The Influence of Parental Involvement on Higher Education Choice-Making in Non-Western Context: The Lived Experience of Students in Kerala, India

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Abstract: *The paper explores the lived experience of students as to how parent-child relationship can shape higher education choice-making, in a non-western context. This study used Constructivist Grounded theory methodology and purposive sampling, including maximum variation and theoretical sampling, to collect and analyse data from students in Kerala, India. The study identifies two key parental functions in the choice-making process: acts of parenthood and parental efforts. Acts of parenthood are characterised by the approach to parenthood and conforming or non-conforming responses, while parental efforts encompass monetary involvement and interactional participation. The findings highlight the importance of understanding parental behaviour and interactional investment in shaping educational decision-making and provides valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers in promoting better educational outcomes.*

Keywords: Choice-making, Higher education, Parental involvement, Grounded theory

1.Introduction

The influence of parents on their children's higher education choices has been widely studied, and various models have been proposed to understand this complex process. Chapman's (1981) model emphasises parents' influence on students' college application decisions by highlighting external and internal factors. Chapman (1986) proposes a behavioural model of college selection, starting with parental influence in pre-search. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model divides college selection into predisposition, search, and choosing. Parental guidance and academic orientation affect a student's higher education readiness and enthusiasm (Jackson, 1982). According to cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), cultural resources like education, knowledge, skills, and beliefs are passed down from generation to generation and can shape a student's college outlook and goals. Students from homes with greater social capital are more likely to activate their capital, according to Tramonte and Willms (2010). Parents' education, involvement, expectations, and encouragement also matter (An, 2010; Manski & Wise, 1983; Perna & Titus, 2004). College admissions are positively correlated with parents' education level (An, 2010; Hossler et al., 1989). Parental involvement is crucial in college selection (Donovan & McKelfresh, 2008). Financial factors also influence decision-making (Sztam, 2003). The high cost of attendance, changing role of higher education, and personal relationship with their children can contribute to parental expectations (Scott & Daniel, 2001).

Parents play a major role in college selection, according to Anctil (2008), Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), and Dupaul and Harris (2012). Bergerson (2009) and Kinzie et al. (2004) found that families invest in their children's higher education for financial returns. According to Paulsen (1990), the total cost of attendance—tuition, housing, and transportation—varies by family socioeconomic status, affecting investment value. Karen (2002) and Kim & Schneider (2005) suggest that parental education and household income increase college attendance.

Parental participation can impact college enrolment as it provides social and cultural capital (Gandara, 2002; Perna & Titus, 2005). Social capital helps gain access to other capital and increase chance of success (Coleman, 1988; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lamont & Lareau, 1998; Lin, 2001). Parents shape cultural capital—traits, skills, and knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories are widely used in education research, with Bourdieu focusing on structural hurdles and Coleman emphasizing parental support (Dika & Singh, 2002). Parenting styles and motivating techniques have been linked to academic performance, but academic decision-making still needs more research (Davis et al., 2006; Turner et al., 2009; Niu, 2016).

Indian higher education research (Xaxa, 2000; Goyal & Singh, 2014; Deshpande, 2006; Tilak, 2015; Shariff & Sharma, 2013) majorly focuses on accessibility of education for different socioeconomic groups, based on quantitative analysis. The educational system, institutional structures, psychological variables, and young people's own interests all have a role in shaping their educational choices. Family, peers, and agents can influence students' educational choices, but few studies have examined their motivations (Kumar et al., 2014). Ball (2003) and Power et al. (2003) argue that parental influence makes educational options 'quasi-individualized'.

This calls for a qualitative study aim to explore the perspective of student as the primary stakeholder. Focusing on the state of Kerala, India, this study examines how parental involvement affects higher education decisions in non-Western cultural context.

2. Methodology

We take an 'emic' perspective on youngsters to define parental participation in the context of higher education choices. This qualitative research examines the interaction between students and their parents as they pursue higher education via the lens of grounded theory. Kathy Charmaz's (2000, 2006) 'Constructivist Grounded Theory' (CGT) design was used to collect and analyse the data, along with an 'active interview' approach (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

2.1 Research Setting

Kerala, India's southernmost state, is our study area. Kerala's education performance is well-known and extensively researched. Kerala is known as "by many measures, the most advanced state in India in terms of education" (Zachariah & Rajan, 1997; Agarwal, 2012; Tilak, 2016) and has a literacy rate above 90%. We collected samples from Ernakulam and Wayanad districts in Kerala, to triangulate the grounded theory. The study's objective is to provide light on the variables that affected Kerala's young people in higher education choice making by evaluating their experiences.

