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## Study on the Influence of Pessimistic Cultural Bondages that Affect the Career Perspectives of Rural Women

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### ABSTRACT

*It is assumable that the entire nation in Sri Lanka can prosper and thrive when both genders have equal opportunities and power. Greater gender equality also enhances economic efficiency, increased income and competitive productivity in the economy. Studies revealed that out of 57 % of the female population only 34.7 % of women actively participate in the economy. By tradition, the rural women accredited the man-made behavioral role as their destiny. The focal object of this study is to examine the impact of prevailing social bondages and to analyze how such elements influence rural women and their career perspectives. Geographically, this research is focused on 3 rural districts namely, Kurunegala, Monaragala and Anuradhapura. In total, 600 informants in both categories of employed and unemployed were randomly selected. Data was collected through adeptly conducted focused group discussions, interviews, questionnaires, proceeded with relevant case studies and observations. SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis. The results obtained in concern with family bondages and their marriages revealed that women are deprived due to the abstained rights for decision making within their family settings. It is anomalous to address above factors as an optimistic mechanism, having established a National Committee for Controlling Gender Based Discrimination (NCCGBD). Thereupon, a revised policy framework should be formulated for empowering rural women while raising awareness on discriminative elements that are blended with conventional social beliefs. Improving positive socio-cultural customs as best practices to ensure asserted women's rights, harmonious marriages, congruent family settings and progressive career perspectives are key elements to be adopted.*

## 1. Introduction

Discrimination against women continues to exist in every society from long ago not in the sake of disrespect but the role that society expected to be played (Smith and Mackie 2007). As per the belief and deep-rooted customs in the contemporary rural context, role of the women has faced a contradiction. Residing in rural areas can also be a cause for moderate educational levels with limited enhancement on economic opportunities (Jayethunga, 2016). At the same time, women are considered as a special group which is vulnerable and weak in many ways but a major character which has turned into a complexity in the modern society who adorns varied nature of composition in the social context. Inequality between men and women is focused by social scientists and biologists to refer to certain biological categories: Among those, identification of sex is based on a variety of factors, including chromosomal patterns, hormonal makeup, and genital structure. The determination of sex is considerably more complex than is generally understood (Ruth, 1998: 17). Sexuality has long been considered highly as personal subjects. There is clearly a biological component, but it is far too complicated to be wholly attributable to biological traits. It must be understood in terms of the social point of view, which ascribes humanity of it (Giddens, 2010: 579). As per these revelations, sexual orientation can be characterized as pre-requisites of enrolling for jobs. However, sex contrasts are infrequently unbiased in practically all social orders, also the sexual orientation is a noteworthy social discrimination. Sex is a basic factor in organizing the sorts of chances and unequivocally impacts the carrier expectations within the family unit to the society. The gender difference becomes a socialized factor from the childhood of both males and females and certain decisive factors are there with taboos too (Parsons and Bales, 1956). Notwithstanding, women accomplish varied tasks within families,

education, economic aspects, religious and the political structures. It is also efficacious that women and their rights are affected negatively due to the reasons of gender-based disparities.

Females in comparison to males encounter a series of specific challenges, biologically such as, attaining adolescence, encountering menstruation, pregnancy, childbirths, feeding kids are some of those associated with the lives of women. In this respect significant thoughts are necessary to assess how women to be in a slimmer value compared to male. There is a clear disparity in gender perspectives and this matter is turning to a controversial issue in the modern society. When the above attributes are corresponded with male population it is unavoidable that females can build a higher scale of equality in the society. The relatively low rate career involvement in Sri Lanka has puzzled many researchers, especially given the consistently high educational attainment levels of women in the country (Samarakoon and Mayadunne, 2018). Female's literacy rate which was 71% in 1971 has increased to 97% by 2018 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2019). This remarkable increase has taken Sri Lanka to the second place in the South Asian region in terms of female literacy rate. However, Sri Lankan literature on the factors that affect demand for female workers is sparse, and the available information is based on interpretation of studies and research in other areas; for instance, while many have argued that impact of the expectations of society on the female career growth in general and the attachments that link women to the social institutions have a direct influence in maintaining career throughout the women's life. According to Hirschi (1969), when a person is more strongly bonded to conventional society, the more sensitive he or she is to the loss of approval from conventional others. Further, he suggests that the social bond contains four elements: attachment, involvement,

commitment, and belief of general social norms exist in the family (Hirschi, 1969).

As stated in numerous literatures, a range of factors contributes to women's persistent career gaps in Sri Lanka (Gunethilaka & Ramani, 1999; Jayathunga, 2016). These are prevailing within gender roles. These roles are developed from early childhood toward primarily domestic identities within the household settings rather than on well-remunerated jobs. Social prohibitions against women working after marriage and especially after child births remain strong. Commuting to jobs, as well as employment in certain sectors (such as the garment industry), retains a stigma, especially for married women. As is common elsewhere in the world, Sri Lanka exhibits considerable educational and occupational streaming by gender, resulting in women's low rates of acquiring the skills valued in labour markets. The human capital mismatches between women's education and training, on one hand, and skills that employers seek in growth sectors of the economy, on the other, those disadvantaged women even more now than before.

So, it is important to determine the factors that affect career development in women from the sociological aspects, too. While attentive to the affection of the family, before the marriage and after the marriage, this study sensitizes the women's desires with reference to the career progression. Though, women on one hand, be considered as the most vulnerable and weakest segment in the society, in contrary, women are the most vital ingredient of the demographic building blocks of Sri Lanka, It is also pivotal to understand that discrimination arises within the family which leads to a noticeable rate of inequality between male and female. In addition, most of the policy drivers and decision makers of Sri Lanka need to be aware of these root causes of social instability so that adequate measures be taken to eradicate factors that impede the

sovereignty of Sri Lanka due to gender discriminations.

