

Education and Socio-Cultural Nexus: Challenges for Mother Student in University Life

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.10.07.2020.p10398
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.10.07.2020.p10398>

Abstract- The history of the formal system of women education is not long in the Nepalese context. The process of formal education started a century ago during the rule of the Rana regime. Nowadays, the girl student number is also going to increase in university in Nepalese context. The main objective of this article is to identify the socio-cultural challenges for mother students in university life. This paper is based on a qualitative research approach. Both primary and secondary data are used in this paper. The case study method is used to collect primary information. The content analysis method is used to collect secondary information. Purposive and snowball sampling method is used to select the cases. Bachelors and masters levels mother students have participated in the cases. With the help of their husband, in-laws, maternal family, and peer motivations they are getting the opportunity of university life. These facts have absolutely disagreed with Walby's theoretical explanation of patriarchy. The main conflict is related to the expenses of the study. These facts are partially analog to the theoretical explanation of Engels.

Index Terms- Challenges, education, mother-student, patriarchy, socio-cultural

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a kind of socio-cultural institution of social structure. It is linked with the human society from the beginning of the human civilization (Hensline, 1997). However, it was informal in the beginning, its form and structures are being changed in course of time. People used to go to the some form of religious places to get the education like Church, Gurukul, Mothersah etc. Then afterward people used to invent different types of places for the study and getting knowledge. In course of development, human society invented the different type of institutions like schools, colleges, universities in the society. The French Sociologist Emile Durkheim saw the major function of the education as the transmission of society's norms and values. He also stated that the society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands. Without these 'essential similarities', co-operation, social solidarity and therefore social life itself would be impossible (Haralambos, 2002).

In Nepalese context, the history of women education is not too long. The process of women education started a century ago during the rule of Rana Prime Minister Dev Shamsheer at the

initiative of Gangabai. Shamsheer helped to prepare the primary level textbook for the school children through Jai Prithvi Bahadur Sing. In 1948 Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer opened Padma Kanya Vidhyashram to impart English education to the girls (Jha, 2011). According to the Census of 2011 A.D, there is significant change in the female education in the context of Nepal. For example, 7,111,504 female are literate which is significantly well improved, whereas it is 1,530,957 in western region and 179,621 in Kaski district. Also the total female population who has done post graduation is 39,603 whereas it is 11,909 in Western region and 1,235 in Kaski district (CBS, 2012). In Pokhara, it seems usual for the women to come to campus for higher education for it has flexible and plural cultural as well as social system. Also because of adaptation of the modern concept by the society, women are sent to get the higher education. Pokhara is one of the places in Nepal, which is highly influenced by modernity, so the society seems liberal compared to other parts of the country. Thus many women get opportunity to have campus education. Nowadays, there are many colleges in Pokhara valley, where thousands of women come to get education. In Pokhara Valley, there are some colleges that offer masters' degree, so it is easy for them to complete their degree in the related fields as per their interest.

It is also a notable conclusion of EFA Global Monitoring Report (2003/04) that more women are going to acquire the mental skills and capability necessary for work life. Besides the well known fact that the involvement of educated women in the labor force aids the development of society, there is also the positive impact this exerts on the women themselves. Thus the relationship between family, education and work are the major influences on women's futures and on the patterns of incentives and costs facing families in deciding to send girls to school. Educating female has a profound effect on national development as lack of their education has been linked to low birth weight, poor health and high mortality rates in children, high fertility rates, poor family nutrition rates, low life expectancy, poor sanitation and high illiteracy rates etc. Thus the socio-economic importance of female education can thus not be over emphasized. Thus there are too many efforts being made by different government's steps, the work of NGO and INGO's to boost female education. But many factors i.e. home, community, school, family size, household income, parents' education, cultural and traditional beliefs etc. continue to restrict development in female education (Alabi & Alabi, 2014). In this context, this paper is focused to explore the socio-cultural constraints of mother students in university life.

II. OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

This research is limited to Pokhara and Prithvi Narayan Campus. Pokhara is the urban area of Nepalese society and Prithvi Narayan Campus is the largest campus of Tribhuvan University. The main objective of this article is to identify the socio-cultural challenges for mother students in university life. This paper is based on a qualitative research approach. Both primary and secondary data are used in this paper. The case study method is used to collect primary information. The content analysis method is used to collect secondary information. Purposive and snowball sampling method is used to select the cases. Bachelors and masters levels mother students have participated in the cases.

III. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

In societies everywhere, cultural institutions and practices, economic processes and political structures are interactive and relatively autonomous. In the Marxist framework, infrastructures and superstructures are made up of multiple levels, and there are various types of transformations from one level to another. Combining the Marxists-feminists and sociological perspectives leads to an understanding of the gender system as a cultural construct that is itself constituted by social structure. One of the ways that society influences each other economically, politically and culturally, is through international labor migration, which also has distinct gender-specific effects (Moghadam, 2005). Marx and Engels believed that the origin of the family is due to the division of labor where wife and children are the slaves of the husband (Ritzer, 2000). An important theme of the work of Marx and Engel was that women were oppressed by men and there was an urgent need of emancipation in the society as well as in the family. They also explained that the first form of oppression that existed in the society was that of women by men in the family. The warring classes of society are the product of modes of production. Through the development of the ages of mode of productions the man acquired more important status and power over the women in the family in course of time. The increased wealth and status of man enable him to overturn the traditional order of inheritance in favor of him (Adams, 2001). Engels (1884) describes the connection between the patriarchal oppression of women in the sense of family and the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Since Marxist believed economy as the superstructure of the society and other fields like religion, culture, education etc. are dependent to it.

Engels (1884) added that the oppression of women to the beginning of private property. The cause of women's oppression is linked to the type of social organization, specifically the economic order. For Marxist, capitalism or class oppression is the primary oppression. In the view of Marxist feminists, only after the eradication of economic oppression, the emancipation of women is possible. Marxist analysis assumed that women's subordination to men was a result of their absence from the productive process. Consequently, women did not control the property but they were themselves property. So the condition of women in the education is also affected. Women are dominated by men to control over the mode of production and the women are treated as the free labor of the means of production.

Patriarchy is the stem of the sociological theory in which men achieve, maintain and enjoy social, cultural and economic power and dominate other character in the family like female and other young males (Jary and Jary, 2000). Walby (1990) argued that women are dominated by the patriarchs i.e. male in the society not to let the women have the opportunity to participate in the family and the society. She explained, the family as the composition of male and female where husband acts as breadwinner, wife-homemaker and children are the dependent ones. Conventionally, the family is considered as the central of women's lives and it is central to the determination of the gender inequality. Marriage and homemaking is compulsory for the women because the alternatives are worse for her in the society. So, she explained that conventionally the family is seen as the central to the determination of other social structures which shape gender relations and other duties of the women in the family as well as in the society. It also determines women's participation in the labor market but it doesn't operate in the reverse way. Patriarchy operates via gender division of labor in the household which forces women to take primary responsibility for housework and childcare even if they are full time employed. Women may have been trapped in unsatisfactory marriages but they don't have choice to find well paid jobs to support themselves and their children. Women are also at a cultural disadvantage because modern western culture especially emphasizes the importance of feminine attractiveness which degrades and threatens women.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Early marriage

The relationship of the marriage is considered as the holy and honored relationship (Prabhu, 1961). The marriage conducted between two persons is not only limited to two persons, it is related to the families, households in the eastern world. So for the honor and prestige, the family decides the marriage between two persons in traditional society (David and Liz, 2002). In some cases the marriage is conducted so early that one can't think of it. Even in the educated families, the task of the marriage of the female is considered as the vital problem in the family. Also, the impact of the modern world is so heavy in this age that the teenagers are too much affected by the global world and they take decisions so hastily. So, some of the teens get married so early that they are not thinking about the future.

Some of the respondents of case study of this study were married so earlier that they weren't conscious about the family and children. Some of the respondents were married during SLC which they felt too early that they didn't have the concept of family and children. The most of the respondents who got marriage earlier got married by their parents but two of the respondents were married as per their own decision. Respondent of the case 1 said that she was married just after SLC examination at the age of 16. At that time, she had no concept about the family, children and husband. She was married so hastily. And she gave birth to their son just after the examination of +2. She had studied about the family planning but she had no idea how to apply it. Similarly, cases 2 and 3 also thought that they were married so earlier. They were all married at the age of 18. They wished that they wouldn't have married so early, because they felt that they missed their valuable time as the students and the unmarried daughters in the school and