2.2 Participants

Participants aged 20–30 with higher education experience (currently participating or has completed) were approached. This study uses maximum variation and theoretical purposive sampling. Maximum variation sampling was used to select individuals based on predetermined criteria (see Appendix A) that would allow meaningful differentiation (e.g., sex, religion, socioeconomic status[1], education level). Later theoretical sampling (based on grounded theory methodology) was incorporated. Of the 50 samples approached in both districts, 36 initially responded. Four more theoretical samples were taken, totalling 40.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through in-person interviews and detailed field notes. Pre-interview written consent was obtained to participate and use information. The interview questions were open-ended but semi-structured. Participants (also called 'cases') were given pseudo names for privacy. Interviews were conducted in Malayalam. Each interview lasted one to two hours and was recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. For accuracy, three interviews were translated back. For data management and analysis, NVivo 12 Plus was used. A basic descriptive analysis was used to compile the respondents' sociodemographic profile, while grounded theory was used to analyse the texts. The analytical process includes the following phases:

Table 1: Steps involved in data analysis of CGT (Charmaz, 2014)

Method	Purpose
Listening, Translation and transcription	The foundation for data analysis
Line- by- line, paragraph by paragraph coding (Initial and focused coding)	The data is fragmented to find codes
Transformation of codes into categories	Codes are combined, and information is abstracted into concepts and categories
Constant Comparative Analysis	Until theoretical saturation is achieved, compare and contrast codes and categories.
Memo Writing	For the formation of theory, it is necessary to conceptualise the link between codes and categories.
Mapping of categories	Effective description of phenomena and relationships

3. Findings

What makes up a parent's and a child's relationship is an amalgam of their actions, emotions, and expectations for one another. It might go either way or be mutual. The initial codes were generated from questions on the respondents' upbringing and familial relationships (codes identified are given in italics). They discussed their parents' roles in their lives and the events or emotions participants had toward their parents that influenced their decisions. Two theoretical categories evolved from the coding, memo writing and constant comparative analysis.

1. Acts of Parenthood
2. Parental Efforts

3.1 Theoretical category 1: Acts of parenthood

A child's first exposure to the world is through parents. Up to an age, kids rely solely on their parents for socialisation. Parenthood has a major impact on a child's growth, development, and educational choices. This code was part of all participant data, regardless of age, place, or gender. All cases said their upbringing affected their choices.

Ally experienced this in the form of a *parent's optimistic outlook influencing their child's decision*. Her single mother was under pressure to make safe educational decisions for her daughter. Despite *family expectations*, Ally's mother encouraged her to pursue her dream.

> *My relatives and friends criticised my choice of Economics after taking plus two Science. Despite her confusion, my mother supported me. Mom was fine with me doing PG anywhere after I graduated in Economics. The future of this course or subject was unclear to my mom. However, she sent me opportunity-related newspaper cuttings (Ally).*

Banu had to deal with a *dad imposing his will*. She qualified and wanted to go to dentistry school, but she had to settle. Since she felt mistreated, she gave up her dream of becoming a dentist to be a stay-at-home mom.

> *BDS or paramedical courses were my preference. However, my parents wanted me to choose a day-study course. Father was strict regardless of course or my preferences. Even if my mom or siblings supported my college education, my father had the final say. The next obvious choice was a regular degree (Banu).*

Parental expectations also influence children's choices. Verbalization isn't always necessary. Renuka, a talented dancer who hasn't considered it as a career because her parents disapprove, behaves as expected. Vishal is an extreme example of how the expectation that a child will contribute financially to the family can cause him to

abandon his further education after higher secondary school. He enrolled in a diploma programme to find work quickly.

> *I danced and joined troupes. I've attended youth festivals. People have asked me why I can't pursue that career...however, your parents fear such unconventional choices. Parents expect a job. That's normal! (Renuka).*

> *They'll be offended if I can't get a good job after spending for my education (Vishal).*

Freedom of choice and expression also fall under this category. Although freedom is seen as a personal attribute, in Indian culture it is often attributed to parents. This component has the same duality of action as the others. Hasini benefited from accepting parents who encouraged her expression. They listened to her concerns and advised her to follow her instincts. Despite Jess's efforts to explain, his *parents ignored him*. Nobody let him choose. Decisions were made for him.