Main focus of this research was to explore specific information on whether there are any obstructions created due to the influence of social bonds on the career perspectives of rural women. Furthermore, to examine the positive or negative impacts that are deep rooted in the social relationships and how best the women can moderate their decision-making capacities to secure their career prospects.

Main objective of the study was "to identify the obstructions caused through the influence of social bonds against the life style of women amidst their association with the co-family members and to ascertain the disparities of the social bonds that affect women's leadership, their rights and the stability of their career.

The study is intended to define and identify obstructions caused through the influence of social bonds against women through their association with the co-family members and to understand the disparities of the social bonds that affect women's leadership, their rights and equality.

Specific objectives of the study were;

- to determine the obstructions caused on women's career due to the effects of gender disparities while identifying the negative and positive consequences that affect the progression of employments and the wellbeing of their families.
- to acquaint the civic community in the contemporary society to broaden their knowledge on the complexity of gender discrimination in Sri Lanka.
- to provide several recommendations for the authorities concerned to adopt policies at each level in order to mitigate the identified social injustices that impede career development.

In this respect the most significant points to be manifested in the study are,

- The negligence of addressing women/girls' desires within a supportive environment paying equal attention to both gender categories within the family institution. To surmount existing drawbacks in the education system in order to broaden the access for vocational education by female students. Moreover the study emphasizes the issues raised by interviewees; namely, career development processes; poor social / legal security against domestic violence, incest, and higher preference for male child. It is a hypothesis that these factors severely impede a woman's ability and opportunity to gain a fair chance and exposure in her chosen career development processes.

Studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between mothers' educational attainment, versus the alternative earnings, and the socio-economic well-being of their family members. The above can be changed over time and they vary within and between cultures and societies. As Khan (2015) stated, it is through culture that a person comes to know who men and women are and what kind of relationship the two have with each other. According to the nature of the culture, eventually the work of a woman is at home and the work of a man is within the community. Naturally, women are not just considered to be physically weak, but are considered to be weak in everything when compared with men and that's how society treats them (Khan, 2015). This notion is widely spread in Asian countries and biological characteristics have strongly influenced towards this idea. Pokhrahel (2008) mentioned that, there is considerable extent women themselves were found to be responsible for discrimination as they perceive the things culturally and perform it accordingly. In addition, they accept the gender-based responsibilities without

considering it as discrimination (Pokhrahel, 2008). Specially, South Asian women are expected to play a family role by the social bonds and thoroughly marginalized women are dedicating themselves deliberately to act the role without any hesitation.

With special reference to Bangladesh, the different socio-cultural norms have created gender discrimination that encourage parental responsibility toward their daughters, as opposed to their sons. These norms are so embedded in the functioning of social life that transgressing them by investing in education is perceived as risking social sanction. On the other hand, a son's education is seen as the duty of the parents for the future earnings. Another important reason for gender discrimination in education is related to the role of women in traditional societies. In fact, women very often carry out subsistence agriculture or domestic work, which is very tiring for marginalized women in developing countries where it is necessary to walk for hours to find water or wood, essential tasks for the survival of the household members. Apparently, these tasks do not need particular knowledge and families perceive girl's education as a waste of time (Pasqua, 2005).

Under this circumstance, the research focused on a series of studies based on gender sensitization and to assess whether the accessibility of females for vital elements is equal to the males. Based on the Indian culture, Sharma (1995) emphasized, the female child's survival is threatened in every stage of their lives. Equality means an equal opportunity to have access to resources and facilities during various stages of her life cycle. Gender equity is necessary for changing attitudes and practices, which allow or deny the girl child's access to opportunities or facilities (Sharma, 1995).The fragmentation of family models and individual patterns in the life cycle, due to major changes in demographic trends and the redefinition of gender roles in modern societies, have produced new areas of female in equality: the

traditional male-dependent condition of women is replaced by differentiated forms of economic and social vulnerability that call for different types of policy responses depending on the stage of the life cycle.

A higher female employment rate does not automatically imply that social justice in the position of women in the labour market has been achieved, however, due to the presence of a gender wage gap and significant gender segregation both vertically and horizontally in the occupational structure. Based on the development, its dimensions and implications require the involvement of international development organizations in the struggle to reverse the socio-cultural, economic and political subordination and debasement of womenfolk, and to acknowledge and enhance their immense contribution to the development process in the world. Women matters have made a remarkable advance from the margin of global attention to the center of national and global politics. Further, countries at nearly the same level of economic development too have much to learn from each other as the educational developments and the degree to which the elimination of gender discrimination in education has proceeded, are not same. It is evident that the causality runs from economic development to greater gender equality as the economic constraints become less binding: for example, as countries becomes well off enough to educate both boys and girls.

Looking back to the history of Sri Lanka, the social structure has both matriarchal and patriarchal elements going hand in hand in the family circle. With the colonization process, women's matriarchal values came to question with regard to the man's authority over women. But, Sri Lanka proved the fact that women brutalized by severe mental trauma such as assassinations of their spouses can become strong leaders in the public politics, an area completely dominated by males. Thus, women's representation may not at large but in small scale in public sectors

such as politics have given strength to the other women in Sri Lankan society to voice their needs and grievances (Vithanage,2015).

