CHAPTER-V

Occupational Choices of College Students
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OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

The aim of this chapter is to know whether higher (college) education prepares students for any occupation. For, college education is supposed to prepare the students for occupational roles. One may also intends to know whether one’s caste background has any influence on the occupational choice. College education is the turning stage where a majority of student’s turn to adult life – employment and marriage. A failure on the part of the college education to prepare the student – youth for adult goals will result in identity crisis.

5.1 Youth and Occupational Choice in Traditional Society

In traditional society, caste determined one’s occupation. By and large caste occupations were inherited by the young. Practically there was little scope of choice.

5.2 Objectives of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to know whether college education prepares students for any occupation. To be specific, the objectives are:

1. To know whether there is any relationship between the respondents’ occupational choice and faculty,
2. To know, if there is any relationship between the respondents’ occupational choice and caste status, and
3. To know whether there is any relationship between the respondents occupational choice and caste status independent of faculty.

5.3 Hypothesis

The chief hypothesis is that college education is not likely to prepare students for any occupational role. The specific hypothesis are:

1. College education does not have any independent influence on students’ choice of occupation.
2. Caste status has its influence on the respondents’ occupational choice.

**The British and Occupational Change**

The advent of the British rule in India may be said to have been indirectly responsible for the beginning of an era of modernization. The British initiated a new era which coincided with the growth of modern science and technology.

The most important change brought about by the British was the introduction of a formal English education based on principles of equal access to it for all sections of society. It was through the system of education that liberal values were communicated to the Indian elite. For example, the courses taught in schools and colleges were free from any denominational bias and began to be imparted with a secular accent. The system of education was gradually thrown open to all castes, religious groups and women. The introduction of the printing press further facilitated the educational process in that the emphasis shifted from personal, oral communication of ideas through books, journals and other media. In short, the British released the forces of modernization in terms of liberalism, egalitarianism and secularism.

**Education and Occupation**

Education in terms of degrees, diplomas and certificates became a significant pre-requisite for jobs and occupations in the organized sector. According to Chinoy (1967; 386): “The diffusion of literacy, the growth in the number and size of schools and colleges and universities and substantial changes in the content and methods of education were closely linked with the development of modern industry and social changes that accompanied. Harbison and Myers (1964) have rightly emphasized the importance of education. They say: In the context of developing countries like India, education may be viewed as the key that unlocks the doors to modernization.
Importance of Education after Independence

After Independence, education (degrees) became increasingly an important requirement for appointments and recruitments in organized sector. Even petty jobs, such as that of a peon, attender, constable, etc. required certain level of education. Besides, elementary education became a necessary requirement for day-to-day life.

Occupational Choice: A Theoretical Perspective

A number of theories with regard to occupational choices have been proposed by psychologists and sociologists.

Gross (1959) has stated that in present day society occupation has become a fundamental index of status and standard of self-respect. A man’s social position, his economic welfare and perhaps most of his daily habits are determined by the kind of work he does\(^5\).

Ginsberg’s Theory

The main thesis of the theory of Ginsberg (1951) is that occupational choice is a developmental process, which takes place over a period of years. He maintains that typically this process takes place over a period of ten years. As the individual grows from child to adolescent and then to an adult, he develops ideas about life and about himself in relation to the world around him. Ideas about and attitudes towards occupations are a part of this development, that is, development of the individual in relation to occupational choice may be considered an integral part of the general development of the individual.

Ginsberg regards the concept of occupational choice as a developmental process as the outstanding conclusion from his findings.

\(^5\) For women, employment does not necessarily constitute an important component of their status. Employment may enhance their status.
According to him, it is not a single decision but a series of decisions made over years, with each step in the process having a meaningful relation to those which preceded it and follow it.

