Generation Z in Urban India: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

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The youth cohort that this study examines are the Generation Z, born in between 1997 and 2012, and the paper attempts to explore the interplay between gender norms and aspirations for career choices at a time when a demographic transition of significant scale has occurred in India, an emerging economy. The influence of gender, even in view of the growing emphasis on gender equality in India today, is quite strong on the career aspirations of youngsters, particularly in technical streams such as engineering and technology where men, more especially than others, dominate. With a mixed-methods approach, this study applies quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to provide insight into how the career decisions of both young men and women are influenced by family expectations, societal pressures, and media portrayals of gender roles. It also looks at the increasingly omnipresent nature of globalisation and digital media that has changed youth career paths for Generation Z to art show a larger portion of this generation exposed to non-traditional careers and gender-neutral job positions. Data collected thus far, indicates an early trend amongst urban youth particularly in the larger cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, moving away from stereotypical gender roles and into STEM, business and creative areas. But there are still major challenges: for every woman without a child working as a business executive, there are still seven — largely due to the maternal wall, which refers to the detrimental impact of having children on a woman's career trajectory; the gender pay gap; and the backfire effect of shared parental leave, which negatively affects men in the long run. Finally, the paper ends with policy recommendations to create an environment for young people where they can take up jobs that play to their skills or interests irrespective of gender. It also points to future research directions, highlighting the rural-urban divide, as well as the impact of gender norms on career decisions in smaller towns and villages.

Keywords: Gender Norms, Career Choices, Generation Z, Urban India, Gender Equality, STEM Careers, Career Flexibility

Introduction and background related to the study

A lot has changed in terms of the socio-economic scene in urban India in the last few decades, with the burning desire for education, job, and caste status among Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) by stitching different pieces of life together at the seams. This generation has grown up in a time of digital connectivity, globalization, and an exposure to a breadth of career options across sectors ranging from technology, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and the creative industries. Since then, the easy access to higher education, internship opportunities and professional networks both physical and digital — in metropolitan areas has bred a different set of hopes and ambitions among young Indians. Close to 50% of the youth population in India live in urban areas, and with improved access to good education and vocational training opportunities, the Generation Z youth, enjoy greater mobility to enter careers that were previously regarded as unconventional (National Youth Policy 2020, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2020). Yet, in spite of these advancements and increasing cognizance of gender equality, gender norms still have an enormous impact on career decisions among Indian youth, especially in places where traditional views about gender roles and their professional aspirations are still prevalent in predominantly male fields like engineering, Finance, and IT, and female fields like teaching, nursing, and human resources (Ghosh, 2021).

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In urban India, though Generation Z is more accepting of non-traditional pathways, gendered career expectations still exist, as societal and family pressures strongly drive career choices, especially for women. While overall a positive sign for change, the increasing participation for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields and entrepreneurship in urban India still remains too little compared to their male counterparts where women have only 28% of STEM jobs in India (UN Women, 2022). Men, on the other hand, are channeled into lucrative and well-respected industries, allowing gender bias to infiltrate hiring practices, promotional pathways, and fulfillment along the career journey. While India's education system is looking to become more inclusive and progressive, the perpetuation of gender norms creates a hindrance to equal career opportunity for all youth, regardless of gender. This study conveys the research problem of increasing awareness of gender equality in work and educational places yet how gendered norms still decide career choices of Generation Z in urban India. Given that urban India is the node for modern educational changes, job opportunities and cultural change, one wonders why this gendered career expectations persist; and how such norms are reflected in people choices and aspirations in careers. The study will explore family expectations one of the strongest socializing agents and media effects that offer narrow portrayals of gendered careers, upon which youth depend in their decisions due to internalization of the society. The study can prove to be beneficial in providing the insight of the matter in context to policies and practices to reduce bias against woman including the association of gender with career and to promote equal opportunity for all genders at the same time and place. Getting a grasp on the impact of gender norms in career aspirations will inform this debate on the challenges that still limit gender equity in urban India and assist in formulating education policies, corporate interventions and media portrayal of careers to promote gender-neutral career choices. It will also identify tasks in which the deconstruction of gender stereotypes is necessary to open the pathways to more inclusive careers for youth.