According to a study done by Gunawardene (2016) he explained Marriage, operating as a social institution, has limited the role of women in Sri Lanka in certain occupations and behaviors, and even moulding the woman's role in how society expects. The fundamental reason for this is the common myth that a woman is to restrict her role to household tasks. Cultural ideas connected to the idea of patriarchy and marriage support this marginalization as an accepted norm. Therefore, women in Sri Lanka seem to take a double bind of marginalization. Further, poor women are facing several problems due to unequal factors of political participation, labour force participation and decision-making process (Gunewardene, 2016). In many areas, women lack the opportunities for training and advancement, and remain trapped in less productive or socially undervalued employment and condemned to poverty. The subordination of such women in Sri Lanka is closely related to the lack of opportunities and the sexual division of labour (Herath, 2015). Further studies show that, the labour force participation of educated women could be improved by encouraging them to attain higher education level with formal training and English literacy, and by enhancing the economic opportunities in rural areas (Jayathunga, 2016).

Kumari Jayawardena stated: "Sri Lanka attracted a great deal of attention in 1960 when Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the world's first woman prime minister. This was widely interpreted, "in Sri Lanka and outside, as an indicator of the role and position of women in Sri Lankan society, a position of equality and independence" (Jayewardena, 1986, p.109). But this creates a contradiction as the indicator accurately reflects the exact position of the women's lives. However, the hidden reality is that, on the whole, women hold minor positions with low status and less

assistance (Jayaweera, et al., 2007). Thus, despite the fact that both men and women received the universal franchise in 1931, that the literacy rate is above 90%, and that education has long been prioritized for males and females, women in Sri Lanka, especially the rural women, are treated as second-class citizens in the socio-economic and political spheres (Herath, 2015, p.2).

Hewamanne stated that, Women brought up in traditional or orthodox family milieus, especially middle-class believe that such sentiments are natural phenomena and are unable to see them as attributes of their socio-economic background (Hewamanne, 2008). Referring to feudal, colonial capitalist formations in Sri Lanka, Goonatilake highlights “the barriers to women’s emancipation and empowerment: This is a struggle against accepted customs, values, attitudes and prejudices arising from various historical experiences. Women are taught to accept certain institutions as ‘natural’ while the man-made codes of behaviour provide the seeming rationale (Goonatilake, 1976, p.16). Many women have defined their lower status as their destiny, because it is inscribed in their culture or religious beliefs. Highlighting the vital importance of women’s empowerment, Swarna Jayaweera argues, “The education process should also be consciously used to empower women to challenge obscurantist practices and rituals that perpetuate the subordination of women in the family through marriage practices and acceptance of patriarchy in household decision making (Jayaweera, 1995, p.21).

According to the above literature most of the studies have discussed the cultural aspect and the role which culture presents the women to play in their societies, while women agree to accept the cultural career which they offer to them. But this study aimed to identify the roles which accredit to the women from contemporary society with the association of the family and the fulfillment of their expectations related to the career. Some of the studies conducted in Sri Lanka have

been based on economic perspective as they discuss the labour force participation and women empowerment. Further those studies created a negotiation on the factors which influence the gender disparities in work premises. Depending on this situation, as very few studies have been dedicated to discourse the non-revealed barriers which are innate with most of the Sri Lankan women, the present study tried to explore how the social bonds tied up the women career which can be affected towards the later lives of the rural women. By means of qualitative inquiry the study explored, the level of women’s accessibility for resources, availability of opportunities to attend decision making forums and especially the degree of social acceptance against women in contrast to the males.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Study Design and Sample Selection**

A multi-dimensional approach was applied in the selection of geographical areas in consideration of the geographical, social and cultural backgrounds in Sri Lanka. When the design of the study is concerned the status of women in selected rural areas was envisaged to be the focal point. The role of those women in their families, whether they are employed or unemployed as well as attitudinal inconsistency and specifically the impact of accustomed social bondages, were included as key elements in the design of the study. Study area selected was centralized to 3 districts namely; Kurunegala, Monaragala and Anuradhapura. Two divisional secretariats from each district were selected for the sample. Accordingly, Kuliypitiya and Kurunegala DS areas were selected in Kurunegala District, while Bible and Monaragala DS areas were designated from Monaragala District, whereas, Madawachchiya and Anuradhapura DS divisions were chosen from Anuradhapura District. The randomly selected number of data providers were 600 whereas, 200 data providers were selected from each district

with the representation of 100 employed and the balance 100 of unemployed and the age limits specified were from 18 to 55 years.

**Table 1.** Urban Population by Districts

<b>District</b>	<b>Urban %</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Urban %</b>
Colombo	90.51	Matale	28.91
Gampaha	67.32	Badulla	28.46
Kaluthara	62.09	Mannar	28.46
Kandy	56.98	Matara	25.11
Galle	50.31	Hambanthota	23.92
Puttalam	42.77	Nuwara Eliya	23.86
Vavuniya	41.87	Polonnaruwa	16.48
Batticaloa	39.47	Kurunegala	12.84
Ampara	37.53	Anuradhapura	11.94
Kegalle	34.29	Monaragala	6.02
Trincomalee	34.02	Kilinochchi	1.62
Rathnapure	30.40	Mullaitivu	0.90
Sri Lanka	43.80		

(Weeraratne, 2016, p. 11).

The sample informants were selected in accordance with officially accepted information prior to the interviews. In the whole process of recognizing the validated sample, the respective stakeholders from the selected divisions were contacted for sharing information. Those stakeholders approached were; Grama Niladharies. Development Officers and Samurdhi Officers of selected divisions.