family respectively. They felt that they could have achieved their life goals and objectives if they were not married so earlier. Respondent of the case 4 said that she fell in love with her boy friend and she thought her parents wouldn't allow hers to marry him. So they eloped from home. At first she thought it would be easy for us to live but then she realized that it was her fault. But they supported each other in the course of life and now hers husband is supporting to continue hers study. She was good at study but she couldn't pass Bachelor's level study regularly because she had given birth to the son during +2 levels. So it took more than five years to complete my Bachelor's degree. Early marriage gets the women to abandon their study as well as career. Early marriage causes early childbirth which limits their capacity and brilliancy. They are bound by their family and household responsibility when they have to give time for the study. The main consequence of the early marriage on the lives of the women is that it prohibits them from entering into the outer world. The family and children become the ultimate goals of the women. Family pressure is the main cause for the early marriage in the traditional society like Nepal, which limits the children in their capability as well as the goal of their life

V. RUMOR MONGERING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Some of the mother-students said that they were backbitten by their neighbors saying that these mother-students were not aware of the family. The neighbors accused them of being ignorant regarding to their household duties and family responsibilities. Both the cases 1 and 2 said that their neighbors spread rumor that they were not caring the family giving importance to their study. But they also ignored their rumors because of the support from the family. Respondent of the case 5 said that some of her neighbor backbit regarding hers study in the Master's level. They accused her of preferring education more rather than her family and children. But she didn't care about that remark at all. Since the society is traditional and patriarchal, it is a great issue for some of the neighbors and the family members that women go out and focus on study instead of giving time to the family and children. The mother-students are the ones who faced the society day by day, so they also have to face different challenges regarding the neighbor's issue. But most of the respondents are not affected by the neighbor's rumors and backbiting because the society is being advanced and nuclear as well as individualistic.

VI. TO FOLLOW THE VALUE OF THE FAMILY

Most of the respondents still felt that they had no right over their fertility right. Most of them didn't use contraceptive because their family didn't want it and the family wanted to have a child. Some of the respondents didn't know about her marriage and they were married earlier than they knew about the marriage and family. Like the respondents of the cases 1 and 2 married earlier but they were not asked about their will. They were married just after the completion of SLC examinations. The parents pressurize their daughters to be married if they receive the proposal from the well established and well positioned family. If a man with government, job proposes for the marriage, the family try to fix up the date for the wedding as soon as possible. Also the respondent

of the case 4 knew about her marriage just a day before her wedding ceremony. Her family had already fixed up her marriage without having her consent. It made her be devaluated in the family. At that time she felt that being a daughter in the Nepalese society is to give up her free will and obey the parents' decision. Also most of the respondents didn't consult with their husband as well as to the family regarding the gap between the two children thinking that it was the fate of the women in the society or family to bear child after the marriage. They thought that it was compulsory to bear child after the marriage. Case 6 said that she had borne a daughter after one year of marriage. Her family members were very happy and now they want to give birth to another child possibly a son after some years. Some of the respondents found it uncomfortable regarding choice of family planning especially those who got arranged marriage. Case 7 said that she felt very hard at first to talk about family planning and contraceptive. She thought student life had finished after the marriage. But she was so lucky that she got opportunity to join the Master's degree. Most of the respondents feel that, after the marriage, the women have to bear the child. Most of respondents felt that it was the fate of the women to have the child. According to them, because of their family, culture and society they had their baby before the post graduation. Some of them thought that they had their first child at the right age according their family. As Acharya (1979) concluded that the tendency of giving more priority to marriage and motherhood prevails in respondent's family.

Although they are educated women, they are not out of the cultural and social boundary. Most of the mother-students felt that it was very difficult to talk to the husband and family about the family planning during the early period of marriage in the arranged marriage. Some of the mother-students who got married in the early age also reiterated that they had no concept of the children and family at the time of marriage. It is seen that, the theory of patriarchy is relevant in this case that women are used to make only home. They are prohibited to be free from the bondage of society and culture to make their own decision.