> *I wanted a change from that school, so I considered other options. I chose after asking my seniors, neighbours, and others for advice. I chose Science because I liked Biology, was bad at Math, and didn't like Humanities. I also disliked my Social Science teacher. My parents supported my study choice (Hasini).*

> *I felt pressure. My father works abroad. Friends told him A and B were Kerala's best colleges. They don't know about government colleges. This is why my parents wanted me to attend this college. Many NRIs studied here. Similar choices were made for school. I had no choice (Jess).*

Parental initiative includes choosing *job-guaranteed educational programmes* for their children. Many of our students say their parents have told them that higher education's only purpose is a job. Anvi struggled to convince her parents to let her study civil engineering. They wanted her to study nursing because it was safe. Some parents, like Cherry's, believe the same engineering degree will guarantee their child a career, which is intriguing. His parents encouraged him to study engineering and start a career. A conversation fragment:

> *Parents wanted me to be a nurse. Mom worked at the hospital reception. My sister picked nursing. Job security made it appealing to parents (Anvi).*

> *My father also said this (Engineering) was good, and your life will be safe and settled. I got college and course advice from my father's friend. He has many contacts and good suggestions. They (parents) preferred a professional degree, as it is nice, they said (Cherry).*

Parenting approach like *older child responsibility* also affect kids' educational choices. Some of our elder sibling participants felt pressured to conform to *social norms*. Even the child's *gender* mattered. For female (like Subhashini), her marriage was the question. She was the oldest of two sisters from a middle-class family (her biography will detail their family financial status). She naturally chose marriage over finishing her studies. She did it to give her parents time to save for her sister's wedding.

> *My father claimed a 1 lakh chit fund he saved years ago after the first semester. That ended my life and dreams! He spent the money on ornaments and sought alliances. My family and I believe in auspicious time. My mother feared we would miss the auspicious time and be unable to marry. They considered my younger sister's marriage and asked me to agree (Subhashini).*

Shiva, the oldest son, felt *obligated to work and contribute to* his sister's wedding. He sincerely wanted a doctorate. Under pressure, he gave in. Instead of studying, he opened a tutoring centre.

> *Parents and neighbours started asking me to work and save for my sister's wedding and reminded my duties. I should find a job, they say. I think time is a bigger constraint than money, as I have faced more issues of time (Shiva).*

Permissive parenting may inspire life decisions in several cases. Sometimes, like in Pragati's case, parents play a marginal role in their children's decision-making. Few expectations were placed on her as she was the youngest kid. However, a permissive upbringing does not guarantee better decisions. Sahana was unable to pick her own path since she lacked direction even from her parent's side. She chose a random course without much thought.

Everyone chooses engineering. I disliked following others. My pals were startled and called me foolish for choosing this. I must take painstaking and time-consuming years to earn a professional degree which I'm not cut out for. I was positive about my choice, anyway. Even though I hadn't decided what I should do after degree, I was happy with this choice (Pragati)

This college was a women's college. I heard about this college at a retreat…from my roommates there. One of my cousin sisters also studied there and she said it was a good college. My mom's cousin was a nun and she recommended for my admission in management quota. About the subject, the manager suggested vocational physics as I was from computer science background (Sahana).

3.2 Theoretical category 2: Parental Efforts

Unlike the more abstract character of the preceding category, efforts of parents visibly influenced a child's decision to attend a certain college or university. Most college students start out financially dependent on their parents. No matter their socioeconomic status, all cases involved their parents in decision-making. Parents also spend time explaining the many educational options to their children. The subcodes of this category are listed here. Mathu was free to do what she wanted because her family was *financially secure*. Because of her parents' support, she advanced quickly. Even with low entrance exam scores, she could pursue a BDS or medical degree.

My parents and I met with an agent who discussed management seats and fees. He asked us to come quickly because seats were filling. We left the next day. I didn't look for another college or wait for entrance results. Since our family friend (a doctor) recommended me, I got MBBS admission in X college under doctors' quota. They charge nearly 10 lakhs as initial amount, but we didn't carry that much. In Y college initial amount was less (2.5 lakhs) so I opted it. I was fine with joining BDS. I wasn't picky (Mathu).

Mathu's parents worked hard to give her a good education. Student higher education choices depend on *family financial stability*. However, financial backing does not guarantee the best decision in every situation. Mathu chose a mediocre university despite having the

means to attend top medical schools. A child's socioeconomic status may increase their options, but many factors determine which is best. Our cultural setting, where parents provide and children receive, connects this code to parents and children.

Sometimes parental and student concerns about the family's finances can influence educational decisions. Sanu and Sanoop are two excellent instances of this. Sanu, from the upper middle class, wanted to study abroad for a doctorate after finishing his master's. He worked because his family's finances prevented him from continuing the plan. Sanoop had to work hard to attend a distant school, let alone his dream university, due to his low income.