Applied data collection process consisted of two approaches as primary and secondary. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires, focused group discussions, case studies, interviews and observations, whereas, secondary data were accessed through official records.

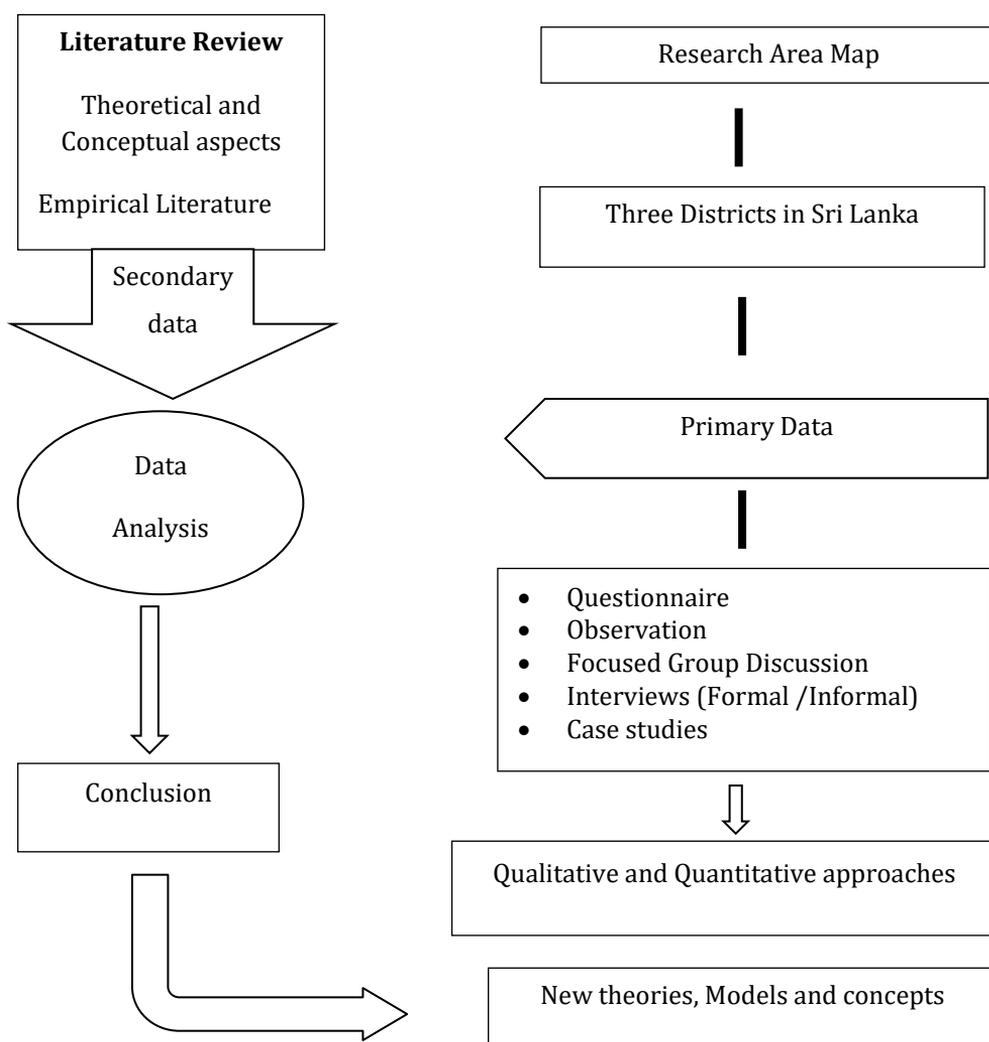
Data gathering was ensued, through the sample represented by both employed and unemployed categories of respondents within rural localities. Also, it was noticeable that building rapport with the data providers was possible due to the recruitment of data collectors from respective geographies. Data gathering was pursued not only liable to the

questionnaire but also evolving behavioral and friendly ties with informants having practiced discussion processes as well. In certain cases, even personal details too were to be gathered and the built rapport was useful in such occurrences. Also noticed that at the inception of data gathering informants were shown to be lesser inadvertent but with the continuation of questioning the respondents could improve their attitudes to give more tactful information. In certain instances, the informants went ahead of giving even fairly sensitive information which was kept hidden for a long time. So, the indirect methods applied enabled them to regurgitate even bitter incidences they experienced.

To justify the accuracy of data collection process through the questionnaire several surveys were done in 2 districts. On the data collection, the team applied formal discussions and informal discussions as well. When the respondents were in groups of 2 or more both formal and informal discussions were performed while submitting questions and recorded feedback. This method was

applied when questions are raised in workplaces and with unemployed women in rural areas. When communal information was thought important, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were held. Minimum 2 FGDs were held in each district whereas, 4 – 6 women were attended in each FGD. These FGDs were conducted by the Principal Researcher. FGDs were quite effective in concern with specific mesh-ups faced by data providers such as ; amidst of unethical treatments against women, mixed expressions by those employed and

unemployed, harassment being faced by women at work places, within families or in both segments, blockades to be faced when attending national development etc., This method was applied in collecting data by moving from group to group and also linking chief data providers into the process. Collection of data through observations too, was one other method evolved in data collection. Observations were effective when FGDs were in progress. And, several case studies were recorded by the principal researcher to prove the highlighted issues.



**Figure 1.** Applied Research Methodology

## 2.2 Data Analysis

With reference to the process adopted for data analysis, the gathered data were scrutinized in two segments as, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was collected through the study as well as other evidence-based facts. The data was analyzed using SPSS software (version 21). The analyzed data and information were presented in an analytical order using tables/charts and graphs. In particular, qualitative data was presented in a descriptive manner using the quotes with the informants own words, in actual form.

