

QUALIFIED YET QUESTIONED: HOW PATRIARCHY LIMITS WOMEN'S MOBILITY AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED CAREER GROWTH IN CORPORATE SECTOR OF MUMBAI REGION

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Abstract

"This article aims to examine, both theoretically and empirically, the impact of Patriarchal norms relating to women's mobility and knowledge-based career growth in the corporate sectors of Mumbai region. Even in the 21st century where women are qualified yet they are questioned when it comes to their ability to travel or make decisions related to their careers. This study helps to investigate how patriarchal norms rooted within families, societies and organizational cultures are shaping women's physical, temporal and professional mobility. Despite rising education levels among female workers, their ability to undertake long commutes, accept transfers, participation in late- hour assignments or attainment of training programmes remains constrained by expectations of safety, honour and domestic responsibility. The research aims to explore patriarchal control over mobility restrictions and its impact on knowledge- intensive careers, especially in Indian urban contexts. Using a survey-based approach, the research quantifies the impact of patriarchal norms on women's autonomy, commuting patterns, and participation in professional development activities. Findings are expected to demonstrate that reduced mobility directly curtails the availability of knowledge enhancing opportunities, which in turn decreases the rate of promotion, reduces skill acquisition and restricted organisational visibility. The study also expects to find demographic trends, such as married women and women living in household where conservative norms prevail. The study extends knowledge in gender studies, mobility studies and organisational behaviour by highlighting mobility as a significant but neglected determinant of women's career progression. Practical implications highlight the importance of gender-sensitive HR policies, safe travel support, flexible work arrangements and organisational interventions to decrease patriarchal gate-keeping. As such, the research affords an in-depth understanding of how patriarchal structural imperatives persist to inform and constrain the careers of talented women.

Keywords: Patriarchal Norms, Knowledge-Based Careers, Women's Mobility, Gender-Sensitive HR Policies, Organizational Culture.

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1. Introduction

Participation of women in corporate workforce has increased considerably in today's urban landscape of India due to higher rate of female education, dismal employment prospects and policy emphasis on gender inclusion. Metropolitan centres like Mumbai, which are generally depicted as progressive and merit-centric, provide women openings in finance, information technology, consulting, media and other ancillary corporate fields. But, even when they're highly

educated and able to do the job, women still face hidden obstacles that hold them back in their careers. They are not necessarily codified in written laws, but ingrained into patriarchal regimes of women's access to movement, safety and public identity.

Mobility is crucial for the development of careers in knowledge-based economies. Geographical mobility by commuting, business trips, manager transfers and participation to training programmes opens access to learning opportunities, networks of contacts, visibility, promotions. Temporality mobility, the ability to work longer or non-standard hours also increases participation in high-responsibility assignments and leadership opportunities. However, mobility continues to be a contested space for urban Indian women, between familial expectations, societal norms of respectability and institutional perceptions of safety and domestic responsibility. Anxious about levels of honour, roles in caregiving and perceived danger in public spaces are also converted into constraints that affect women more than men, even in supposedly enlightened corporate quarters. These gendered mobility constraints are compounded in a city like Mumbai, characterised by long travel to work times, poor public transport and working hours extending late into the day. Whereas an urban corporate career is considered most conducive to men, women are frequently called upon to negotiate permissions, make a business case for trips or prerequisites and say no to assignments that will keep them out through late hours or moving towns. The effects of the latter are not confined to the point of entry, but persist in its consequences for knowledge accumulation, skill upgrading and organization-related visibility over time. As a result, career advancement for women is formed not just of their own capability but of how much patriarchal handcuffs allow them to succeed.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study examines how patriarchy-based societal expectations influence women's mobility and career growth in Mumbai's knowledge-intensive corporate sectors such as IT, Finance, Consulting, Media, and HR. Mumbai is selected due to its high work intensity, long commuting hours, and strong mobility requirements for career advancement. The research focuses on three forms of mobility: physical mobility (travel, relocation, training), temporal mobility (flexible and extended work hours), and professional mobility (promotions, skill development, visibility). It explores how family expectations and organizational culture either restrict or support women's participation in these mobility forms, ultimately shaping their career trajectories. Using a quantitative survey method, the study analyses women lived experiences of mobility constraints, considering demographic factors such as age, marital status, education, and household norms to identify patterns affecting career progression.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