I wanted to study abroad. So, I searched the institutes, sorted my priorities, mailed them, and got positive and negative responses, some with scholarships and some without. Funding issues caused me to drop. I told parents about this, but they couldn't take a big loan (Sanu)

So, after 7th moved to another school, 3 kms distance but I walked that distance to save money. Only when I reached plus two, my family could afford vegetables or non-vegetarian (once a while) food bought from the market. Financial situation at home and being the oldest kid made me question every decision. I can't ignore my parents' work even if they want me to study more. I chose an affordable local college. No other factors like college or department quality were considered (Sanoop).

A student's family finances determined whether they could *afford supplemental preparation or regular tuition.* The *availability of cheap hostels* near universities influenced students' decisions to attend college out of town. *Student loans and government grants* for economically disadvantaged students were used by many of our participants. Our financially vulnerable cases benefited from scholarships and other financial aid. Our cases Appu, Banu, Ashi, Ankita, Akshy, Sanoop, Vijil, Shitha, Laya, Mubeena, Jithin, and Murshid received government scholarships. Here, it's emphasised that a parent is inextricably tied to any and all financial choices a child

makes at this juncture. The decision to avail for a scholarship too is a collaborative one.

> *Since it was a government institute, I was fine financially. Costs were low. Fellowship was 4000 per month for MPhil. My father is an estate worker. During degree, I had no fee concession and my father had to struggle for paying fee. During PG, however I was relieved, as they increased the monthly income bar. I got E grants during PG. I stayed at university hostel which was only Rs 80 per month. Even now, I stay there (Ankita).*

> *Dad was on the fisheries board, so I got a grant for higher studies. The grant covers my entire fee plus hostel fee (Akshay).*

Despite her high social class, Ankita's family is poor. However, she continued her studies and is now completing her MPhil at a prestigious government university. She remembers her father struggling to pay her college tuition and government E-grants being a huge relief. Akshay enrolled in a costly engineering programme despite coming from a lower middle-class background. The Fisheries Board supported him (his family is from Ernakulam coastal area). Both their parents sent them to college with state aid because they were dedicated and studious.

Parents' involvement in their children's education is likely to include more than just financial aid. Parents *may research the field and consult their network to make the best decisions* for their children if they see talent and aspirations. Sometimes parents *try to teach their kids something new or get them involved in extracurriculars*. Some of our participants have been inspired to pursue further education because of experiences from their formative years. Instead of just introducing a new activity, parents *follow up*. Our participant Ally exemplifies this.

> *Newspaper reading was mandatory at home since childhood. Father would ask about newspaper articles when he got home from work! I read newspapers daily and became interested in politics and current events. My parents discuss social and political events. All of that sparked my interest in this topic. In 8th grade, my father told me about civil service careers. Then I knew nothing about it, but I gave it a serious thought during PG (Ally).*

Ally has decided to pursue a career in public service and has cleared the prelims. Her parents' efforts clearly inspired her interest in the subject, she says. Appu's parents worked on a tea plantation and had only an elementary education, while Ally's parents worked for the government and had advanced degrees. Despite this, they worked hard to give Appu the best education, while he scored 100% on his higher secondary final exams. Appu's parents encouraged him to *discuss his post-secondary goals and career paths with seniors and teachers*. His mother read the newspaper daily and took notes on upcoming tests and educational articles. All these factors have contributed to Appu's decision to pursue his undergraduate degree at Delhi University, widely considered one of the finest educational opportunities.

> *Parental support was great. My mom searched newspapers for opportunities and made me take exams. They are not very educated; they don't know enough to guide me. So, they encouraged me to ask everyone I could to get information regarding my HE (Appu).*

This section showed how focused code categories became theoretical categories. How a family is structured, how parents communicate with their children, the advice and encouragement they give, and how much they are appreciated are all considered *acts of parenthood. Parental efforts* are the time and money parents spend planning and paying for their children's higher education. These actions sidestep the already established ways of being a parent.

4.Discussion and Conclusion

Parent-child relationships, parental expectations, and parenting styles strongly influence individual decisions - reciprocal or unidirectional. The parent-child bond affects every decision a child makes, including their education. We detail the two theoretical categories here.

4.1 Acts of parenthood

We found that parenting style directly affects a child's education choice. Although freedom is a personal choice, in Indian culture it is often granted by parents. The child's choice was influenced by the parent's views on personal freedom, societal norms, and popular higher education options. *Approach to parenthood and conforming*

and non-conforming response are the two major aspects of parental behaviour.