This study concerns the circle of the social order which circulates on the concept of gender. Since, this research was consolidated on the concepts of; Gender discrimination, Gender, social bonds, the study was performed within the limits of definitions of the said elements. The study focused on rural settings thereby selecting 6 Divisional Secretariat Divisions within the 3 districts confronting geographical limits. While the majority of Sinhalese Buddhists are living in these administrative areas and there are communities representing other ethnic groups too. In the process of data collection, a rapport built between data providers and the study team encouraged some of the informants even to express extremely confidential matters through their expressions. In this respect the data assemblage was attended with the assurance of securing such data without spoiling their identities.

## 3. Results and Discussion

It is clear that woman needs to accomplish a major role in favor of stable social existence particularly in rural Sri Lanka which is equipped with a multitude of creations within the social setting. It is also visible that the moderate role of women prevailed in the society has fashioned to a complexity in the current social aspirations. As stated in gender values and in concern with the forefront

decision making by women, degree of social acceptance, as well as the access for resource bases in current social settings were analyzed comprehensively. The said analysis was attended in two dimensions at primary and secondary levels. In par with the Primary level analysis, the study team paid explicit attention on the social bonds related to the family setting while secondary level analysis focused mainly on the social bonds effectual on the marriage life. In this respect, the impact of norms and practices in concern with parents affection on children, ability to influence brothers and sisters, responsibility on the first child, gaining advantages in decision making, to distinguish others' behavior and attitudes to practice steadiness on decision making in the family have been taken into account at the primary level assessment. .

The pursuance in the secondary level was more on the assessment of the diverse role of women within families, the time constraints that affect carrier perspectives negatively, busy life due to domestic affairs, difficulties encountered in travel in interior locations, uneven support from the rest of family members, strain in finding time for academic courses at weekends and in particular to face financial crisis.

To identify the research problem, the first analysis was conducted to clarify the research gap before measuring the causations.

The upper age limit of respondents interviewed was between 36 – 45 years which represents 48.6% of the total sample whereas, the lowest age limit of data providers was between 18 – 25 representing 14.1 % of the total. This reflects that a higher percentage of sample informants represent the middle-aged category. Also revealed that 60.4% of total interviewees were married partners and 29.3% of the total was unmarried. While, 4.3% found to be divorced and 3.1% were married but living separately. Also 1.5% were asserted as living together, and 5% appeared as widows. The highest

percentage of data providers represented the category of married partners. When the ethnic representation of the sample is concerned 78% , the highest majority was

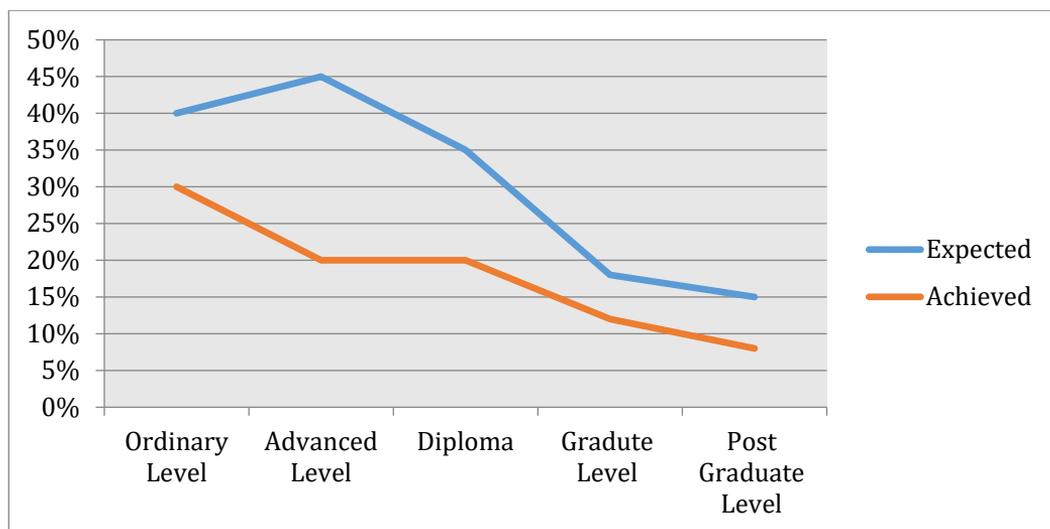
represented by Sinhalese women, while 5% represented Tamil community, whereas, 14.2% & 2.8% were represented by Muslim and Burger communities.