This research has important theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The study adds to literature on gender inequality beyond traditional topics of work-life balance and glass ceiling, by connecting patriarchal control toward women's mobility with knowledge-driven career progression. The study provides data from Mumbai region, an economically advanced and socially complex space. The study reveals the everyday overlooked problems faced by educated women like restrictions on traveling, safer concerns and demonstrated how these problems affect their access towards training, promotions and professional visibility. It also showcases the heightened vulnerability of married women and other with household conservative norms.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of patriarchal norms on women's mobility in Mumbai region
2. To understand the career decision pattern based on family and societal control among educated women.

3. To investigate the relationship between commuting constraints and career outcomes.
4. To suggest policy makers to advocate career opportunities and flexible mobility for women employees.

1.5 Hypotheses Based on the Objectives

H01: There is no significant relationship between patriarchal norms and mobility constraints.

H11: There is a significant relationship between patriarchal norms and mobility constraints.

H02: There is no significant relationship between mobility constraints and knowledge-based career growth.

H12: There is a significant relationship between mobility constraints and knowledge-based career growth.

2. Review of Literature

In light of the existing social context, this research explores how gendered normative expectations and patriarchal norms impact women's physical, temporal, and professional mobility within the corporate world in Mumbai and the implications for their knowledge-based career progression (Hanson, 2010; Uteng & Cresswell, 2008). Despite rising levels of education and increased participation of women in India's urban workforce, patriarchal family structures, cultural expectations, and organisational practices continue to regulate women's mobility and autonomy (Kabeer, 2016; Desai & Andrist, 2010). Studies on women's employment in urban India indicate that concerns related to safety, honour, and domestic responsibility frequently constrain women's ability to undertake long commutes, work late hours, accept transfers, or participate in training and development programmes, even when they possess the required qualifications (Chakrabarti, 2017; Phadke, Ranade & Khan, 2011). Such mobility restrictions limit women's access to skill enhancement, networking opportunities, and organisational visibility, thereby adversely affecting career advancement and reinforcing gendered inequalities in professional outcomes (Acker, 2006; ILO, 2018). Therefore, employing an empirically grounded survey design, this study examines the linkages between patriarchal control, women's work-related mobility, participation in formal education and training activities, and career outcomes. In doing so, the research provides critical insight into how deeply embedded social and cultural structures continue to constrain the career progression of well-educated Indian women within India's largest urban economic centres.

3. Methodology

The research follows a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. The methodology can be broken down into two key components:

Primary Data: A structured questionnaire was developed to gather information and to quantify the impact of patriarchal norms on women's autonomy, commuting patterns, and participation in professional development activities.

Secondary Data: In addition to primary data, secondary data was collected from existing literature, industry reports, and academic studies. This data provided a broader context and supplemented the findings from the primary survey.

Population: It focuses on educated women employees working in the organizations of Mumbai region who are engaged in knowledge-based jobs or professional roles in order to examine the impact of patriarchal norms and mobility constraints on career growth.

3.1 Research Design, Sample and Data Collection

Universe	Mumbai
Sampling Method	Simple Random Sampling Method
Sample Size	205
Methods of Data Collection	Primary Data & Secondary Data
a) Primary Data	Questionnaire
b) Secondary Data	Blogs, Websites, Journals, Reference books

4. Results & Discussion

The data was collected from 205 respondents through google form survey method and initially the questions were relating to demographics considering age, gender and marital status. From which age group of 36- 45 were 43.9 % and 26 – 35 were 31.7% respectively. Question relating to marital status 67.8% females were married and 27.8 % were unmarried respectively. Questioned relating to educational qualification were asked wherein 35.6% were graduate, 29.3% were postgraduate females followed by 14.6% professional degrees and 13.7% matriculate. The data was collected to identify from which sectors they belong so the data highlighted as majority of 41% from finance and banking sector, 24.4% from consultancy firms and 18% from Media / HR and lastly 14.1% from IT sector.