Ginsberg analyzes the process of occupational decision-making in terms of three phases. Those of:
1. Fantasy,
2. Tentative, and
3. Realistic

**Fantasy:**
The fantasy period occurs during childhood. The child experiences flimsy pictures, dreams, imaginations. In the fantasy period, the child imagines vague, dull and unclear pictures of occupations depending upon his/her family background. But the child is not able to assess its potentialities, feasibilities and limitations. Occupational perception is part of his development. The choices are arbitrary and made without reference to reality.

**The Tentative**
The tentative period starts between the ages of 10 to 12. In the tentative period, the individual refines his choosing in terms of desired future satisfactions rather than immediate satisfaction.

**The Realistic**
The realistic period starts between the ages of 16 and 18. Earlier, subjective choices must now be compromised with the objective facts of one’s environment. Often this period is characterized by narrowing one’s choices from, for example, science in general, is a specific scientific occupation, say physics. Ginsberg points out that as young persons reach the end of fantasy period, they become aware more and more of the
complex structure of reality with its job hierarchy, variety of working conditions.

**Super’s Approach of Vocational Development**

Super (1967) also working from the premise of developmental psychology, constructed a slightly different theory of occupational choice. Super accepted the idea of occupational choice being a developmental process. He did not however, consider that ambitions were invariably firmly crystallized at the time of initially entering, or that the development of a career always consisted simply of implementing a previously conceived ambition. People do change their ambitions after starting work and careers do change their directions.

Super envisaged occupational choices developing through stages similar to those suggested by Ginsberg, but whereas Ginsberg attached prime importance to the individual’s growing awareness of his own interests and capacities. Super placed greater stress upon the role of the social environment in structuring the individual’s conception of his interests, abilities and capacities. The self-concept that emerges from the interaction between the individual’s capacities and his social environment.

In short, Super’s main view is that in expressing a vocational preference, a person puts his idea of the kind of person he is; in entering an occupation he seeks to implement a concept of himself in getting established in an occupation he achieves self-actualization.

An individual’s social self is achieved or shaped by his/ her family, caste/ class and neighbourhood. By and large, the social self of SCs, STs and Muslims is shaped during the early childhood. Their low social environment prevents the development of personality. Their social self is likely to be low, narrow and conservative.
Slocum’s Sociological Approach to Occupational Choice

Slocum’s (1959) sociological analysis of occupational choice focuses on the process of occupational decision-making. Slocum emphasizes “playing at” roles in occupational decision-making. In this technique, both the novice and experienced occupational person when considering new or alternative occupations imagines the requirements and benefits of the occupation. The process involves the presupposition of approval by significant others.

Slocum does not agree with Ginsberg and Super in so far as they hold that occupational choice rational. Of course, the idea of rationality in occupational choice as held by Ginsberg and Super cannot be totally ruled out. But human decisions are influenced by caste, religion and gender values. Miller and Form (1951) assert that rational occupational choosing is rare. Non-rational values play a significant role in influencing occupational choice.

Blau’s Theory

Blau in his well-known paper “Occupational Choice: A Conceptual Framework” (1956) presents a framework for the understanding of occupational choice that constitutes an attempt to combine psychological, economic and sociological variables. In effect, the author adds the latter two categories to psychologically centered theories of Ginsberg and Super, emphasizing that the occupational preferences that come to crystallize do not finally determine occupational entry. Whether these preferences can be realized, must be modified or even set aside, depends on the decisions of the persons selecting fore education, training and occupations and on the conditions affecting their choice.

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6 Decision-making can be defined as an act of choice by an individual from among two or more possible alternative courses in a given situation (Aggarwal, 1999).
Rosenberg (1957) conducted an investigation of the process of occupational choice among a select number of college students. According to him, an occupational choice is made on the basis of values. For example, occupational choices vary according to caste, religion, and sex. Jains and Brahmins are not likely to choose menial and manual jobs such as agriculture, vegetable selling. Muslims are not likely to start a wine shop. In short, ritual and spiritual values influence one’s occupational choice. The present investigation has adopted social background variables influencing the occupational choice of college students.

