SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER V

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Education is the spring board by which women can raise their status as one’s cognitive and intellectual skills as well as social orientation, attitudes and aspirations are shaped by education. Education liberates women from ignorance and enhances their self esteem. It brightens the chances for access to employment, thereby facilitating greater economic empowerment of women.

Education is a lifelong process. Education occurs beyond formal education in the entire life time of an individual as human beings try to achieve better quality of life at each stage of development. But, unless lifelong education opportunities are available to all for improving Knowledge, skills and competence within a personal, civic, social and employment related perspective, better quality of life cannot be achieved. It is more so in the case of women.

Not many research studies have been undertaken in the area of lifelong education of women. In order to facilitate lifelong education of women basic information on a number of related aspects must be available. The present study titled "Lifelong Learning Aspirations and their Correlates of Rural Women in Dindigul District" was conceived as important from this point of view.
Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. to identify the lifelong learning aspirations of selected women;
2. to identify the influence of variables, namely, age, educational and occupational status, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child's age and husband's educational status on the lifelong learning aspirations of women; and,
3. to find out the facilities available for fulfilling the lifelong learning aspirations of rural women.

Hypotheses Tested

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Lifelong learning aspirations differ among women from different age groups.
2. There is a positive relationship between the educational level of women and their lifelong learning aspirations.
3. Working women have more aspiration for continuing their education than non-working women.
4. Among women, there is a direct relationship between lifelong learning aspirations and family income.
5. Lifelong learning aspirations differ among women from different communities.
6. Unmarried women have more aspiration for continuing, their education than married women.

7. Women who are from nuclear, extended and joint families differ in their lifelong learning aspirations.

8. There is a relationship between women’s lifelong learning aspirations and the number of their children.

9. There is a direct relationship between the lifelong learning aspirations of women and their youngest child’s age.

10. There is a relationship between women’s lifelong learning aspirations and their husband’s educational status.

Methodology

The present study was carried out in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu. There are 14 blocks in Dindigul District. From these 14 blocks, 4 blocks were selected for the study by using random sampling method. These blocks were Athoor, Dindigul, Nilakottai and Vedasandur. From each block four Panchayats were selected, again by random sampling method. Totally, sixteen Panchayats were selected for the study. From among the women in these Panchayats, a sample of one hundred illiterates, 100 school dropouts, 140 higher secondary educated women and 160 graduates were selected by random sampling method.

The tools used for collecting data were a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The interview schedule was used to collect data from illiterate respondents and school dropouts. The questionnaire was used with
educated respondents. After the data were collected they were analysed using a computer. Statistical measures used in the analysis included chi-square test and correlation coefficient.

**Major Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study are presented in four parts. These include

1. **Personal Background of the Respondents**
2. **Lifelong Learning Aspirations of the Respondents**
3. **Influence of Socio-economic Variables on Lifelong Learning Aspirations**; and,
4. **Facilities Available for Fulfilling Lifelong Learning Aspirations**.

**1. Personal Background of the Respondents**

The respondents’ age ranged from 15-40 years. The majority belonged to the age group of 15-20 years. The respondents were from several educational levels. A large number of the respondents were not earning. The highest percentage of respondents were from the income group Rs. 1001-5000/- a month. A large proportion of the sample was from backward communities. Most of the respondents were unmarried. A large proportion of the sample belonged to nuclear family. Most of the respondents had two children in their families. The majority of the respondents’ husbands were secondary school educated.
2. Lifelong Learning Aspirations of the Respondents

A total of 48 subjects / courses were named by the respondents as the ones desired by them. The courses preferred by the respondents were classified into ten categories, namely, Textiles Related Courses, Craft Related Courses, Production Related Courses, Health Related Courses, Personal Development Related Courses, Technical Related Courses, Fine Arts Related Courses, Academic Related Courses, Farm Related Courses and Family Living Related Courses.

Tailoring, embroidery, fabric painting, weaving and fabric dyeing courses were included under textiles related courses. As for the respondents’ preferences among the textiles related courses, tailoring was preferred by the majority of the respondents (74%).