4.1.1 Approach to parenthood

Cultural expectations affect parenting style. Baumrind (1991) suggests categorising parents by their behaviour with their children: demanding and responsive. According to Baumrind (1991), authoritarian parents demand obedience and compliance from their children without explanation or negotiation.

Jess, who was forced to choose between management and medicine or engineering, demonstrates this approach. Jess made his decision out of fear of parental blame. Being blamed seemed an extrinsic punishment based on his performance in the chosen field. Jess didn't choose his school, major, or college. He agreed with the parent on all those options out of fear of responsibility. This extrinsic reward and punishment system has been extensively studied with mixed results (Davis et al., 2006; Deci et al., 2001; Greenberger, 2008). The authoritarian parenting style and the student's perceived extrinsic punishment dampened Jess's intrinsic motivation to pursue his interests and goals.

However, authoritative parents monitor their children and set clear rules. The child develops self-direction and independence in this unique parent-child relationship (Sahithya et al., 2019). Appu was influenced by authoritative parenting to pursue higher education. His parents supported and guided him to achieve his goals and excel in school. Studies have shown that authoritatively raised children thrive and become confident, self-directed adults. An ongoing dialogue between parent and child allows each party to express their thoughts and opinions, helping the child develop agency and responsibility (Hassandra et al., 2003; Lei et al., 2018).

How parents raise their children often depends on their own expectations and aspirations. As shown by Banu, this can happen when one or both parents force their preferences on their child. However, as Renuka showed, the child may have adopted the parent's preferences out of necessity. This highlights the immense power

dynamic that exists between parents and children. Expectations can also influence how parents raise their children by choosing educational programmes that guarantee a good job, as in case of Cherry.

Parenting styles, like other psychosocial factors, vary widely due to culture and society. Parenting styles and expectations differ between Eastern and Western cultures. Asian parents value interdependence over individualism more than Western parents which affects parenting styles and expectations (Lansford et al., 2018; Mousavi, 2016; Wang and Leichtman, 2000).

4.1.2 Conforming and Non-conforming Response

Unlike Western individualism, collectivism emphasises Asian and Indian society's interconnectedness (Chadda & Deb, 2013). Our study examined how collectivism affects college selection, particularly how parents influence their children. Parents conformed or non-conformed to cultural or social norms, according to our study. For instance, gender played a crucial role in our research, as we sought to understand the importance of parental influence on decision-making based on gender. Our findings showed that parental gender norm compliance (not gender itself) determined decision-making. Jasmi wanted to study engineering at a university outside her hometown. However, her father worried about her safety and suggested she attend a local college. Our findings confirm that cultural and social norms, especially parental influence and compliance to these norms, influence decision-making.

Indian society values certain higher education programmes prestigious than others. As an example, Anju is pursuing her MPhil in Botany. Anju chose Botany despite societal and peer pressure to study Physics or Chemistry. Instead of conforming to society, her parents encouraged her independence and self-determination. This type of parental encouragement has a major impact on a child's intrinsic motivation. Bronstein et al. (205) and Rajendran et al. (2016) found that positive parental support can shape a child's intrinsic motivation and self-determination. In contrast, a negative and dominating

parental view can make the decision-making process more challenging, as in the case of Jess. Positive parental support can make decision-making easier, according to Hegna and Smette (2016).

4.2 Parental efforts

This study highlights how parental efforts—monetary and non-monetary—can greatly impact a child's education. The study suggests that emotional and interactional support are as important, if not more, in a child's educational choice. *Parental monetary involvement and participation in the interactional process* are the two major aspects of parental efforts.

4.2.1 Parental monetary involvement

Parental monetary involvement refers to the significant financial contributions made by parents towards their children's higher education. Higher-income families can fully fund their children's education, making the process easier and more successful. Many believe college is a good investment due to its long-term financial and social benefits. Our participant, Mathu, from a wealthy family and had no limitations in terms of college options. Despite this advantage, Mathu shared that she felt a lack of motivation or purpose throughout the entire process. This highlights the importance of not just financial support, but also emotional and personal drive in the educational journey.

Many studies, including Tilak (2000), Azam & Blom (2008), and Sanchez & Singh (2016), show that household wealth and poverty affect educational achievement. Our research also shows that "family investment choice" as an economic factor affects educational outcomes. Viya, a lower-middle-class participant, struggled to choose a major and college. Her family couldn't afford a hostel, so she enrolled in a nearby college. This case shows how economic status directly affects educational opportunities, a topic widely studied (Beck, 1992; Reay, 1998; Archer & Hutchings, 2000).

