

# Gender in Career Decision Making by Women: An Autoethnographic Account

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## Abstract

Career, work, job, vocation etc holds very significant meaning in one's life. The definition given by Cambridge Dictionary says that 'Career' is the 'the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially those related to that person.' A career is often composed of 'the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position' (British Online Dictionary 2014). Oxford Dictionary defines 'Career' as 'the job or series of jobs that you do during your working life. So it is an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress.' Through this paper, it is intended to present a collection of reflective narratives that, taken together, explore the varied dimensions of women, gender and career in the present moment. An effort is made to use autoethnography to help gender studies' researchers, answer questions that cannot be answered by traditional, empirical research methods and to reveal voices that are obscured by aggregations of data. How this is done, however, varies widely- from an autobiographic novel to speculative fiction to rigorous academic analysis.

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*Index terms*— gender, women career, autoethnography, career decision making.

## 1 Introduction

he rate with which Indian women are disappearing from the workplaces is an area of serious apprehension that requires sustainable and holistic intervention. No country can develop without fullest utilization of human capital. Educated or uneducated women, skilled or unskilled/semi-skilled women and young or experienced women; all have a definite place, relevance and significance in any economy. Literature suggests that work holds same significance for men and women but this might not be true for parenthood, especially in a country like India. According to a recent study conducted on forty seven companies across different sectors in India like FMCG, IT, Manufacturing, ITES, E-Commerce and Financial Services to explore gender diversity plans and policies in Indian companies, there are a good number (up to 91 %) of new mothers who aspire to come back to work (Gender Balance India Survey 2016) <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/diversity/is-india-inc-doing-enough-to-move-the-needle-on-gender-diversity-14739>, Retrieved on 26/02/2018 . But out of this, a major chunk, almost 72%, have no intentions to return to their previous workplaces. The most widely quoted reasons for that are bias in expectation and performance, serious dearth of mentoring and psychological support for 'returnees/ comeback mothers'. This apprehension is also authenticated by the fact that only 26% companies have a returnee program to attract women who are on a career break. The recently amended Maternity Benefits Act has missed out the opportunity to introduce paternity leave and possibly a chance to spread the message that the responsibility of running a family should be of both the parents. India needs to think beyond the closed gender role differentiation norms prevailing in the society and take a seemingly audacious step towards Maternity and Paternity Benefits. Countries such as the UK, Singapore and Australia have introduced various categories of leaves relating to child birth, including parental leave (enabling parents to share the parental leave in the manner suitable for them), family leave etc., where both the parents receive the benefit of leaves at the time of child birth. This, to an extent, helps parents to strike a balance between their careers and personal life. Although the

45 steps taken by the government in the recently amended Maternity Benefits Act are commendable, it may well be  
46 a case of missed opportunities in catching up with such extended requirements.

47 Women form an integral part of the Indian workforce be it urban or rural India. As per Census 2001, only  
48 25.63 percent of women are actively engaged in the workforce, out of which 80 percent are involved in menial jobs  
49 in unorganised sector. In the rural areas, women are mainly involved as cultivators and agricultural labourers.  
50 (Statistics Year Book India 2015).

51 The current status of women in India requires a multidimensional mediation across all the levels of society,  
52 politics and economy. Meta-analyses of available literature highlight similarity among men and women with  
53 reference to confidence, risk taking capabilities and negotiation and there are enough scientific claims that  
54 support this. Despite this the story that statistics tell about the workforce participation of women. Stereotypical  
55 expectations from and by women at the time of choosing career and making career development decisions could be  
56 one of the reasons for lesser number of women in some fields or mitigated representation of women at a particular  
57 life and (or) career stage. This creates an ominous necessity for constructing plans and building unrestricted  
58 resources that understand their requirements and multiply their ranges and prospects.

59 There are many socio-cultural stereotypes prevailing in the country with respect to parenting. Combining it  
60 with career makes it even more interesting field to research and conduct an autoethnographic study. Making  
61 career choice decisions are one of those important decisions that a person takes in his/her life. Understanding  
62 the factors that play critical role in making these decisions become more crucial when these are related to a  
63 woman and the limited resources available to her. Research and surveys conducted recently have indicated that  
64 balancing work and family is on the minds of college-age women long before they are married. The recent study  
65 on 3000 working moms reveals lack of childcare facilities and lack of flexibility as the top two reasons for women  
66 leaving their well started career. 2 II.