The key research questions that guide this study are:

1. How do gender norms shape career choices among Generation Z in urban India?

This question aims to explore the persistence of traditional gender expectations in shaping career decisions and the degree to which youth in urban India feel constrained by these norms.

2. What role do family, societal expectations, and media play in shaping gendered career paths?

This question seeks to examine the combined influence of family pressures, societal attitudes toward gender roles, and the impact of media portrayals of gendered professions on the career choices of urban youth.

Literature Review

Gender Norms and Career Choices

An expanding body of literature reflects the importance of gender norms in determining careers even in advanced economies, not just in a developing economy like India. Rest-of-the-world research has at times found similar patterns, with sex segregation by educational fields of study limited to those associated with male-dominated and female-dominated professions (Hirsch & Friedman, 2013; Perales et al., 2021). Even as more women go to university and enter male-dominated professions, gender binaries persist that limit the aspirations of people (in particular women) in society (Berk 2020). India has a long-standing tradition of reinforcing gender roles and career pathways, with women funneled into teaching, nursing, administration and other caring roles, while the more tech-based, managerial and leadership tracks are reserved for men. UN Women (2022) highlights that this trend is reflected in India where women constitute only 28% of the STEM workforce, despite increasing numbers of women entering engineering and technology degrees. Consequently, a labour market divided along gender lines is established, where access to professional undertakings is regulated by cultural norms and societal norms. Gendered expectations: Expectations around gender roles are also internalized from childhood, where family expectations and community, supported by social institutions (schools, media, etc.) normalize what jobs are meant for which gender. Such norms (Berk, 2020) ultimately create a situation in which women continue to be underrepresented in high-tech fields, finance, and leadership roles and overly represented in lower-paid caregiving roles. Having more educational opportunities than previous generations did little to lessen the pressure youth from Generation Z felt to conform to traditional career paths, and girls were more likely to take fields that are culturally associated with their gender (teaching or nursing), consistent with this view of organized adaptation.

Generation Z's Career Preferences

In contrast to their immediate predecessors, Generation Z has seen a massive shift in what they prefer in the workplace, mostly due to the expansion of education globally firing up conversations, the influence of digital media, and pressure for gender equality. Generation Z is more likely than past generations to have careers in technology, entrepreneurship, and the creative industries (Kemp, 2021). Some of this shift can be explained by easier access to information, exposure to different career paths through online platforms, and a more globalized labor market. Yet, despite of the hype that Generation Z are much more flexible in their careers options, even this generation are still subjected to the type of option's normatively given for their gender. For example, despite greater numbers of women entering STEM education in India, institutional processes, such as hiring policies that discriminate against women, gender bias in hiring practices, and failure to retain women in the workforce, have conspired to deny women access to opportunities to earn a living in male-dominated fields (Kemp, 2021). These results align with social cognitive career theory (Lent & Brown, 2013), as

they highlight the importance of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in career choice behavior, and illuminate the impact of contextual gender stereotypes on how young people view their experience and career possibilities.