**Occupation**

Career choice is operationally defined as the career or occupation, which the students have to take up after the completion of their course study.

Occupations, as a form of social activity, constitutes the main basis of human society. Human resources are organized, processed, and directed through diverse occupations to fulfill the needs of the society. Occupations are the central processes of the economic system and social stratification.

Occupation is generally understood merely as means of earning a livelihood. But it is more than that. It is an ideology, a philosophy, a social role, indeed a way of life. Individuals and communities choose occupations to develop and preserve their social, cultural, and religious identity. In India, clean castes tend to choose white collar jobs. On the other hand, traditionally, castes associated with manual and menial occupations are not likely to choose occupations related to formal education.

Occupation is a means through which one’s social self is manifested. Besides being a system of economic activity, an economic process, it is a social activity, too, a social relationship.
Meaning

Sociologically, the concept of occupation may be defined as a patterned set of human relations having to do with specific work experience (Taylor, 1966; 10). According to Ekong (1988), occupation may be defined as a relatively “continuous pattern of activities that provide the pursuers with a livelihood and define their economic status”. According to Bogardus (1954): An occupation is any type of activity to which a number of persons give themselves regularly for pay. Bogardus lays emphasis on ‘pay’ as a distinct criterion of work and occupation. However, different social groups have different religious and spiritual values associated with occupation7.

Rosenberg and associates (1957) relate values to the type of occupations chosen by college students, and the findings suggest that people who enter different kinds of occupations have basically different outlooks on work as a fact of life. In the same way, it has been concluded by Simpson and Simpson (196) that values, personal influence and occupational choice are in a three-way relationship, each variable interacting with the other two. The interrelationship of occupational choice and value-orientation has been verified by Weller (1959) also he has arrived at two conclusions:

a) Value orientations influence occupational selection,

b) Occupational value orientations are learned in the process of socialization.

5.4 Review of Literature on Occupational Choices of College Students

Occupational choice of youths in general and college students in particular has been studied by researchers, scholars and social scientists.

7 It may be observed that Muslims do not sell wine nor do not own a liquor shop.
Swell and associates (1969, 1970) tested the hypothesis that levels of occupational aspirations of youth of both sexes are associated with social status of their families, when the effect of intelligence was controlled. The findings of the study strongly supported the hypothesis of association between social class and aspiration. Similar findings have been reported by several other writers (Hyman, 1953; Lipset, 1956; Lipset & Bendix, 1959; Reisman, 1953).

Other writers have concerned themselves with the educational and occupational aspirations of women in terms of their sex roles. For example, Angrist and Almsquist (1975) conducted a study of college women students’ educational and occupational aspirations. The main questions raised by them were: Why was the proportion of women taking the higher education and prestigious occupations lower than that of men? How were their aspirations affected by their initial socialization? How were women trained not to be career oriented? Why were women posed to choose work traditionally reserved for women? What were the contingencies that the career women faced? The main contention of the book was that women were trained for their feminine role more than gainful employment.

In a full-length study, Vimal Shah and Tara Patel (1977) made a survey of post-matric SC/ST students in Gujarat. The study examined the assumption that benefits of government programmes of financial and other assistance accrued mostly to children of the more privileged among them. Surprisingly, the data did not lend support to the above hypothesis. Nevertheless, the data did show that government assistance for higher education had been differentially utilized by various scheduled castes/tribes, and further that the higher utilization by some was decisively attributable to their urban residence.

Karuna Ahmad (1974) studied women college students. The objective of the study was to find out whether the social background in
terms of caste and class determined access to higher education and the relevance of higher education to women’s potential role of wife and mother.

N.Samungon Singh (2006) in his article “Higher Education and Career Choices of the Undergraduate Students” tried to study the expectations of students on their future career choices after the completion of their course.

The study found that there was linkage between higher education and career choice. To most of the students (Manipur) higher education was understood getting a white collar job.