## 67 2 The Backdrop

68 The leaky pipeline is clearly visible at the juncture when parenthood supersedes every other aspiration of women.  
69 It could lead to a situation where girls tend to select occupations that do not completely match with her aspirations  
70 and talent and most of the time fail to move forward in her most appropriate and desired career intention.

71 This paper makes an effort to identify how stereotypes and other forces involved in doing gender, affected the  
72 formative process of self-concept development, and thereby played a crucial/dominant role of framing career  
73 anchors of women. Adopting autoethnographic approach both as the process as well as a product of the  
74 investigation is a well thought of decision by the author who herself is a management graduate and is involved in a  
75 very women friendly (?) or perceived to be so, profession. Precisely this paper is an autoethnographic revelation  
76 of gendered career choice and career development decisions and intends to explore the role of doing gender in  
77 career decision making. It will also emphasise upon the areas of gender doing which are still unaddressed or are  
78 by default considered to be inclusive. A critical scrutiny to bring forward a comprehensive picture is intended  
79 through this work.

80 Schein's (1992) 'Career Anchors' are defined as a career related concern or drive that shapes the selfconcept  
81 and perception of a person and becomes a driving/motivating force that influences him/her while making career  
82 decisions. Career has both subjective and objective aspects. The subjective aspect refers to individuals' career  
83 satisfaction and job satisfaction, while the objective aspect is linked to promotions, salary and hierarchical position  
84 . Prior research suggests that women prefer the subjective aspect of career to objective aspect and tend to  
85 set rather low goals in the career context 5 . Further, it has been suggested that to succeed in careers, women  
86 should prove their credentials by seeking and having more educational experiences than men 67 A well planned  
87 and well-designed intervention is quite necessary to help students/ early career people (both men & women)  
88 understand their careers effectively and to act as the mentor for other workers also in developing their own career  
89 (Canannan, G. ??, 2006). The model proposed by Greenhaus et al ??2000), keeps individual in the centre of  
90 the career decision making process as a driver who has to make career related decisions; and is stimulated by  
91 a need to search a career. In this process the individual sets career goals, develops strategies and work upon  
92 different schemes to succeed in his/her strategies and progress. The work of Greenhaus and Powell (2012) in  
93 the area of career introduces the term "Family-related work decision". This term was used to refer to choices  
94 related to vocations which are intensely steered by family reasons, like going for part-time work arrangements for  
95 child care or not accepting a raise in work keeping the complications of work life balance in mind (Greenhaus &  
96 Powell, 2012). In 2014, Greenhaus and Kossek used a little comprehensive work-home perspective on career. This  
97 identifies the interdependencies between individuals' careers and their broader home context. It also included the  
98 family as well as the other life roles such as friendships, public and relaxation characters that a person plays in  
99 his/her life (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). There are sound evidences in the relevant literature that indicate that  
100 women keep work life balance as a significant factor while deciding upon their career (Ng et al., 2005; ??ämsä  
101 and Hiillos 2008). Besides this, at the early career phase, a dynamic process plays significant role in the way  
102 through which every individual tries to learn and adjust in the new and demanding organizational role that is  
103 aligned with his/her individual role (Chao, G.T 2012). 4 Ng, T.W.H., Eby, L.T., Sorensen, K L., & Feldman,  
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109 career: Developing an autobiographical approach. *Gender in Management*, 23 (6), 395-408.  
110 choices long before they have actually entered in to family role. Research has also proven that women due to  
111 various reasons choose such career and vocations that fail to utilize their abilities and talent to the fullest. In  
112 this process they do not follow their unique career aims and objectives (Abele, A.E., & Spruk, D. 2009).

### 113 3 III. Theoretical Foundation & Literature Review

114 Since Parsons (1909) presented the first conceptual framework for understanding individuals' career decision  
115 process, a growing number of theories and models of career development and career choice have emerged.  
116 Although these models have made substantial contributions to the understanding of career decision making and  
117 career development, most theories are based on the experiences of white, middle-class males. Moreover, most  
118 career development theories also assume that individuals are free to choose from among an array of alternatives  
119 which are available to all. Thus, researchers have begun to question the relevance of these theories to women  
120 and individuals from different cultural, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987;  
121 Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980). Many of the assumptions of career development theories ignore the social realities  
122 of special groups where career development may be constrained by such factors as prejudice, discrimination, and  
123 opportunity availability imposed by society's sociopolitical system (Griffith, 1980; Smith, 1983).