These studies found that college financial risks are not evenly distributed. Our research also examines socio-psychological factors

like parents' aspirations and siblings. The trade-off for affluent families, like the case of Gowri, is between various higher education opportunities. Low-income families' trade-off is between education, employment for a male child (Vishal) or marriage for a female child (Subhashini). Our research shows that socio-psychological factors like parents' aspirations, and family size should be considered alongside financial risks.

4.2.2 Participation in the interactional process

Coleman (1988) states that social capital determines access to tangible and intangible resources. The dynamics between parents and children, as well as between parents and other adults, have been found to be vital in the transmission of resources and knowledge from one generation to another (case of Ally, Anjali, and Mathu). The concept of cultural capital was first introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, who later referred to it as "information capital" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Parental involvement and family structure greatly affect economic, social, and cultural capital distribution. These elements have been shown to mediate generational resource transfers. Cherry, one of our engineering graduates, leveraged his father's connections to gain early counselling, including which institutions to apply to and which majors to pursue.

Diya's story illustrates the struggles of first-generation college students. She struggled in early stages to find reliable sources of information without a network of knowledgeable friends and acquaintances. Appu's first-generation college experience was shaped by his parents' determination to find resources and opportunities for him despite their limited network. The school's faculty and senior students encouraged Appu to learn as much as possible, and his family was eager to explore other resources.

Parental social capital's impact on children's access to knowledge capital and higher education decisions is complex and deserves further study. The research is clear: informed, involved parents can benefit their children's education. According to Barone et al. (2018), Corcoran

et al. (2018), and Lareau (2011), social capital can help young people make informed college decisions.

4.3 Context of Kerala

Due to high literacy rates and social mobilisation, Kerala values education highly. Kerala has a high Institutional Performance Index score and benefits from social capital (Mayer 2001). This also motivates parents to provide the best education they can afford, and our study points it to parenting style. Studies show Indian parents' priorities vary. Rao, McHale, & Pearson (2003) found that parents who prioritised their children's social and emotional development were less authoritarian. Kerala's nuclear family structure promotes involved, autonomous, and responsive parents, according to our study, and parallelly due to changing social norms, children may want more freedom. The study also found strong presence of bonding and bridging social capital. To advance in higher education, upper-class participants used bonding social capital, while lower and middle-class participants used bridging social capital (especially to gather information). This study's significant contribution is that right information may optimise choice making.

4.4 Summary

We explored the various ways in which parental and offspring interactions impact the decision-making process of our participants. Through our analysis, we were able to refine the theoretical categories and identify the role of parenting approaches, conforming and non-conforming responses, parental monetary engagement, and interactive participation. These factors can serve as a barrier or a privilege for a student about to make a college choice.

Every factor cannot be a barrier or privilege for a single person i.e., if one factor is a barrier another factor can be a privilege. A rational proposition therefore is: - successful choice depends on employing existing privileges to overcome barriers all the while enhancing these privileges. The finding reveals that their choices are best understood as part of a complex interplay between parental and individual pursuits created from participants' personal lived experiences.

5. Policy recommendations

The key policy interventions from the perspective of the findings in the study are:

1. Provide comprehensive and tailored higher education information for parents through technology.
2. Offer parent education programs on higher education choice making processes.
3. Offer student-parent counselling sessions to navigate the higher education process together.
4. Invest in advising structures like career counsellors to ensure access to adequate information.

Acknowledgements

Appendix A: Profile of study participants
The socio demographic profile of the participants. The variables in the analysis include age, sex, religion, social group, socioeconomic position, and level of education.

Variable	Number	Percentage
Age Group		
20-25	21	52.5
25-30	19	47.5
Sex		
Male	18	45.0
Female	22	55.0
Religion		
Hindu	22	55.0

Christian	12	30.0
Muslim	6	15.0

Caste

Gen	14	35.0
SC	4	10.0
ST	5	12.5
OBC	14	35.0
LC	1	2.5
RC	2	5.0

Economic Status

Poor	4	10.0
Lower Middle	10	25.0
Middle	11	27.5
Upper Middle	10	25.0
Rich	5	12.5

Education

Graduate	8	20.0
Professional Graduate	9	22.5
Post-Graduate	14	35.0
Professional PG	7	17.5
M.Phil.	1	2.5
Ph.D.	1	2.5