Wire basket making, toy making, wire chair making and mat weaving courses were included under craft related courses. Among the craft related courses, the course preferred by the majority (51%) was wire basket making.

Preparation of processed foods, preparation of novel foods, preparation of beverages and soap making courses were classified as production related courses. A large proportion of the respondents (46%) preferred to undergo courses related to food production under production related courses.

Healthy living and yoga courses were categorized as health related courses. From among the health related courses, the majority (44%) of the respondents wanted to learn about healthy living.
Spoken English, entrepreneurship development, law, meditation, beautician, leadership development, repairing household electrical appliances, spirituality, Hindi, public speaking and karate (a martial art form) courses were included under personal development related courses. A large number of the respondents (42%) aspired to learn spoken English from among the personal development related courses.

Computer, typewriting, shorthand and industrial training courses were included under technical related courses. Expectedly, the computer course was the most sought after course among the technical related courses (42%).

Interior decoration, rangoli (floor decoration), mehendi designing (decorating palm and foot with colour dyes), drawing, music and dance courses were included under fine arts related courses. Only 28 per cent of the respondents preferred all the fine arts related courses.

Five academic related courses were mentioned, which included Bachelor of Arts/Master of Arts, Diploma in Cooperation, Professional courses - BE, MBBS, B.Sc. (Agriculture, Nursing), Secondary School Teacher Training and Bachelor of Education. Among these courses, the highest preference (22%) was for getting undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree courses.

Mushroom cultivation, sericulture and coir making from coconut fibre were included under farm related courses. Very few, i.e., not more than 14 per cent, preferred to undergo farm related courses. The other courses were preferred by less than 5 percent of the respondents. Child care, adjustment in the family and pregnancy care were included under family living related
courses. Only about 13 per cent of the respondents desired to learn about aspects of family living.

The majority (80%) of the illiterates wanted to acquire basic literacy skills of reading, writing and doing simple arithmetic. Ninety three per cent of the illiterates desired to learn to sign their names.

**Reasons for Choosing Courses.** As for the reasons for the choice of the various courses, the majority (53%) of the respondents stated that they would like to learn subjects/undergo courses for adding to their family income; 52 per cent stated satisfying one's personal desires as the reason; 51 per cent stated economic independence; 48 per cent stated that acquiring skills for day-to-day use, furthering their knowledge and guiding their children were the reasons why they aspired to study the courses; and, very few respondents stated the other reasons like being in the company of friends (4%) and compulsion by family members (2%).

3. **Influence of Socio-economic Variables on Lifelong Learning Aspirations**

   a. **Influence of Age.** Among the textiles related courses, the correlation coefficient shows that there was significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the preference for tailoring and embroidery courses.

   As for craft related courses, no clear pattern emerged in the relation between age and preference for courses.
A significant relationship was found between two out of four production related courses. In the case of health related courses, as the age increased, the percentage of the respondents who were interested in learning about healthy living decreased. However it was not significant.

As for personal development related courses, out of eleven courses, preference for all courses except two declined after the age of 25. The correlation between age and preference was significant in the case of five out of the eleven courses.

There was a relationship between preference for two of the four technical related courses and the age of the respondents.

As far as fine arts related courses were concerned there was no significant correlation between age and course preference except in the case of one. There was no relationship between age and course preference in the case of academic related and farm related courses.

A significant relationship was found between age and one of the four family living related courses.

In sum, it may be said that age was significantly related to 13 of the total 48 courses preferred by the respondents.

b. Influence of Educational Status. The correlation coefficient between each of the courses preferred and the educational status of the respondents showed that three of the five textiles related courses were significantly related to educational level.
The correlation between the respondents’ educational status and preference for courses was significant in one out of four craft related courses.

There was no evidence of any pattern in the preference according to educational level in the case of production related courses.

The educational status was found to influence significantly the respondents’ desire to learn health related courses.

Preference for courses significantly increased according to increase in the educational level in the case of personal development related courses.

Among the various technical related courses, the computer course was preferred by the majority of the respondents at the highest two educational levels.

Statistically, preference for three out of four technical related courses was positively correlated with the educational level.