124 The model derived out of the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986) includes personal input variables  
125 comprising personal characteristics such as gender, background/context variables comprising environmental  
126 characteristics such as parent and family influences, and learning experiences comprising variables such as  
127 objective performance, school experiences and role-modeling experiences. These variables shape and inform  
128 career-related self-efficacy (e.g, perceived task competence) and outcome expectations (e.g., anticipation of  
129 certain outcomes, such as self-satisfaction and financial reward). Self-efficacy and outcome expectations along  
130 with personal and contextual variables play an important role in the formation of interests and career goals.  
131 However, researchers have accepted the role of cultural considerations and variations in the significance of self in  
132 decision making related to valuable life decisions. Career choices is one of those important life decision that is  
133 subjected to stimuli and contemplations that are familial and collective in nature.

134 Review of Literature presents several theories of Career Choice and factors affecting decision making process  
135 of men and women. Yet there is a dearth of work focusing specifically to young women who are professionally  
136 qualified and are yet not contributing to the workforce. Betz and Hackett (1997) assert that both the theory  
137 and measures of career-related self-efficacy are useful both in research examining barriers to and facilitators of  
138 women's career development and for designing and evaluating the effectiveness of practice grounded in this theory.  
139 Betz and Hackett admit the challenges for a women to not to allow herself to be pushed to traditional career,  
140 but to restore options that may have been de facto removed by sexism and gender role stereotyping as well as by  
141 other environmental barriers. Overall, self-efficacy theory is thought by many to have great potential for careers  
142 work with groups who have traditionally underachieved in certain areas for example, girls, women and minority  
143 ethnic groups. One of its strengths is that it doesn't ignore biological, social or environmental influences, or the  
144 current context. However, it does assert that as individuals get older, it's more difficult to change interests, goals  
145 and performance outcomes.

146 From a review of a decade of research into women and career development, Phillips and Imhoff (1997)  
147 conclude that 'women's lives are complex'. They note that the past decade has seen significant progress towards  
148 understanding this complexity. Fitzgerald et al (1995) stress the need to study concepts and variables for  
149 women (such as those identified by Betz, 1994) which were previously regarded as unnecessary and irrelevant,  
150 concluding that this will lead to a greater understanding of the vocational behaviour of everyone.

### 151 4 IV. Career Decision Making by Women

152 Theories related to women's career development began to emerge in the early 1980's (Astin, 1984; Armer,  
153 1985; Ottfredson, 1981; Hackett & Betz, 1981). These theories improved on earlier theories by taking into  
154 account variables which influence women's career choices, aspirations, and work behaviors. A socio-psychological  
155 model of career choice and work behaviour titled, 'the meaning of work in women's lives' by Astin, Helen S  
156 presents a beginning formulation of a theoretical model, which draws from both empirical evidence and past  
157 theoretical formulations of career development, to enhance an understanding of women's occupational choice  
158 and behaviour. The model, which is need-based and socio-psychological, incorporates 4 constructs: motivation,  
159 expectations, sex-role socialization, and the structure of opportunity. She attempted to develop a model of career  
160 choice and work behavior that attempted to combine both personal (psychological) and social forces as well as  
161 their interaction.

162 It is over twenty years since scholars began to question the adequacy of the extant career theory for illuminating  
163 women's lives. However researchers like Astin (1984) have accepted this long back that women's career choices  
164 and career decision making might follow a completely different path as compared to their counterparts. Forrest &  
165 Mikolaitis (1986) and Gilligan (1982) have suggested that a women's identity is reflected in relational roles that she  
166 plays while connecting or differentiating with others. These authors have contributed additional considerations