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1. Age Group

A significant condition for inclusion in the study was that participants had completed some form of postsecondary education. Members of our group are all in their twenties. This is broken down into two groups, those aged 20 to 25 and those aged 25 to 30, with a slightly higher participation percentage among those in the latter age range. Participants in their late twenties provided valuable insight on how students' perspectives on higher education change as they take on new responsibilities in adulthood.
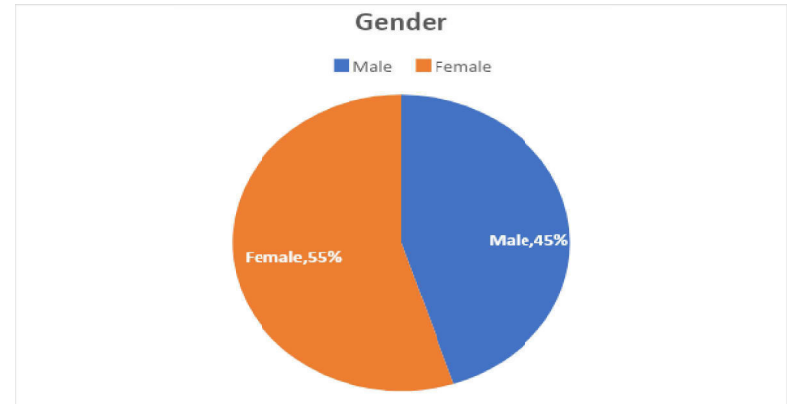
Figure A.1: Age of participants (Source: Primary Data)
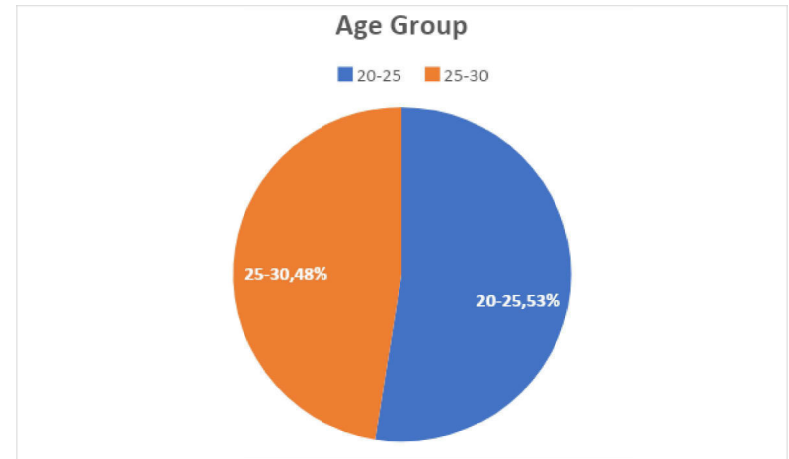
2. Gender

The chart shows that about equal numbers of males and females took part in the research. Women were friendlier and more forthcoming with information while speaking with the researcher.
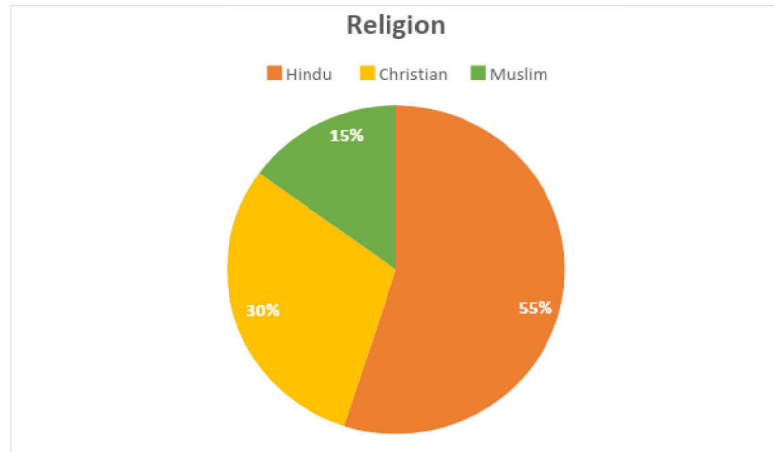
Figure A.2: **Gender of participants (Source: Primary Data)**

3. Religion

To get the most diverse results possible, we interviewed people from all three of Kerala's major religious communities: Hindu, Christian, and Muslim.

Figure A.3: Religion of the participants (Source: Primary Data)

4. Social Group

Every major demographic in the state of Kerala was represented. Participants included those who identified as belonging to the general population, the Other Backward Classes (OBC), the Scheduled Castes (SC), and the Scheduled Tribes (ST).