The percentage of respondents who desired to learn fine arts related courses increased with the educational level. The relationship was statistically significant.

The preference for two of the four farm related courses were found to be positively and significantly related to the educational level.

The relationship found between the educational level and the preference for courses was significant for two courses out of the three family living related courses.
On the whole, the preference 30 courses out of 48 was significantly associated with the educational level of the respondents,

c. Influence of Occupational Status of Respondents. Calculation of chi-square value showed that there was no association between the occupational status of the respondents and any of the ten categories of courses.

d. Influence of Family Income. The majority of the respondents from all income levels preferred the tailoring course. Statistical calculation showed that there was significant association between the respondents’ family income and the preference for textiles related courses. Among the four craft related courses, wire basket making was preferred by the highest percentage of respondents from all income levels. Except in the case of one craft related course, there was no significant correlation between income level and course preference. No clear pattern emerged in the relationship between income and course preference in the case of production related courses.

Income did not influence course preference for health related courses. In the case of five of the personal development related courses it was found that the percentage of aspirants increased significantly as the respondents’ family income increased.

In the case of aspiration to study computer, typewriting and shorthand courses, the number of respondents increased significantly with the income. A significant correlation between course preference and income was found only in the case of two out of the six fine arts related courses.
Family income did not influence significantly the preference for academic related courses except in the case of acquiring undergraduate / postgraduate degree, which was one among the five courses listed. Family income did not influence aspiration to learn farm related courses. No significant relationship was found between course preference and income in the case of family living related courses.

Taken together, of the total 48 courses, the preference for 13 was significantly related to the income of the family.

e. Influence of Community. No clear pattern emerged as to whether the community of the respondents makes a difference in the choice of textiles related, craft related, production related, health related, technical related, academic related, farm related and family living related courses. There was significant association between the respondents’ community and the preference for personal development related courses. The highest number of respondents from each caste group preferred the computer course among the technical courses. The highest number who aspired to study three of the four technical related courses were from among those from forward castes. However, the observed difference was not statistically significant.

f. Influence of Marital Status. More number of married respondents than unmarried ones preferred four out of the five textiles related courses. The difference between them, however, was not statistically significant. Out of the four craft related courses, the majority of the married and the unmarried women were interested to learn wire basket making. In the case of all the four craft related courses, the aspirants were more among married than among
unmarried women. However, the difference was not statistically significant. More married than unmarried women preferred to learn production related courses. It is seen that there was very little difference in the percentage of married and unmarried respondents who preferred health related courses. As far as the personal development related courses were concerned, there were more unmarried respondents who preferred each of the courses than married ones in the case of all ten out of the eleven courses. Statistical calculation showed that there was significant association between the marital status of the respondents and the preference for personal development related courses.

The preference for all the four technical related courses listed was more among unmarried women than among married ones. Statistical analysis showed that though there was association between the two, it was not significant. Those who preferred each of the fine arts related courses were higher in percentage among unmarried respondents than among married ones. The preference for academic related courses was higher among unmarried than among married respondents, which shows that the preference for academic related courses was influenced by the marital status of the respondents. The difference, however, was not statistically significant. The marital status of the respondents did not influence their preference for farm related courses. There was a lot of percentagewise difference between married and unmarried respondents who preferred each of the three family living related courses. However, the difference was not statistically significant.
On the whole out of the 10 categories of courses there was significant association between the marital status and the course preference in the case of only one category.

g. Influence of Type of Family. The type of family was not found to influence the preference for courses significantly except in the case of textiles related courses. Out of the 10 categories of courses in the case of only one category was significant association found between the type of family and the course preference.

h. Influence of Number of Children. In the case of the number of children, it was found that it had no influence on the course preferred. There was no influence of the number of children on the preference for textiles related courses as there was no systematic decrease or increase in the course preference as the number of children increased. There was no significant difference between the number of children and the course preference in the case of craft related courses. In the case of production related courses, the number of children did not influence the preference for courses. In none of the cases was the observed association between the number of children and the course preference statistically significant.