## 5 INDIAN WOMEN ARE LEAVING THE WORKPLACE AT THE FASTEST RATE:

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167 when looking at life roles, such as values, gender, and socialization. Connel(1987) introduces 'gender order' to  
168 refer to a historically and archeologically fabricated trend and pattern of power relations between the two broad  
169 genders men and women which can later on be institutionalised in various roles of society. Traditional gender  
170 order portrays man as the breadwinner and women as home-based caregiver or secondary earner ??Gherarrdi  
171 1995 ??&io 2001). Interestingly when a women breaks this 'male bread winner model' and moves out the house  
172 she is automatically expected to choose a professional which is suitable for type of identity of women like  
173 nurses, teachers etc ?? Tienariet al. 2002). Hansen (1997) has listed gender role socialization, role conflict  
174 among family/marriage and work, focus and timing of marriage, inadequate work orientation, and gender role  
175 differentiation as some of the barriers in women's career development in her Individual Leadership plan Model.  
176 Zunker (2002) defines career related decisions to be affected and taken within the boundaries of a lifelong process  
177 of identifying and integrating women's primary needs, roles, and goals within herself and her work/career and  
178 family. Having a career and family together has offered many challenges to women (Valdez & Gutek 1987) as  
179 work and family roles pose simultaneous demands to women. There is a clear trend across globe that women tend  
180 to enter the workforce in lower status, lower paying jobs which are clustered in a limited numbers of conventional  
181 careers affected by gender role discrimination and fitting best for women where she can simultaneously devote  
182 time for her caregiver roles in family. Heinset al (1982) believe that, "Achieving professional status may be more  
183 difficult for woman than for men" (p 455). ??omenico & Jones( 2006) believe that career aspirations of women  
184 are influenced by gender based stereotypes, socioeconomic status, parent's occupation, Parent's education level  
185 and husband education and earning. ??eung & Chen (2009), argue that there is significant relationship between  
186 women participation in the workforce and the environment enabling their career aspirations and ensuring progress  
187 of women's career development.

188 The current work is an effort to bring forward the fact that there are many talented Indian women who are  
189 missing from the workplace. The reason for that is twofold ; one is that the voice of Indian women in terms  
190 of career choices and career related decisions is still unheard (a vast gap in women specific/oriented research  
191 literature and career theories is an evidence to this belief) are second is that our workplaces have not given due  
192 considerations to the women specific expectations. The recent amendment in Maternity Benefits (Amendment)  
193 Act 2017, is an exception and a welcome step, but there is still lot more that requires to attract and retain women  
194 talent in Indian workplaces.

195 The amendment protects employment of women and grants 26 weeks of paid leaves (for the first two children)  
196 as compared to 12 weeks in the past. The initiative is good enough to bring back the focus on outlook towards  
197 maternity at Indian workplaces. The amendment envisions many qualitative benefits and seeks to uplift the work  
198 conditions as well as work life balance of working mothers phenomenally. It is expected that this amendment  
199 will benefit around 1.8 million working mothers, as it applies to both the private and the public sector. But is  
200 this quantitative gain enough to ensure inclusive workplaces in India? The important question that arises is the  
201 objectives that this amendment seeks to achieve. Will it be a change agent in improving gender parity at Indian  
202 workplaces? What we need is a change in the mindset towards working mothers, which is not easy in a patriarchal  
203 society like India. There is a section of corporate India like, HSBC Global, SAP Labs India, Accenture India and  
204 Make My Trip.com etc which a consciously designing gender sensitive policies. But at the same place, we have  
205 many companies where women still have to face discrimination of all forms when they move on the family way.

## 206 5 Indian Women are leaving the Workplace at the Fastest Rate:

207 Large number of women is leaving the workforce in India. There is a drop in the percentage participation of  
208 working age Indian women by 10 %. This is the largest drop in the world (ILO Report 2016). Only 27% of  
209 the female population aged over 15 is working in India. This is the lowest rate of women's participation in  
210 any workforce among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries; with the highest  
211 in China at 64% (World Bank Report 2013).This is a jolt to the initiatives and the efforts towards gender  
212 equality at workplace. We are losing 48% of women during the transition from junior to senior positions (Gender  
213 Diversity Benchmark for Asia Report 2011). Losing a woman employee in the first 7-12 years of her career is huge  
214 productivity loss to any company. Right and effective maternity policy for Indian workplaces is a need of hour.  
215 With 87th rank in Gender Equality Index we report progress on mitigating the gender gap this year in the area  
216 of salary/wage equality and across other indicators of the Educational Attainment sub index. It resulted into  
217 sealing the wide enrolment gap in primary and secondary education (World Economic Forum 2016). McKinsey  
218 Global Institute study says that by 2025 there is a possibility of increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)  
219 of India by between 16% and 60%, merely by facilitating female workforce participation in the economy equal to  
220 men (Abraham 2013). India will have a working age (under 30) women population of almost 250-300 million by  
221 the year 2020. This is such a huge potential which equals to the entire population of the US or Italy, Germany,  
222 France and the UK combined (NSSO 2011). This astounding figure reveals the significant role that Indian women  
223 can play in Indian economy and business. Apart for the evidences those advocate gender equality in India and  
224 claim that this could radically add to its GDP, there are numerous arguments to support the fact that India  
225 simply can't afford to wait for gender equality at workplace.