VII. COMPULSION TO BEAR THE CHILD

Women are obligated to bear the child after marriage. If she is not able to have the child after marriage, she is treated as a barren lady and discrimination starts in the family as well as in the society. It is not only limited to the rural areas but it is also the same in the urban areas. The educated women are also not out of touch. The women who study in the Master's level, are either married or are about to marry because they are in their matured age. Mid twenties is considered as the right age for the marriage for the women in Nepal. In this study, most of the women express that they are not free to choose to bear babies on their own. They also think that they have to bear the child just after the marriage. Not according to the cultural aspect only but also according to the health issues, some of them thought that it was the right age to have the child. Case 7 said that it is the fate and compulsion of the women to bear the child after marriage, so it is not odd for her to have a child just after the marriage. Case 9 said that she and her husband consulted to use contraceptive to avoid the child birth during their first year of marriage, but because of the pressure of the family and backbiting of the neighbors they had their child and

now they are using contraceptive to stop another child for the time being. Similarly, case 10 said that she wanted to bear the child after finishing her Master's degree, but it didn't work for her in the family and she had to have the child. After the child birth, she couldn't complete Master in Nursing (MN). But she has changed her subject in the Master's level; and she took up Sociology as the major subject and she is about to complete her degree next year. Similarly, Case 11 said that she was married while she was studying in +2. At first she tried to use contraceptive to avoid the child bearing, but it was not easy as she thought because of the family pressure.

So, in some cases women are considered as the source of the child and family and society expect the children from the couple after the marriage. First the women had to give importance to have child after the marriage rather than her career and future goals. So, in this sense, the women are bound in the culture and family and she can't pursue her own life goals and perspectives. As argued by Acharya (1979) marriage and motherhood are the ultimate goals for girls. Their main purpose is to marry and bear child for the family and society and it gives satisfaction to them.

VIII. COORDINATING ROLE IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

Since Nepal is culturally and socially rich country, it has different festivals and familial ceremonies. Every caste has their own type of festivals and ceremonies as well. And there are different life time ceremonies like birth, marriage, death etc. Nobody can go beyond their culture in some extent (Jamison, 1996). One has to give his time to these activities somehow. The mother-students are busy in their home, not only in the household and family responsibility but also to the cultural practices. Some of the respondents like the cases 12, 13 and 14 said that they had to involve in the different ceremonies, festivals in the role of coordinator and mediator being the daughter-in-law. Since, they are the daughters-in-law; they are the main part of these activities. They have to actively involve and participate in the festivals and ceremonies. So, they have to be ready and prepared for the different programs like that. These mothers also thought that they should give time to the family and cultural practices. Because of these many issues, they have to give up their classes sometime and couldn't study well in the home as well. It can be concluded that women are considered as the homemaker in the society of Nepal as argued by Walby (1990) theorists of Patriarchy. It seems women are bound to the family and culture and they can't make their own decision regarding their lives and profit.

IX. CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC EXPENSES

Since some of the respondents depend on their husbands in the context of economical expenses of the study along with household expenses. Sometimes, it gives conflict to the couple; like the respondent of the case 15. She used to have verbal conflict to the husband while she was studying and wasn't working. That's why she joined the job just after the examination of her Master's degree had finished. Case 15 also said that she was fully supported by her husband during the Master's level in the first year. But it became the issue of conflict in the family, so she joined the school as a teacher as soon as the second year examination was over. She

was feeling better and they didn't have conflict because of the issues of the educational as well as other expenses. Similarly, case 16 was hesitated to tell about the economic dependence on the husband, because she also felt hard to tell about that. In more than one meeting, she rarely talked about the relationship with husband about the economic dependence and conflict in the family.

It is the economic dependency of the women which creates conflict in the family. So, it can be considered as the source of power as argued by Marxists. Economy makes great impact in the other structures of the society. Those mother-students, who have job, don't have this type of problem in the family. They have different type of problem. As Ollenburger and Moore (1992) wrote that the Marxists believe that the economic dependence is part of the system that maintains marriage, the family and mothering. Also Walby (1990) argued that the women are freely employed in the home and even in the employed sector, she is paid less to make women dependent to the male and patriarch.

X. CONCLUSION

In Nepalese society, the university education system has been practiced since the Rana regime. Although there are too many challenges for the women to get university education after the marriage and being a mother, they are getting this opportunity. Many women are coming to the universities and campus to complete their study even after being a mother. With the help of their husband, in-laws, maternal family, and peer motivations they are getting the opportunity of university life. These facts have absolutely disagreed with Walby's theoretical explanation of patriarchy. Many women come to the campus even during pregnancy showing their bulging figure on the campus. Although there are too many conflicts in the family in the sense of getting the power of resources and capital in the family, they were allowed to get an education. This change is occurred due to the rapid growth in awareness through socio-cultural transformation processes. The main conflict is related to the expenses of the study. That's why mothers are willing to get the job just after finishing the study. These facts are partially analog to the theoretical explanation of Engels.

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