Among the respondents who preferred health related courses, those with one child were higher in number than those who had more children. As for personal development related courses, the higher the number of children, the lower was the number of those who preferred 7 out of the 11 personal development related courses. However the relationship was not statistically significant.
None of the four technical related courses was preferred by those having more than three children. Out of the six courses, none of the fine arts related courses was preferred by those respondents who had more than four children. No one with children preferred to undergo teacher training or professional courses.

None of those who had more than three children preferred to learn any of the four farm related courses. In sum, it may be said that the preference for none of the categories of courses was influenced by the number of children.

The respondents who preferred to study child care and family adjustment were the highest among those who had one child only.

i. Influence of Youngest Child’s Age. No systematic relationship was observed between textiles related courses, craft related courses and production related courses and the youngest child’s age. But a significant relationship was found in the case of one out of the four production related courses and the youngest child’s age. As for health related courses there was significant relationship between the course preference and the youngest child’s age in the case of one out of two courses. No relationship was found between the preference for personal development related courses and the youngest child’s age.

None of the four technical related courses was preferred by those respondents who had children older than 15 years. More respondents whose youngest child’s age was from 0 to 3 years desired to learn five out of the six fine arts related courses than those who had children older than 3 years. However, the observed difference was not statistically significant.
Among the academic related courses the percentage of women who wanted to undergo undergraduate and postgraduate courses was the highest among women who had children less than 3 years.

In the case of three out of four farm related courses the respondents whose youngest child’s age was less than 3 years were higher in percentage than others.

in the case of family living related courses, the age of the youngest child did not influence the course preference.

In brief, out of 48 courses only in the case of 2 of the courses there was significant association between the course preference and the youngest child’s age.

j- Influence of Husband’s Educational Status. Irrespective of the educational status of the husband, tailoring was the most preferred course. No consistent pattern emerged in the preference for craft related courses according to the husband’s educational status. In the case of production related courses also no consistent pattern emerged as to the relationship between the course preference and the husband’s educational level. There was no relationship between the husband’s educational level and the preference for health related courses. The entrepreneurship course was preferred by most of the respondents from all categories. Statistical calculation showed that the respondents’ husband’s educational status was significantly associated with the preference for personal development related courses.
The highest number of respondents who preferred computer courses were from among those whose husbands had had higher education. However, no significant relationship was observed between the two.

In the case of fine arts related courses, the educational level of the husband did not make a difference in the choice of the respondents. None of the academic related courses was preferred by respondents whose husbands were less educated. Though the educational level of the husband seemed to influence the preference for academic related course, there was no statistical evidence to support this.

The husband’s educational level did not influence the choice of farm related courses as no consistent pattern could be observed.

The highest number of respondents who preferred all the three of the family living related courses had husbands who had had education higher than secondary education. However the difference was not statistically significant.

The analysis showed that out of the 10 categories of courses the preference for only one course was influenced by the husband’s educational level.

4. **Facilities Available for Fulfilling Lifelong Learning Aspirations**

Even though all the respondents had aspiration to continue their learning and study many different subjects formally and / or nonformally, the majority (98%) of them were not attending any nonformal or formal educational programme at the time of the study.
The majority (99%) stated that facilities were not available in their own town / village to continue their studies. Television was a major nonformal learning source of useful information for rural women.

The majority of the aspirants from all the four educational categories stated economic reason as the major one for not aspiring to undergo any formal or nonformal educational programme. Lack of freedom to undergo continuing education programme was stated by the second largest number of respondents. The third reason stated by the majority of the respondents was lack of time to pursue education. Lack of transport facilities to go to places of education and educational institutions being far away were cited as reasons by only the illiterates and school dropouts.

Knowledge about the Open University system was higher as the educational level increased. Ninety one per cent of the graduate respondents and 49 per cent of the higher secondary educated women were aware of the Open University system. Nearly fifty per cent of the higher secondary educated women were aware of the Open University system while only nineteen per cent of the school dropouts had knowledge of it. Most (70%) of those who had knowledge about the Open University system did not know the modalities of joining the same.