**Table 3.** Nature of obstruction faced by the Respondents

<b>Nature of obstruction</b>	<b>Unemployed (N=300)</b>	<b>Employed (N=300)</b>	<b>Total (N=600)</b>
<b>Family based involvements and the consequences therein</b>			
1. Acceptance within the family members	48 (16%)	83(27.6%)	131 (21.8%)
2.Choice of wardrobe	52(17.3%)	71(23.6%)	123 (20.5%)
3.Held responsibilities of household	178(59.6%)	196(65.3%)	374 (62.3%)
4.Help in financially	25(8.3%)	234(78%)	259(43%)
5.Choice to engage with the society	33(11%)	72 (24%)	105 (17.5%)
6.Choice of spending leisure time	61 (20.3%)	93(31%)	154 (25.6%)
<b>2.Education</b>			
7.Continuation of education without obstruction	26(8.6%)	88 (29%)	114 (19%)
8.Selection of Stream in A/l	42(14%)	71(23.6%)	113 (18.8%)
9.Selection of career after A/l	33(4.3%)	58(19.3%)	91 (15.1%)
10.Continuation of higher education	12(4%)	18 (6%)	30 (5%)
<b>3.Marriage</b>			
11.Choice of age to get married	10(3.3%)	21(7%)	31 (5.1%)
12.Choice to have a love affair	5(1.6%)	8(2.6%)	13 (2.1%)
13.Situation of marrying a proposed person by parents	225 (75%)	252 (84%)	477 (79.5%)
<b>4.Family life</b>			
14.Responsibilities of the household	278 (92.6%)	261 (87%)	539 (89.8%)
15.Choice of family planning	6(2%)	8(2.6%)	14 (2.3%)
16.Choice of raising number of children	6(2%)	12 (4%)	18 (3%)
17.Continuation of further education	4 (1.3%)	6(2%)	10 (1.6%)
18.Choice of wardrobe	4 (15%)	65(21.6%)	69 (11.5%)
19.Choice of social contact	12 (4%)	52 (17.3%)	64 (10.6%)
20.Choice of spending free time	10(3.3%)	11 (3.6%)	21 (3.5%)

Above table shows family obstructions faced by the respondents in Primary and Secondary levels of analysis in the study. The percentages further explain how the decision making and free will have influenced the respondents' lives in both levels as before and after the marriage. It is highly manifested how the social bonds create an obstruction when selecting priorities from multiple

choices. Respondents have commented that continuing education was restrained due to many reasons, but the expectations considerably existed.



**Figure 2.** Difference between expected Education level and achieved education level (N=600)

As per the analysis executed on the expected vs. achieved levels of education it was revealed that 81% of them are not satisfied on the education level they attained. One of the reasons bestowed was their compelling situation to attend marriages leaving from further education at least by those qualified to enter the University. Second reason highlighted was the inadequacy of the A Level education to find a job in the current context. The analysis also disclosed that the majority of those unhappy on their academic level are with the ambitions to join a higher level of education. Nevertheless, 8% of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the highest level of education they have completed. The reason they brought up to confirm their satisfaction was that they could successfully complete A Level education amidst extreme economic hardships prevailed in their families.

Out of 113 data providers who had followed A'Level, 18.8% had selected main streams of subjects independently, whereas, 45% had been influenced by their families in selecting their subject areas. It surfaced in the data analysis process that expectations of parents, financial viability and the influence of others had been some of the causes affected to select

respective subject areas. A range of 2% reflects other reasons too, such as the subject streams available in particular schools and the itineraries exist therein. Also, the profile of information disclosed that 5% of interviewees had not shared any comments. The conclusion reached is that the majority of data providers those who studied at Advanced Level had selected subject areas without future aspirations on targeted jobs.

As per the analysis executed on the level of satisfaction on the higher education they attained, it was revealed that 70% of them are not satisfied. One of the reasons bestowed was their compelling situation to attend marriages leaving from further education at least by those qualified to enter the University. Second reason highlighted was the inadequacy of the Advanced Level education to find a job in the current context. The analysis also disclosed that the majority of respondents are unhappy on their academic level with the ambitions to join a higher level of education. And it seems a contradiction between education and family duties. For example,

### Case Study 1.

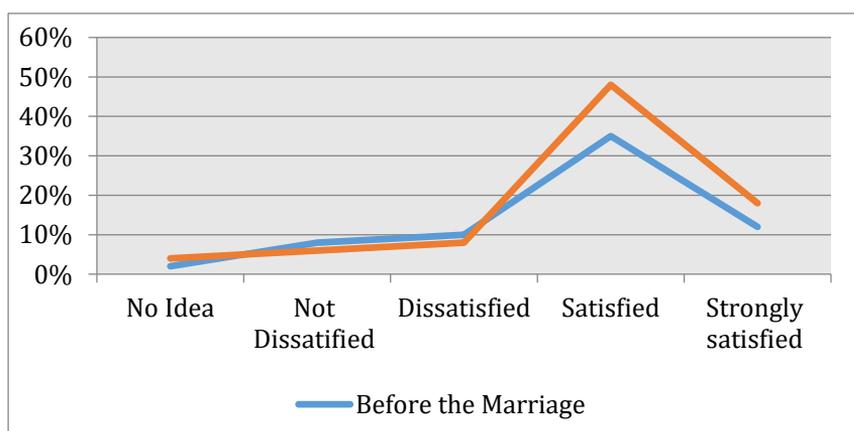
A Woman (24 years) from Anuradhapura stated that,

*'This is my fate.... I was born to a very poor family and I am the eldest. My parents did casual jobs and I have four siblings. Although I tried to go to school there was no good environment to achieve my targets. Somehow, I used to study hard and my aim was to enter the university. I did O/L and passed the O/L. But my parents told that, they are unable to support my educational expectations due to their economic hardships. They emphasized me to get married. After my marriage husband didn't give support to continue my education furthermore. Now I am a mother with two children.*

As per the utterance of one of the case holders which is confirmed by a large number ( 42 %) of informants, most of the women do not get the consensus of husbands after marriages either to continue or to join new academic courses which is a decisive factor. Similarly, to enter into compromise with husbands by wives to continue their carrier is a failure. Only 10% could continue their higher studies from the total respondents. Nevertheless, 8 % of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the highest level of education they have completed. The reason they brought up to confirm their satisfaction

was that they could successfully complete A Level education amidst extreme economic hardships prevailed in their families.