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## 226 6 An Inclusive and Innovative workplace for Women:

227 An inclusive, flexible, conducive and innovative workplace plays a significant role in harnessing the immense  
228 potential of trained/experienced women. Women workforce in India contributes 32% to the informal economy  
229 (which includes agriculture also) and 20% to the non-agriculture based jobs. Not surprisingly but a huge portion  
230 of female workforce (57%) is engaged in home based ventures (Report of Ministry of HRD 2014).

231 There could be several reasons for this. Some of these reasons are insufficient childcare facilities, nonconductive  
232 work environment for working mothers due to unfavorable policies, very few initiatives to help and counsel new  
233 mothers to support their trouble-free comeback, various socio-cultural stereotypes and gender role differentiation  
234 in terms of child care and parenting in India. Successful reintegration of women talent also requires metrics at  
235 the right place to measure and utilize the effects of this change in future. Indian workplaces need to work in  
236 these areas to fill the huge gender gap.

237 V.

## 238 7 Research Gap

239 Research has indicated that balancing work and family is on the minds of college-age women even when they  
240 are unmarried This is also evident that women mostly choose those career options that allow them more time  
241 with family and create less challenges. They also see their career choices from the lenses of perceived work life  
242 balance in particular profession and prefer family or gender specific (?) jobs. There is a possibility that a girl  
243 chooses a course leading to a specific career keeping various societal pressures and pre conceived notions in mind.  
244 These gender role biases might prevent her in choosing a career that might be her true talent and also aspiration.  
245 There is a very crucial role of organization in terms of creating an employer brand or carreridentitiy that is either  
246 women friendly (?) or may too demanding and unfriendly (?). Indian society of 1980s and 1990s was a typical  
247 playfield offering very few career choices both to men and women. With the advent of technological advancement  
248 and liberalization policies of them Narsimha Rao Government the career opportunities which were previously  
249 very limited gradually expanded. Among the limited career opportunities the scope was even narrow for women.  
250 Professions like teaching, medical and nursing were listed as most nobel career options for women. There were  
251 very limited women barristers, bureaucrats, judges or journalists. In such scenario, this paper is set in the social  
252 and cultural background of India of late 1980s and 90s and intends to explore the role of doing gender in career  
253 decision making by way of autoethnographic study.

## 254 8 VI.

## 255 9 Methodology

256 Autoethnography is a type of research that uses writing and self-examination to explore far-ranging cultural,  
257 political, and social issues through personal experience. It is a qualitative, reflexive, ethnographic method where  
258 the researcher is also the subject of inquiry (Ellis, Carolyn; Adams, Tony, Bochner & Arthur 2010). Ernst &  
259 Vallack (2015) argue in favour of autoethnography and warn the social science researchers against the possibility  
260 where individual exceptions become less important than the general trends. Caretta, Drozdowski, Jokinen  
261 & Falconer (2016) very recently, make use of reflexivity, autobiographical writing, and reflection, to analyse  
262 increasingly stressful and demanding working conditions of early academicians.

263 Adopting autoethnographic approach both as the process as well as a product of the investigation is a well  
264 thought of decision by the author who herself is a management graduate and is involved in a very women friendly  
265 (?) or perceived to be so, profession. By using autoethnography as the research method, this paper intends to  
266 investigate aspects of doing gender in career decision making. Starting with a reflective examination of myself  
267 as the author and gender as one of the factors in the process of my career related decision making, the aim is to  
268 investigate questions of culture, social norms, gender stereotypes, familial influences, self-concept and identity.  
269 During the course of data collection for two of my papers; one related to identifying (using narrative enquiry)  
270 career anchors of educated women who are not participating in the workforce, and other seeking to explore  
271 male member's (of the family) intercession in the career choice decisions of management graduates (who have  
272 shared their career autobiographies with the author and are pursuing a particular stream of education), I came  
273 across the singularity of some cultural, social and economic phenomenon in career decision making of women.  
274 While conducting narrative enquiry of the indepth interviews of these women the author came across with the  
275 possibility of involving herself as a subject due to the similarity of incidents/anchors/ Year 2019 ( ) A motivators  
276 (de-motivators) and frequency of occurrence of these incidents/anchors in her own life. a) An Autobiographical  
277 Account "I was born as second girl child of well-educated parents whose thought process and life style was much  
278 ahead of their time. Four of us were living in a pseudo nuclear family. It was a pseudo nuclear family as my  
279 grandparents were living in the same building which was a huge premise encompassing the families of two of  
280 my uncles as well. It was a trier III city which had enjoyed as well as suffered the locational advantage and  
281 disadvantage of being very nearby to the capital of the State." "One of my uncles had three girls and another had  
282 a son as the only child. In total we were seven cousins living almost together." "My mother was the only daughter  
283 in law in the family who was working and was also been respected for the high education that she possessed." "A  
284 confident working mother and a supporting husband who was not only proud of her wife's dedication towards