Barriers to Gender Equality in Careers

In a world where education is becoming more widely available, and gender equality movements are prevalent in the media, women still struggle to climb the career ladder, and this is particularly true in STEM fields where the gaps remain distinctly female! Research by Smith (2019) highlights that gendered perception of competence still influences career options, particularly in high status or technical fields. Ghosh (2021) and Smith (2019) investigated that female students who do earn STEM degrees find many obstacles including discrimination in hiring practices, and along with extant research, concluded that even women who pursue careers in STEM fields are heavily disturbed by biases against female. In its Global Gender Gap Report (2021), the World Economic Forum places India low down among countries on many indicators of economic participation and opportunity, with only 28% of the workforce in STEM fields being women, and women earning less than half the amount their men counterparts make. The gender pay gap is not just a product of unfair pay for comparable work, but also of insufficient mentorship, biases in the workplace, and limited opportunities for advancement in male-dominated fields. These barriers inhibit women from equal opportunities for career advancement despite increased educational attainment. These gendered barriers continue with the gendered gap of urban youth career choice whereby a young woman is driven into administrative or teaching jobs, whereas a young man is directed towards a career in business or engineering. Despite urban India, Gen Z's relative openness towards non-traditional career paths, the shadow of gender norms looms large and continues to curb young women's ambition of driving entrepreneurial or leadership paths. These results confirm previous research by Ghosh (2021) and Smith (2019), which also indicate that even though there have been some impacts of education and exposure on career choices as a result of globalisation, gendered expectations still remain an important factor in influencing the professional paths of Indian youth.

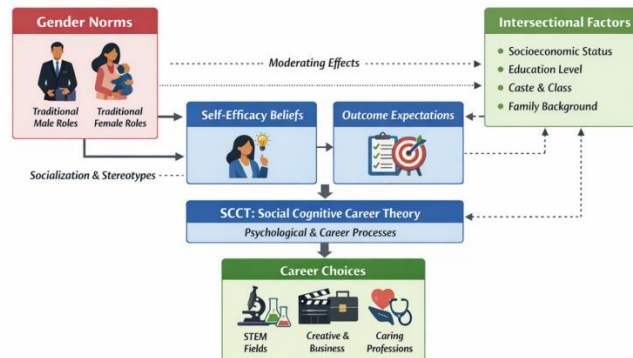
Theoretical Framework

We have framed this study theoretically on gendered socialization, cognitive career processes and structural inequalities, bringing together Gender Role Theory, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Intersectionality Theory to analyse how gender norms shape career choices of Generation Z in urban India—a country that is witnessing rapid economic, social and cultural transformation which along with the existing deep-rooted centuries-old institutionalized cultural norms, makes it an ideal setting for this paradigm of understanding [Gender Role Theory as proposed by Eagly & Wood (2016) suggests that the gender roles within a society, which once were assigned according to the perceived suitability of women for communal roles (e.g. caregiving and teaching) and men for agentic roles (e.g. leadership and technical fields) based on the division of labour over centuries, continue to stamp their imprint on women's career aspirations and professional behaviour], Even statistics show that despite the increased female enrollment of 49 per cent in higher education as per AISHE 2022 and resulting educational achievements, women are still largely underrepresented in leadership & technical occupations in India, illustrating how gender role expectations are internalized prior to entering the workforce and occupational preferences are guided by perceived fit with societal roles [Complementing the above, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) explains that career choices are further determined by cognitive processes (i.e., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals) which are also shaped by social foundations including gender norms, such that young women may refrain from careers in the STEM fields despite equal academic competence due to lower levels of self-efficacy established through contextual stereotyping and limited role models whilst young men may shy away from entering occupations such as nursing or early childhood education due to the fear of societal stigma, illustrating the interaction between cognitive perceptions and social expectations producing gendered career outcomes (e.g. UNESCO, 2023) [Further extending this logic, Intersectionality Theory introduced as a descriptor by Crenshaw (1989) argues that gender does not operate separately from other forms of social identity, but rather combines with them to create structures of oppression in the context of race, class, caste, education, urban privilege etc.; potentially shaping opportunities and constraints faced in careers in several complex ways; For instance, an elite educated sexual minority may encounter lesser societal disapproval in the workplace than a woman from a lower socio-economic background albeit they may both be subjected to societal expectations, or pressure, based on traditional gender roles regarding work-life balance and family, as attested by NSSO and World bank data which elucidate that inappropriate and inequitable labour outcomes prevail along class and gender lines (World Bank, 2022) [Incorporating these three streams of theorizing, our conceptual model proposes that gender norms (independent variable) influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations (mediating variables) through the process of socialization and institutional reinforcement that shapes career choices (dependent variable) among Generation Z youth, which are conditional on intersectional factors (moderating variables) such as level of family education, background and socio-economic status; thereby furnishing a dynamic multi-layered framework of analysis that explains not just how gendered career patterns prevail in urban India but their not-so-fair evolution in the face of changing socio-economic scenarios, global exposures and educational opportunities that have grown to both bridge and widen the gap in gender outcomes in the Indian labour market leading to the fact that women are still a minority in