Research findings also confirmed that interference caused on education has led to early marriages. Accordingly, entering into early marriages was reported to be a high concern in the rural context. Among respondents, 56 % of data providers who got married at the ages below 18 years commented that the cause affected for such decision was the disruption or interruption that happened to discontinue their education. Similarly, another segment of 33% brought up other reasons for the influence of family members. One such reason was the minimum educational level of parents. A supposition can be made that ignorance of (5%), low education and poverty (6%) and also certain love affairs were the propensities affected by this setback. The tendency of entering into marriages at premature ages represents a higher ratio in rural areas when compared to urban settings, yet, similar propensity is visible in a higher scale among those urbanized poverty groups in the urban areas too. The study outcomes revealed that those entering into marriages in premature ages are to suffer due to the challenges of inaccessibility for social privileges and rights as well as the depression over legal matters too.



**Figure 3.** Level of competence in decision making before and after the marriage (n= 600)

One of the surfaced factors was that 67 % of data providers representing the unemployed category stated that they are satisfied with the decision-making processes prevailing at home settings. In contrast, 40 % of the employed category of respondents expressed that they are not happy about the status of decision making at domestic level. In the process of this research, the majority of data suppliers (80 %), stated that there is a visible difference between male and female children on the freedom of decision making within families. Whereas, the balance 20% expressed views to say that no such difference prevailed. However, the data providers had commented that there was a difference of the freedom on decision making in particular incidences such as; on marriages, issues related to education, on travel/visits and in relation to friendships with outsiders. Data suppliers expressed views that decision making within families after marriage is at a satisfactory level. Accordingly, this study has revealed that the domestic selections are not attended in line with the preference of women and these types of selection indicate the difference between the tasks and roles of men and women. In concern with the impressions of data suppliers there are positive views that support of husbands and the parents of women is satisfactory. Also asserted in the study that cooperation of children and the parents of husbands too was at a satisfactory level. For instance,

### Case Study 2.

A Woman (38 years) from Baddegama stated that,

*"I got married 21 years ago, when I was 17 years old. In my family there are 5 brothers and sisters and I am the eldest. That time my brothers and sisters were in childish age. In the past we had encountered a varied nature of economic hardships. Consequently, I did not have ambitions to go for higher education and to continue studies only up to O' level. At this time, when I was studying at O' level, I started my friendship with a youth*

*in our village. From the date that my parents got this information I had to face varied problems. At this juncture, since there were no other options, I escaped from home with my boyfriend immediately after completing my O'level exam. After leaving the area we went to the Trade Zone at Koggala. At this place we both could find jobs in a Garment factory. After some time, we got the consensus of both families and could register our marriage"*

Most of the women in rural areas had faced living hardships due to the deficiency of family income amid of higher number of dependents while one of two persons struggling to earn the living expenses. One other ideological custom was in prevalence to pay limited attention to pursue education for girl children, yet higher priority was made available for the education of male children. Instability as well as unpredictability of the prolongation of employments involved by women was revealed as one other crucial factor. As per the analyzed data many of the women employees had left their carrier due to several causations. The assessment performed accordingly revealed that there had been several causes and effects for a higher percentage (60 %) of women employees to vacate their jobs. It was disclosed that central causes affected for vacating their careers were;

- a) Prevailed uncertainty of jobs in forthcoming years;
- b) A bigger volume of 60 % had vacated their career after marriages.  
While
- c) 47 % of those left their jobs were due to salary anomalies.
- d) Also, another segment of 30 % had to leave their jobs due to the excessive domestic workload that had to be dealt with.
- e) Another 11% uttered about institutional problems as reasons for leaving their career. Whereas

- f) 10 % had to leave the jobs due to the pressure erupted from the family. Finally,
- g) Another 6 % of data providers articulated on certain hardships which they could not tolerate being women. Further respondents revealed that,

### Case Study 3.

A Lady (37 years) from Medawachchiya stated that,

*"Prior to my marriage I was working in a private institution holding the position as a computer data operator. Even after the marriage I could continue my job for 3 months. Since I had to leave home in the morning and to return in the evening there were arrears of work at home. This resulted in my husband's mother taunting me. Finally, I decided to vacate the job. Situation afterwards turned into a problematic status compelling us to move into a rented house. Issues confronted after the marriage led me to discontinue my jobs".*

One other supplementary matter emerged was in relation to the time saving needs of employed women since they are bound to perform domestic actions as well. Therein, mobilization has become a considerable issue for all types of married and unmarried women and most of them stated that migration was more acceptable than long distance commuting. Other women, such as grandmothers, may be relied upon to carry out household care roles and act as substitutes for migrating mothers, which is more acceptable actions as well. This substitution appears to be less common for long-distance travelling where women are still expected to fulfil household roles of preparing meals and caring for children for example. Preparation of meals and assisting children on assigned homework are essentials. Thus, proximity to home is the most important criterion in selecting a job. Besides travel time the security of those

involved in distant travel too, were addressed as a vital aspect.