## 11 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

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285 career but was also the strongest supporter pillar of her aspirations and successes was the natural environment  
286 in my family." "Attaining Education and aspiring for a Career was inbuilt in my DNA. Gender was not at all  
287 the guiding force in my family till I reached to my graduation days." "We played all sorts of sports I had not  
288 encountered the episodes of 'doing gender in my family till then. b) A tomboy or a Girly girl "Without a single  
289 deliberate effort by my parents or me, I grew up, to know that my cousins use to reiterate my identity as a  
290 tomboyish person and my elder sister as a girly girl." "All I knew was that I was a go-getter, bold, confident and  
291 outspoken girl and so was my sister with a bit of shyness and a bit of less opinionated identity. She was also  
292 a confident and extrovert person; thanks to the upbringing given by our parents!" c) Making a Career Choice  
293 decision "I remember it was summers of 1998, and I was about to finish my last year of graduation, when I received  
294 the call letter from Indian Institute of Mass Communication, for appearing in an interview to get admission in  
295 Masters of Journalism." "If I get admission there it was going to be the beginning of a new life for me. A life  
296 full of adventure, passion and unpredictable working life with lesser scope for family time and work life balance.  
297 (This was my way of thinking and my perception about journalism as a career in India)." "Off course I filled up  
298 the form, off course I had prepared for it, off course it was one of the finest places in the country to pursue such  
299 course." "Then what was bothering me. A tomboyish girl who was bold enough to travel frequently from her home  
300 town to the nearby city Lucknow; was appreciated from her writing and speaking skills and had also represented  
301 her university at the State level Debate competition (which required staying at a far off hostel at Hyderabad  
302 for four days) was thinking the way quite unlikely of her". "Something was bothering me." "I had anticipated a  
303 much predictable career and a much routine working life for me." "Who was this new version of mine?" "Was it  
304 really new, or was it just hidden from me and I was till then not aware of my true self-image. "It was strange to  
305 get along with this unknown selfidentity." d) Am I Cut for Journalism? Despite being able to cross a very small  
306 hurdle in my way to get admission in the course of Journalism, I simply let it go and convinced myself that it  
307 must not have been an appropriate field for me." "What is that appropriate field? Who will decide the degree  
308 and criterion for appropriateness?" "My parents neither encouraged nor motivated me to take choose journalism  
309 as my career" "They were as neutral as possible." "Where from this feeling and self -belief that journalism is  
310 an over demanding field which expects more than what I have in store to offer to my career creped in me. e)  
311 Choosing an Appropriate (?)Career "During my post-graduation days the most certainly available career path  
312 for me was of a HR person owing to my training as Masters of Human Resource Management & Industrial  
313 Relations." "From no-where the idea of appearing for a National Eligibility Test for Lecturer ship came to me  
314 and I qualified the coveted exam in my first attempt." "By the year 2001, I was a management graduate, working  
315 as a monitoring and evaluation consultant in one of the leading NGO of Lucknow and was busy in my usual  
316 working life. "Then one fine day the qualifying certificate which proved to be my gate pass to the world of higher  
317 education and becoming an academician, arrived at my home." "I could read the happiness and comfort in the  
318 voice of my parents when they informed the news to me on my office's landline phone (mobiles were not the usual  
319 way of communication then)." "Oh; so this was that most appropriate career for me." "Was I cut for becoming  
320 a professor?" "Am I?" "Does this career guarantee the work life balance that is one of the crucial conditions for  
321 me from my working life?" "Am I unknowingly following the path that my mother walked?" "Am I treating her  
322 as my role model?" "I did not actually know that at that time." "Is teaching a really Flexible Job?" "Or is it one  
323 of those most appropriate careers for a woman?" f) It is definitely not as easy as I thought?