Ninety nine per cent of the respondents stated that facilities for Continuing Education were not available in their villages. Ninety six per cent were ready to go to educational institutions outside their village. The majority of the respondents (45%) wanted to learn / study courses in private institutions. Only twenty nine per cent of the respondents wanted to study in
Government Institutions. Forty three per cent wanted to study in Industrial Training Institutions. Thirteen per cent of the respondents preferred to study courses through distant education mode.

The majority of the respondents were not aware of the Continuing Education Programme of the Government. Only two per cent of the respondents were being benefited by the Continuing Education Programme of the Government.

**Conclusions**

From the summary of the findings the following conclusions may be arrived at:

1. Rural women of Dindigul district of all castes, ages, educational levels and income levels have aspiration to study or undergo different formal and nonformal educational courses.

2. The courses that the sample of the study aspired to study included courses related to textiles, handicraft, production of goods, health, personal development, technical education, fine arts, academic education, family living and farm related courses.

3. The total number of courses aspired for under the various categories was 48.

4. Out of the 48 courses, in the order of priority, tailoring, wire basket making, food production, healthy living, spoken English, computer course, interior decoration, postgraduate degree, child care and kitchen gardening were popular.
5. The respondents' aspiration to choose the various courses were, in the order of priority, based on certain factors, namely, adding to family income, satisfying one's personal desire, economic independence, acquiring skills for day-to-day use, furthering one's knowledge, guiding one's children, being in the company of friends and compulsion by family members.

6. The age of the respondents influenced the selection of 13 out of the total of 48 courses which was roughly one fourth of the total number of courses. Hence it might be concluded that the age influenced the selection of the courses to a certain extent.

7. The selection of 30 courses out of the total of 48 was influenced by the education of the respondents. Hence it might be concluded that education is an important factor determining the aspiration of women for continuing education.

8. The occupational status of the respondents was not found to have any influence on the selection of courses.

9. The community of the respondents influenced the selection of courses only to an extent of 25 per cent.

10. Only one tenth of the course selection was influenced by the marital status of the respondents and the type of family.

11. The number of children did not influence the respondents' aspiration to continue their studies. Also the youngest child's age and the husband's educational status were not determining factors in continuing their studies.
12. At the time of the interview 98 per cent of the respondents were not in the process of learning anything.

13. Factors not favourable to the continuation of their studies included lack of finance to study, lack of freedom to pursue studies, lack of time, lack of transport facilities to go to institutions and the distant location of educational institutions.

14. Ninety nine per cent of the respondents did not have the required facilities to fulfill their aspirations.

15. The majority of the respondents were not aware of the continuing education facilities made available by the Government.

16. Knowledge of the Open University system varied with the education level.

Suggestions Emanating from the Study

The study has brought out that opportunities for either formal or nonformal education are practically non existent in rural areas. This finding of the study may be passed on to nongovernmental and government agencies so that they can organize suitable programmes.

The Continuing Education Programme of the Government must provide opportunities to women for fulfilling their aspirations through the continuing education centres in villages. All the components of the Continuing Education Programme, namely, income generation, equivalency programme, quality of life improvement programme and individual interest promotion programme,
and, literacy programme, should be implemented with full vigour in both spirit and letter.

Nongovernmental agencies must be motivated and encouraged to provide lifelong learning opportunities to rural women.

The study has shown that the aspirations of women were limited to only 48 courses, both formal and nonformal. There are many more courses / subjects which will be useful to them in their life. These courses may be made known to them. Educationists and nongovernmental agencies should also make available knowledge and skills that the respondents have aspired for by making use of the media like radio and television.

The Gandhigram Rural University and other colleges in the Dindigul District might prepare educational programmes based on the aspirations discovered in the present study and telecast them through the Edusat scheme.

All rural women may be organized into viable Self Help Groups for offering formal and nonformal educational programmes.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The present study has attempted to study the lifelong learning aspirations of women only. A comparative study of men and women vis-a-vis Lifelong Learning Aspirations can be undertaken. Such a study will be very useful to planners and others to design appropriate learning courses for men also.
The influence of the variables such as age, education, marital status, educational level of the husband, age of the youngest child cannot be generalized on the basis of the present study, as the sample was small. Large scale studies may be undertaken to determine the influence of such variables on the lifelong learning aspirations of women.