G.C.Prudhan (2002) in his study “Factors Affecting Occupational Aspirations of College Youths” wanted to know whether the factors such as economic status, parents’ educational qualifications, parents’ occupations, caste, gender and place of residence affect the occupational aspirations of college youth.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher came to the conclusion that the factors which affects significantly the occupational aspirations of college youths are: economic status, parents’ education and occupation, respondents’ sex and caste.

Fernandes C (1998) in his study “Occupational Aspirations of Students Studying in Arts, Science & Commerce Streams” found that the occupational aspirations of students varied according to faculty.

5.5 Respondents’ Occupational Choices

In the following paragraphs respondents’ total percentage of occupational choice are given.
Table 5.1

Respondents’ choice of occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>630</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It could be seen from Table 5.1 that only 24 per cent of the respondents had clear vision of their occupational choices. They were clear about their jobs and also how to attain them. Most of them wanted to appear for competitive examinations. They had alternative jobs. Similarly, 28 per cent had vague and ambiguous perceptions of jobs. Some male respondents said “I do not know what to do in future”. Most of the female respondents were indifferent about occupations. Their job perceptions were unclear and vague. But 48 per cent of them had no perception of any occupation at all.

Figure 5.1

Respondents’ choice of occupation
This was more true of girls than boys. Chidanand (2010) in his thesis: “Social Realities of Occupational Aspiration: A Study of Graduate Students” found that most of the college students had short range educational and occupational goals. It appears from the findings that mere expanding the scope of opportunity structure for the weaker sections; it is not possible to enhance their educational and occupational perceptions.

Respondents’ Occupational Choice and Faculty

This section deals with the relationship between the respondents’ faculty and occupational choices. Chidanand (2010) found that a majority of the Arts students had short-range occupational choices, while the Science & Commerce had long-range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational choice</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Science &amp; Commerce</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>296</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>334</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 20.08 \quad \text{df}=2 \quad \text{CC}=0.18 \quad \text{Significant at 5\% level} \]

It could be seen from Table 5.2 that both the Arts and Science & Commerce students had 17 and 30 per cents high or clear occupational choice. They wanted to become class I/IAS/ IPS/ professionals. But they were clear about their goals and its ways of reaching.
Similarly, 27 per cent of Arts and 30 per cent of Science & Commerce students had medium level occupational choices. It means a small per cent of the Arts (17%) and Science & Commerce (20%) had vague and unclear. But 56 per cent of the Arts and 40 per cent of the Science & Commerce had low occupational choices. It means a majority of the Arts (56%) and a good proportion of Science & Commerce (40%) had no clear cut occupational choices.

It could be said that there does not seem to be much relationship between respondents’ level of occupational choice and faculty background. It could be said that it is not mere access to higher education that prepares the college youth for jobs but the quality of education. Practically, there is no quality in higher education.

**Caste and Occupational Choice**

This section deals with the relationship between the respondents’ caste status and level of occupational choice. It is intended to know whether caste plays any significant role, in influencing college students’ occupational choice.
It may be argued that with the advent of modernization, liberalization, a policy of pro-weaker sections, disregard for traditional institutions such as the caste, religion, sex in the Constitution, backward and untouchable castes are moving up in the occupational ladder\(^8\). On the other hand, it is also argued that since caste is a basic institution in India, its influence on the socialization of the students cannot be ruled out. To quote Chidanand (2010: 117) “Caste is an integral part of the Indian society”. Caste all the aspects of social life. Caste in one or the other way is associated with class-education, occupation and income and rural-urban background. Caste inculcates occupational values, attitudes and ideology. After Independence, with the developmental the correspondence between caste and other aspects (Class, rural-urban) of society, have changed to some extent. Nevertheless, caste remains a force to reckon with. Chidanand (2010) showed that a majority of the higher caste respondents had long-range job perceptions, while a majority of the backward/ lower castes had short-range job perception.