324 As a person I never became the victim of gender role differentiation. I was never told to do something or not  
325 do something just because I fall in to a particular biological category of sex. I have never seen such environment  
326 in my family where cooking cleaning etc. is a 'women only' job and earning or bread winning is a 'male only'  
327 domain. That means I have never faced a 'second or third party gender doing.' Then who instigated my decision  
328 to choose a so called women friendly career. Was it the societal, familial and cultural environment that very  
329 subtly has played its role or was it my perception towards specific careers and certain degree of perceived scope  
330 of work life balance associated with these careers? Or was it my intentionally made decision to choose a career  
331 where the scope of autonomy, flexibility and work life balance is one higher side.

332 One thing was clear. Work life balance was my dominant career anchor (Schein 2012). Finding out the role  
333 of gender role differentiation and gender doing in framing this particular career anchor is the arena where future  
334 research is possible while using the same autobiographical and ethnographic approach. As present study intends  
335 to take only career choice into its purview of exploration, the life story is depicted only upto the phase when the  
336 author has made her career choice decision. Challenges in the way of career development and growth is another  
337 field of study that might get affected with gender role differentiation and gender doing once the author has played  
338 another life roles of a wife and mother. Latest studies and surveys have strikingly mentioned that that it is the  
339 most demanding phase in a women's professional and personal life and the pipeline is quite leaky there.

## 340 10 VII.

### 341 11 Theoretical Contribution

342 Precisely it explores the role of doing gender in career decision making of women. Autoethnography is a method of  
343 research that involves describing and analysing personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences.  
344 The method challenges canonical ways of doing research and recognizes how personal experience influences the  
345 research process.

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346 Autoethnography acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence  
347 on research. This paper also makes an effort to provide a historical and conceptual overview of autoethnography.  
348 The reasons for coming to autoethnography for exploring gendered career decision making by women and identify  
349 key concerns and considerations that led to the use of this method are good enough. This paper is both product  
350 and process of autoethnography for collecting evidences of doing gender in career decision making of women.  
351 All of the pieces of narratives in this paper share some characteristics: Each one is the result of a rigorous  
352 examination of the self and lived experience, and each one moves between the subjective and the cultural in its  
353 analysis.

## 354 **12 VIII.**

### 355 **13 Managerial Implication**

356 Women form an integral part of the Indian workforce. Gender Equality is one of the ambitious goals under  
357 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Researchers have noted that understanding differences among women is  
358 critical for crafting policy and making public investments that meet their needs and expand their choices and  
359 opportunities. The autoethnographic revelations of realities of challenges and anchors of career decision making  
360 by women might be a key contributor towards framing more sustainable and future oriented workplace policies  
361 and practices. A sincere effort towards hearing the voice of women and including them in the process of decision  
362 making is the need of hour. Without which the real concerns, true stories, deep pains and moments of ultimate  
363 joy will remain unnoticed and unaccounted.

364 To make our workplaces more inclusive and sustainable is the need of hour and should be the prime focus of  
365 our policy makers. Corporate world needs to take this issue far more seriously than ever. In today's world of  
366 war for Talent India Inc. cannot afford to miss even a single trained worker to be out of the workforce. The  
367 expenditure done on training women engineers, doctors, and managers etc will be utter waste if we fail to create a  
368 suitable match between their life roles and career expectations. Gender role differentiation has done enough harm  
369 to our economic and societal wellbeing and this is the time to challenge it with full force and right intentions.  
370 More researches and indepth analyses in this area and more explorations to hear ' Her' voice in the world of  
371 education and career can reap the desired results in coming future. There is a lot more scope in this field for  
372 more qualitative as well as quantitative studies and empirical future researches. Notes 1. Although I treat this  
373 autoethnography as "my" story, I need to confess and admit that my parents, elder sister and cousins are also the  
374 writers" of this story.

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### 377 **15 ( )**

378 A I have intentionally used the principal individual particular to elude communicating for them, but I want to  
379 concede their full contribution in constructing my life story the way it is. <sup>1</sup>



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