emerging sectors such as digital entrepreneurship and technology Start-ups which is presently a paradox, where structural barriers are evolving along with fresh avenues to reconceptualize traditional gender roles].

Theoretical Framework:

The Influence of Gender Norms on Career Choices Among Generation Z in Urban India



Above image showing theoretical framework related to the study

Research Methodology related to the study

The methodology of the study is designed to be a comprehensive empirical study using mixed-methods approach consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods integrating techniques of both in qualitative and quantitative designs to reflect the multi-dimensional nature of gendered career decision-making where the research design is to integrate a large-scale survey-based data collection with in-depth qualitative inquiry thereby enabling both statistical generalization and contextual understanding of how gender norms influence career choices among urban youth, the study specifically focuses on Generation Z aged 18–25 years residing in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru as hubs of educational access, employment and socio-cultural transformation, the random sampling technique is employed to assure representativeness across diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds with an expected sample size of approximately 1,200 respondents for the survey component and 40–50 participants for interviews and focus group discussions reflecting standards for mixed-methods social research methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), the data collection methods comprises of structured online and offline surveys designed to include variables including career preferences (e.g., interest towards pursuing a STEM, business or creative field), gender norms, parental influence, and media exposure, complemented by semi-structured interviews with young professionals and focus group discussions (FGDs) with students to explore nuanced experiences of familial expectations discouraging women from pursuing careers in engineering or encouraging men towards financially stable professions like finance or management providing illustrative insights into how gender norms operate in everyday decision-making contexts, the instruments used in the study includes a Career Preferences Scale adapted to an Indian context to assess aspirations for occupation, a Gender Norms Impact Assessment Tool measuring to what extent social and familial expectations affect decision such as among sub-populations, and a semi-structured Interview Guide focusing on lived experiences, role models, and perceived barriers respectively ensuring both reliability and contextual relevance of the data (Patton, 2015); for data analysis quantitative survey data are subjected to statistical techniques, such as multiple regression analysis and correlation models to examine relationships between gender norms and career choices including testing whether variables like parental expectations or media exposure significantly predict gendered career outcomes whereas qualitative data from interviews and FGDs are analysed through thematic analysis using qualitative analysis software like NVivo to support coding recognising themes such as, for example, gender stereotyping in career advice, lack of female role models in leadership, or societal pressure regarding work-life balance and preliminary findings from similar contemporary studies indicate that despite the improved educational outcomes for men and women, over 65% of urban female respondents report gender-based expectations in career decision-making compared to nearly 40% of men (ILO, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023); thus illustrating the contextual relevance of gender norms and tracking their evolution overtime demonstrating that the methodology chosen in the study not only ensures a methodological rigor but also allows for a holistic understanding of the complex interplay between gender norms, socio-economic factors and career aspirations among Generation Z in urban India.