**Figure A.4: Social groups of participants (Source: Primary Data)**
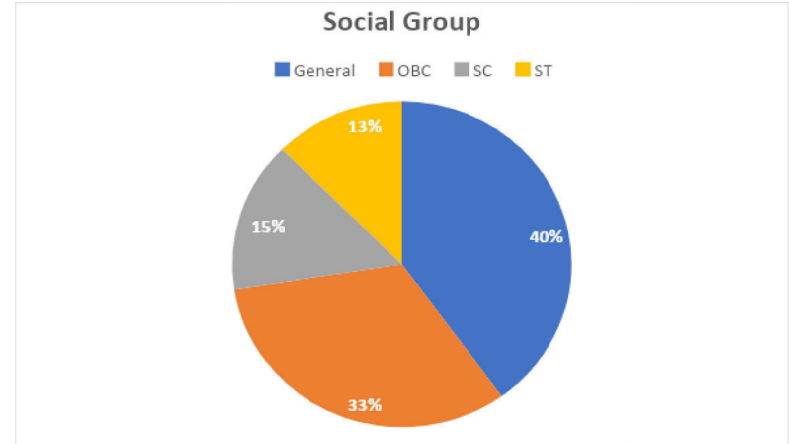
5. Economic Class

Those who took part in our study came from a wide range of economic backgrounds. Economic class is categorized based on 1) At least one parent permanently employed 2) Standard of living based on house design and landscaping, number, and model of vehicle 3) First attended school of the respondent. A person is:

- Middle class – At least one parent permanently employed.
- Lower middle class – Met condition 1 but condition 2 shows 2 BHK home and low-end vehicle and evaluating type of first attended school.
- Upper middle class – Met condition 1 and condition 2 shows 3 BHK home and high-end vehicle and evaluating type of first attended school.
- Rich – Met condition 1, more than 3 BHK home with landscaping, top branded vehicles more than one and evaluating type of first attended school.
- Poor – When none of the first 2 conditions are met.

Figure A.5: Economic status (Source: Primary Data)
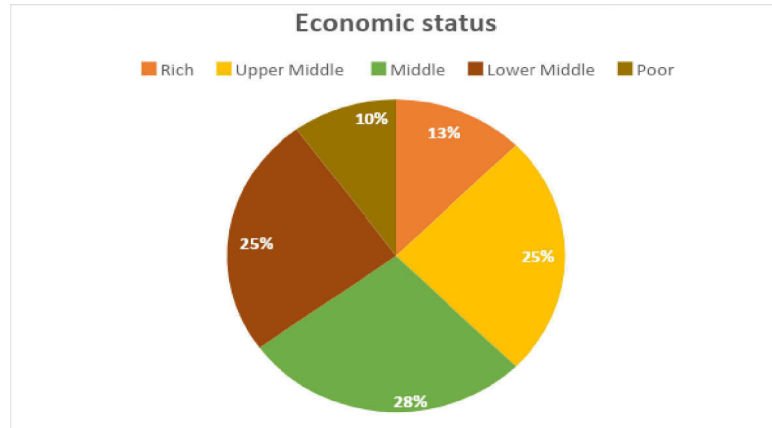
6. Educational qualification

Participants' level of education was a primary consideration in their selection. There was a wide range of opinions on the value of a university degree among the participants. Graduates, professionals, postgraduates, graduates with professional experience, and those with higher degrees (MPhil, PhD) made up our sample. The percentage of respondents in each group is shown in the accompanying bar chart.

Figure A.6: Educational qualification of the participants (Source: Primary Data)
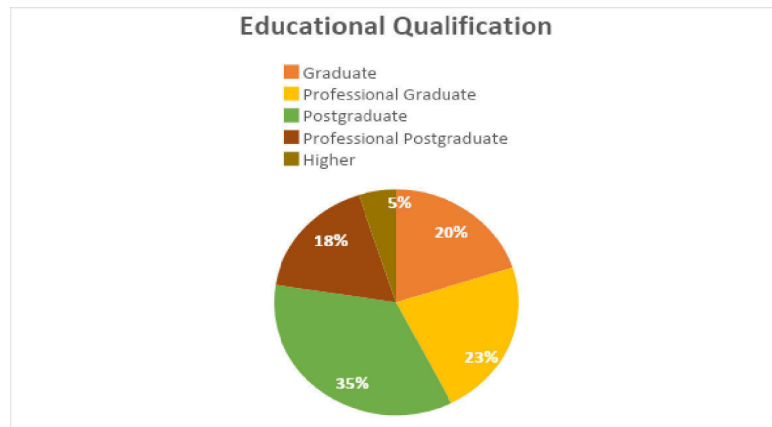
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