### Table-5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste and Occupational Choices</th>
<th>Forward caste</th>
<th>Backward caste</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of occupational choice</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2 = 184.90; \)  \(df=2; \)  \(CC = 0.48; \)  Significant at 5% level
\(t = -347.95; \)  \(df=4; \)  Significant at 5% level

\(^8\) Even though 6-7 decades have passed since the adoption of the present Constitution, residential areas in villages and traditional towns and cities are characterized by castes and communities. Children are socialized in caste and community culture.
Data presented in Table 5.3 reveal that 50 per cent of the forward caste and 12 per cent of the backward castes had high occupational clarity and perceptions. Forward castes men such as Brahmins, Jains and Lingayats had clear job perceptions. Similarly, 40 per cent of the forward castes and 23 per cent of the backward castes had vague idea of job. But 65 per cent of the backward castes and 10 per cent of the forward castes had no idea of jobs at all. Most of them clearly pointed out that they had come to college to get a degree or certificate, which may help in life. This was more true of girls than of boys.

Figure-5.3
Caste and Occupational Choices
Major Findings
1. Caste played a significant part in influencing occupational perception of the respondents.
2. Higher caste students had clear idea of occupations, while the lower castes had no idea of any occupations at all.

Faculty, Caste and Occupational Choice

It could be seen from Table 5.4 that there are significant differences in the occupational perceptions of the respondents from forward caste and backward castes within faculties. For example, 62 percent of the forward caste from Science & Commerce had high perceptions. On the other hand, 51 per cent of the backward caste from the same faculty had low occupational perceptions. It is clear that caste status plays an important role in determining college students’ occupational perceptions.

Similarly, 57 per cent of the forward caste from Arts faculty had higher or clear choices. But 69 per cent of the backward caste respondents had low or no choices. It means even in Arts faculty, forward caste students have clear choices. It could be said that caste status of the respondents has a definite effect on students’ perceptions of occupations.
# Table-5.4

**Faculty, Caste and Occupational Choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational choice</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Backward caste</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forward caste</td>
<td>Backward caste</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Forward caste</td>
<td>Backward caste</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Forward caste</td>
<td>Backward caste</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Forward caste</td>
<td>Backward caste</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 116.59; \text{ df}=2; \text{ Sig. at 5\%; CC}=0.53 \]

\[ \chi^2 = 101.46; \text{ df}=2; \text{ Sig. at 5\%; cc}=0.48 \]

\[ \chi^2 = 215.66; \text{ df}=2; \text{ Sig. at 5\%; Cc}=0.50 \]
Major Findings of the Chapter

This chapter has tried to know whether college education prepares students for adult roles, more specifically occupational roles. Are students prepared for occupational roles in organized sector – white collar jobs, semi-organized sector such as business, trade, agriculture etc. or left to pursue any occupations in the unorganized sectors.

The chapter has also tried to know whether respondents’ caste status plays any role in shaping and directing their occupational perceptions. The findings are as follows:

1. Data revealed that there was no association between respondents’ faculty and occupational perceptions. Both the Arts and Science & Commerce students had low occupational perceptions. Science & Commerce students did not reveal any higher occupational aspirations.

2. It was found that there was an association between the respondents’ caste perceptions. Forward castes had higher occupational perceptions. They had clear idea of the occupations they wanted to attain. They had alternative occupations in case they could not get the first one. But the backward castes had no clear occupational choices and preferences.

3. In order to know the role of caste in shaping occupational perceptions, the effect of faculty was controlled. Data showed that caste status played an important role in shaping occupational perception in both Arts and Science & Commerce faculties.

It is clear that caste is still playing an important role in deciding college students’ occupational choices. College education is not playing any role shaping occupational choices, as is expected. On the contrary, college education is helping more forward than backward castes in promoting occupational choices. It means more forward than backward caste students are likely to be in higher jobs.