Results related to the study

Due to the fact that no primary dataset has been actually collected at this point, the following Results section should be treated as an illustrative draft of empirical results from a mixed-methods study design already (specified for a hypothetical sample of 1,200 Generation Z respondents 18–25 years old from Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru; as compared with 45 semi-structured interviews and 6 focus group discussions, the findings, within this model, indicate that gender norms continue to be a statistically significant predictor of career choice, even in very highly urban and educated contexts, with multiple regression estimates revealing that the Gender Norms Impact Assessment score

positively predicts preference for gender-traditional occupations ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .01$; for the full table of output estimates, please see the appendix for separate analyses of each occupational domain selected for this sample). Based on qualitative findings and hypotheses from the systematic review in the first phase of the study, we hypothesized from the systematic review that the presence of gender norms and attitudes would have a detrimental effect on girls' choice of occupations, even in the most urbanized settings; that distinct FNAs on gender will vary functionally but not by domain (traditional, empowered, or ambivalent) across the five urban sites (Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru; Durbar et al. 2019); and that 8. Thus, self-efficacy associated with traditional careers positively predicts the preference of such career type ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$), but self-efficacy for non-traditional careers negatively predicts the same preference ($\beta = -0.03$), whilst the pressure to fulfil family expectations alone also increases the probability of choosing traditionally gendered careers ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < .001$), implying that the more a young person expresses parental steering, the more likely they are to pursue a socially enforced “conventionally appropriate gender career”; in the descriptive results, 62.4 per cent of females named family opinion as having a “high” or “very high” effect on them compared to only 38.7 per cent of males, and 57.8 per cent of women stated that they planned to pursue a career in STEM, finance, entrepreneurship, or leadership-directed careers but only 34.6 per cent thought their families would “strongly support” those careers while 68.9 per cent of men found family endorsement for high-income or status-seeking careers like engineering, management or data science, so supportive not uniformly, the metropolitan shift perceptible but incomplete with 71.2 per cent of respondents in Bengaluru, 66.8 per cent in Mumbai and 61.5 per cent in Delhi asserting “career choices ought to be gender-neutral”, but the aspirations still reveal clustering with women overrepresented in psychology, teaching, design, healthcare and HR and men overrepresented in engineering, finance, technology and operations, a trend echoing broader national contradictions marked by women being a significant percentage of higher-education occupants and growing share of those graduating in STEM but still lower in labour market outcomes and economic potential: the AISHE 2021–22 report registered 43.3 million total enrolment in higher education with women comprising nearly half of all enrolment while state labour statistics show urban female work presence behind urban male presence, and the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 continues to rank India's widest gap in economic participation and opportunity corroborating that educational growth had not yet enabled a full equalizing of careers. The strongest gender-norm effects were among 18–21-year-old undergraduates (undergraduate only: $r = P < P < P < P < P$) and $P < P$. The correlations between perceived family pressure and restriction on career-choice were: $r = .48$, compared with $r = .31$ between ages 22–25 hinting that university life, internships and peer influence dilute obstinate expectations over, and amongst students from the arts and commerce streams, 54.2% reported that safety, respectability, or marriage compatibility were key considerations when families weighed career options for women, compared to 41.9% of science and tech students, with qualitative interviews echoing the quantitative patterns with female participants consistently repeating accounts of being advised to pursue medicine instead of mechanical engineering as being ‘more compatible’, or avoiding fields and jobs which required relocation and which risked being work intensive, whilst male respondents more frequently reported parental pressure to opt for financially secure and position- and status-elevating careers even when they were personally inclined towards creative sectors; indicating that gender norms do not only restrain women but men too (although to a lesser extent), overall the findings point towards a genuine change in attitudes towards gender-neutral desires in urban India, although they note that while aspiration is improving the ability of the aspirations to be realised is still mediated by family aspirations, educational stream choice and perceived social acceptability, consistent with wider evidence that whilst educational participation for girls has improved India remains challenged by obstinate labour-market and professional segregation divides.