### Case Study 4.

A Woman (38 years) from Kuliyaipitiya, *"Upon completion of A Level I could successfully complete the Diploma Certificate Course on Information Technology. Thereafter, I had the desire to continue the Degree course as well on the same stream. At this juncture I had to attain my marriage, too. At this time my husband's mother was unwell due to some sicknesses. As a result, I had to spend my time to maintain domestic affairs while taking care of the sick mother, hence, time became a crucial factor. Finally, I had to give up hopes on further education."*

The above account reveals that the responsibilities to be encountered before and after the marriage are profoundly different and have impacted in a sizeable manner. Assistance of the family members to the career has decreased after the marriage and most of the respondents had to allocate their time to play the newly adapted role in their lives. Usage of time for daily routine while paying attention to leisure time activities has been taken into account and 65% of data providers indicated that they have sufficient time to think about their own existence, and their wellbeing, 35% of the balance informants asserted that they do not have any free time to think about their existence. It was asserted through the study that the reason for such a situation is due to their business on the needs of children, and the time needed for domestic activities. When the daily routines of informants are concerned there is no difference on weekdays or weekends since they are unemployed women. A segment of 24 % of these women spend time on religious activities. Another batch of 17 % spends their time on social media programmes. Whereas, 14 % of informants accentuated that they spend time on shopping. Another group of 10 % used to attend pleasure trips while 9 % of other groups spent time with friends. The above

distribution discloses that unemployed women have the habits of spending time on their personal needs as well other than the time being spent on domestic work

However, the analysis of study outcomes indicated that parents' affection is higher towards the male children than female while ability to influence by the female, to brothers and sisters remain in a very lower position. As the first child, the particular individual has an extensive responsibility in the family. Wider spectrum of opportunities to distinguish others' behavior and attitudes and unable to play an intermediary role on decision making in the family have been displayed. At the same time, the inadequacy of time in career development activity, busy life due to domestic affairs, difficulties in travelling as living in marginal villages, unavailability of support from the rest of family members, weekends to be allocated for education which is problematic and financial crisis have affected the women's career and these factors have changed the women's life than they expected.

#### **4. Conclusion & Recommendation**

It is obvious that a woman being the leader of social existence embellishes multitude of creations within the social setting. It is also visible that a moderate role of women prevailed in the society has fashioned to a complexity in the current social aspirations. In the existing social context women are to perform a multidimensional role such as; child births, feeding and caring them, management of domestic affairs while also accomplishing duties entrusted at workplaces being employees. The study has focused on comprehensive justification between unwavering gender values and the degree of women's participation in decision making events, and the degree of acceptance of such within the society. Similarly, the access for resource bases in current social settings and in particular, to assess the similarity between male and female on the said avenues too, were focused on.

The study disclosed that the social bonds moderate the women's career from the position which the family offers as a member. The inquiries on the family status of data providers in particular, prior to their marriages, disclosed that more attention had been paid on male children than girl children. Major part of the household responsibilities is entitled to the respondents in the family as before and after the marriage. Assistance in financial crises is not accepted as the women's role which differs from earning money. It is also a noteworthy observation that women are highly restricted in social contacts with opposite gender. Affirming this, most of the women said that they are to associate with the same gender at family settings.

Also came to light that, entering into education by girl children in rural societies before their marriages exhibits certain underrating compared to the male. Girls are expected to enter early proposed marriages. The above circumstances create barriers for married women as well to continue their education seeking better career prospects. Data providers those are currently employed as well as those married women eagerly looking for carrier prospects stated few imperative blockades namely; (a). low educational backgrounds, (b) volume of household responsibilities, (c). dissatisfaction of husband on wife's wishes for further education / findings jobs (d). added tasks to take care due to deceased family members or elderly relatives and also (e). the difficulties on travel between homes and the workplaces.

However, the research findings disclosed that when a woman endeavors for job avenues after marriage, she has to make an effort to maintain a balance between husband, children, domestic setting, and issues of relatives etc., hence there is a long recession of their progression. In contrary, when the males exert such effort they receive higher appreciation from all in their families. This complex nature of disparities created

within the social bonds has depressed the female jobseekers.

The gender-based disparities are originated socially, within the social bonds and owing to parent headed authoritative attitudes, inclusive of gender discrimination. Under the above circumstances, a set of long term and short-term suggestions are bestowed in order to exclude negative cultural attitudes from society such as gender-based separation evolved in rural women in Sri Lanka. These findings and recommendations are mostly important to the policy makers to increase the contribution of the women in labour force participation through the national development. In this respect, there are series of actions to be initiated by the legal authorities and the society as a whole to free women from such depressions.

- To establish a partnership-oriented approach so as to empower women while diagnosing even sensitive problems being faced by them in order to evolve a sustainable empowerment of Rural Women's Societies (RWSs) at Divisional Secretariat level. This shall facilitate the rural women providing financial, psychological and community assistance.
- Counselling sessions should be conducted to advance the awareness on family planning, re-structured role of women being diverted from the traditional women's role, that is deeply rooted in the rural culture, in view of enhancing the hidden capacity of them. Also recommend to interact male persons too, and to implement series of programmes in pursuance of changed attitudes of male partners, policy makers and community leaders to eliminate mythological attitudes based on gender concerns
- By commencing a broader dialogue on women's rights subjected for challenges emerged due to the gender discrimination of women and to ascertain the

strengthened legal framework on women with secured rights.

- The village-based partnership approach be recommended to advance their vision /mission and strategic plans to advance from village level to the national level. This can be pursued under the theme of *National Committee for Controlling Gender Based Discrimination (NCCGBD)*. Initial step would be to establish Women's societies at village level. In subsequent stages those societies, be registered under DS's office for regular monitoring. The below picture illustrates briefly, the way how it moves from village level to the national level.
- More government or community-initiated pilot projects shall commence their strategic moves as entrepreneurial and self-employed actions added with economic empowering strategies, as to provide more income earning ventures according to the skills available in the rural community.
- Conduct more technical and vocational training short term courses to eradicate the mismatch between the rural community and the labour market. Such measures being action research tasks and to replicate success case models for adjoining districts too. This be the aim of counterbalancing the workload of women without disturbing their involvement in domestic activities.

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