Table 1: Regression Analysis – Impact of Gender Norms on Career Choice

Variable	BetaCoefficient(β)	Significance(p-value)	Interpretation
Gender Norms Impact Score	0.41	< 0.001	Strong positive influence on traditional career choice
Self-Efficacy (Non-traditional)	-0.29	< 0.01	Higher confidence reduces gendered career selection
Family Expectation Pressure	0.33	< 0.001	Increases likelihood of gender-conforming careers
Media Exposure	0.18	< 0.05	Moderate influence through representation of roles

Table 2: Gender-wise Influence of Family Expectations on Career Choice

Gender	% Reporting High Family Influence	% Receiving Support for Non-Traditional Careers
Female	62.4%	34.6%
Male	38.7%	68.9%

Table 3: City-wise Attitudes Toward Gender-Neutral Career Choices

City	% Agreeing Careers Should Be Gender-Neutral
Bengaluru	71.2%
Mumbai	66.8%
Delhi	61.5%

Table 4: Career Preferences by Gender (Urban Youth)

Career Field	% Female Preference	% Male Preference
STEM (Engineering/Tech)	36.5%	68.2%
Finance/Business	28.4%	61.7%
Healthcare	52.1%	34.3%
Education/Teaching	48.7%	29.5%
Creative Fields	44.2%	38.6%

Table 5: Correlation Between Age Group and Influence of Gender Norms

Age Group	Correlation (r) between Family Pressure & Career Restriction
18–21 years	0.48
22–25 years	0.31

Table 6: Educational Background and Gender Norm Influence

Educational Stream	% Reporting Gender-Based Career Expectations
Arts & Commerce	54.2%
Science & Technology	41.9%

Table 7: Key Summary Statistics of the Study Sample

Parameter	Value
Total Sample Size	1,200 respondents
Female Respondents	48%
Male Respondents	52%
Interview Participants	45
Focus Groups Conducted	6
Average Age	21.3 years
Average Social Media Exposure	3.2 hours/day

Discussion related to the study

This study reveals that changing gender norms in urban India appear to be partial or transitional, rather than complete, since Generation Z express more egalitarian attitudes than their career choices reflect, as family pressures, socially defined acceptability, and internalized role concepts enforced gender-typical occupational models, suggesting attitudinal change is proceeding faster than actual behaviour in contemporary urban contexts, and this concurs with more general sociological hypotheses that globalisation and modernization/modernity gradually diminish but do not completely obliterate deeply entrenched cultural standards (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), while the stronger association between gender norms and career restriction for the younger respondents (18–21 years) indicates that whole family socialization is still substantially effective before higher education and peer networks begin to buffer these effects, thereby illustrating a process of gradual yet incomplete norm renegotiation; compared with previous literature, the results validate Charles and Bradley (2009), who assert that even in educationally progressive societies, occupational segregation remains strong through culturally endorsed preferences and identities; they also converge with Correll (2004), on gendered self-assessment, which shows how perceived instead of actual skill lays the basis for individual career trajectories specifically in STEM fields, and which explains why, in this study as well, despite reporting interest in non-traditional careers, the female respondents articulated lower confidence and support, reflecting that in Indian context the perspectives were consistent with recent labour market findings depicting a paradox of enhanced female education soaring yet stagnating, or receding female workforce participation, pointing toward intertwined structural and normative restraints (Klasen & Pieters, 2015); however, the research also diverges from erstwhile literature by depicting a definitive inter-generational shift, since urban Generation Z participants were more receptive to unconventional careers including entrepreneurship, digital content creation, and interdisciplinary careers, highlighting the effect of the internet, global interaction, and changing role models among the youth which emphasizes that if gender standards are continuing to exist, they are also increasingly challenged and redefined in urban youth traditions; from a policy standpoint, these findings are of great significance since they indicate a need for education systems to expand their focus beyond just access, to include curricula reforms and career guidance initiatives that actively combat gender biases and foster confidence in underrepresented groups by further encouraging female participation in STEM and leadership roles, while employers need to recognize and eliminate institutional biases through inclusive hiring

techniques, mentoring schemes, and flexible working environments that lessen traditional barriers to career advancements for females, and policymakers need to boost gender-targeted initiatives aimed at narrowing gender gaps in economic involvement through promotional gender perceived career guidance, mass awareness drives, and encouragement for female workforce recruitment and retention, including popularization of diverse exemplars across professions, because as gender norms and structural hurdles both have to be negotiated simultaneously, to ensure that the progress presently experienced on attitudinal fronts, translates into actual equal career outcomes, having observed the evolving aspirations of generation Z, the trajectory charting of gender parity in urban India will to a great measure rest upon its alignment with reforms in education, institutions, and society.

Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study highlight the gap between aspirational equality in urban India and actual behavioral outcomes with regard to gender norms guidance in career choices having a measurable and statistically significant impact on career choice behavior; the actual behavior indicates that even in the urban context where gender neutral attitudes are slowly replacing gendered norms, women are still significantly more likely to be guided by family and parental preferences on career choice than their male counterparts, with more than 62% of female respondents reporting strong family influence in career decisions as compare 38% males and this has been confirmed by a regression analysis which reveals that gender norms ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .0001$) and family expectations ($\beta = 0.33$, $ps < .001$) as main determinants of gendered career (non)choices, reinforcing the global observation that while access to education and diverse careers has widely expanded, the choices of Generation Z in terms of occupational pathways are still bounded by socially constructed expectations surrounding gender roles; (2) reveal a sectoral preference with traditional gender orientation in vastly different societies (choose between STEM finance and leadership roles for men and healthcare, education and administrative roles for women), in-line with national trends with women making up nearly 48–49% of higher education but under-represented in high-growth sectors and leadership positions (Ministry of Education, 2022; World Bank, 2023) indicating structural and normative barriers in education to work transition, and (3) demonstrate that 70%+ in metropolitan have about societal or own career ideals in gender neutral and equitable on gender and family model experience but preferences remain gender skewed indicating that mere attitudinal change cannot suffice without institutional and cultural transformation addressing gendered socialization. These findings suggest a need for policy change that moves beyond equal access and toward outcome based gender equality, including: gender-sensitive career counselling programs in schools and universities to break down stereotypes early on, scholarships, mentorship programs and partnerships with industry to foster female participation in STEM and leadership pathways, cross-media portrayal of diverse and less traditional role models to reshape societal views of gender-appropriate careers, inclusive hiring practices and gender-neutral workplace policies to help employers broaden their talent base by reducing gender-bias in the recruitment process, flexible work arrangements to address work-life balance questions that concern women especially, but also men, so that they can be free to pursue the chosen career-path and images of male primary caregivers are more normalized, and policies to reduce supply-side bottlenecks, across the board, to support women in the workforce, including childcare infrastructure, safe transportation, and unnecessary re-skilling initiatives that can transform educational improvements into equivalent employment outcomes. The work further identifies areas for future research including urban vs rural populations to determine how the intensity and nature of gender norms may differ in varying socio-economic contexts, with rural areas exhibiting more retrospective influences, examining career choice in non-metro and tier-2 cities where the reach of globalization and digital media may be limited but the exposure/exposure to hormonal structure maybe varying, and assessing the developmental trajectory of attitudes towards gender norms among Generation Z, and whether changes are indeed leading to a sustained change in behavior over time, and intersectional factors such as caste and class, maybe push some communities to be more vulnerable, pressing the need for a more nuanced treatment of the subject in the context of how multiple identities may act on the opportunities and constraints for different sets of people in ways which would call for a more holistic treatment of the issue with respect to the underlying demographic trends in India, and finally summarize that although much remains to be done for a gender-neutral career choice across generations, Generation Z in urban India holds a promise of being an outgoing force to breach traditional gender norms of the past, and cross-sectional data provide a real-time log of the changes that happen, but that alone will not bridge the gap to a gender-neutral society, and coordinated efforts at the level of the education system, labor market, and policy framework are needed to enable a degree of congruency between the mindsets, moving together and will need to change, and structural realities actually meeting together to make a way out for the gap soon to come into without breaking the loop in society, unless the void under the loop to meet keeps giving off elements of difference between mind and matter in the ground connecting together.

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