4.1 Interpretation of Data

Patriarchal Norms & Family Control

With 109 neutral answers and 73 agreeing that they could travel, the majority of respondents had conflicting opinions about long-distance work travel. A sizable majority (145) concurred that getting family consent is necessary before taking jobs that require late hours. The majority of responses were neutral to agreeable when it came to giving priority to household duties over professional obligations. Furthermore, 139 respondents concurred that decisions regarding career mobility are influenced by concerns about family honour, whereas opinions regarding male family members having more freedom in terms of work-related mobility were largely indifferent.

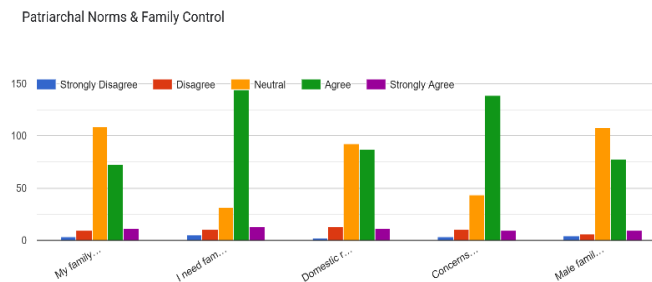


Figure: 4.1.1

Mobility Constraints & Safety

The majority of responses were neutral about safety concerns limiting late working hours (117). Long commutes have a detrimental impact on one's physical and mental health, according to the majority (141). Most people had a neutral opinion about career opportunities being limited by unsafe or inconvenient travel (107). Furthermore, 132 respondents concurred that professional mobility is restricted by inadequate transportation options, while 107 respondents were confused about whether stress from commuting impairs their ability to perform at work.

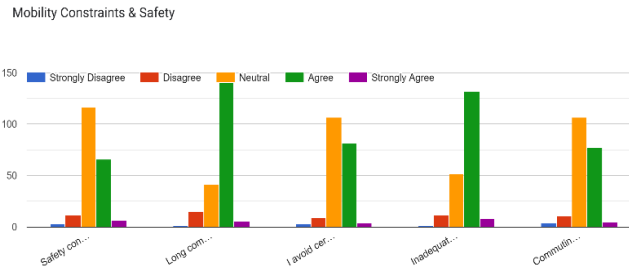


Figure 4.1.2

Organisational Culture & Gendered Expectations

About 139 respondents expressed no opinion regarding managers' presumptions that women are unwilling to move or travel, as well as organizations' informal discouragement of women from working late hours. Similarly, 147 respondents had neutral opinions about organizational policies that fail to adequately address women's commuting challenges, 120 respondents had neutral opinions about women being less likely to be assigned to travel-intensive roles, and 130 respondents had neutral opinions about career advancement requiring high mobility and flexibility.

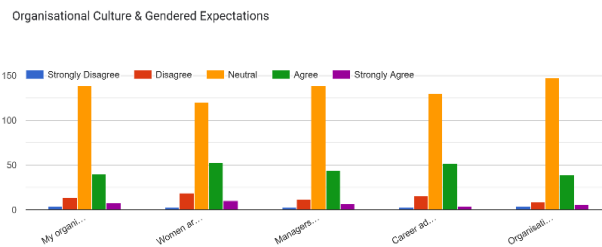


Figure: 4.1.3

Knowledge-Based Career Growth & Autonomy

Respondents were questioned about Mobility restrictions have limited participation in training or skill-development programmes, and 146 responses were neutral.

Respondents were asked about declined knowledge-enhancing opportunities due to mobility constraints and around 136 responses were neutral. 138 neutral responses for question of limited mobility reduced their chances of promotion and 138 and 139 neutral responses relating to professional visibility and networking opportunities were answered.

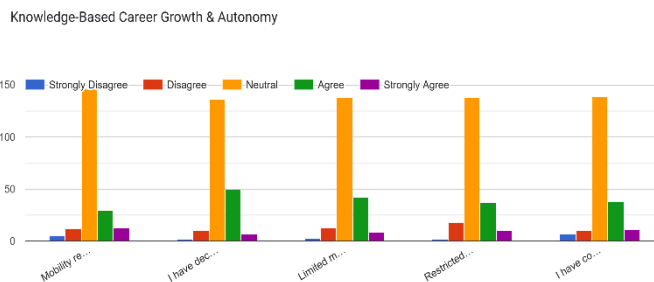


Figure: 4.1.4

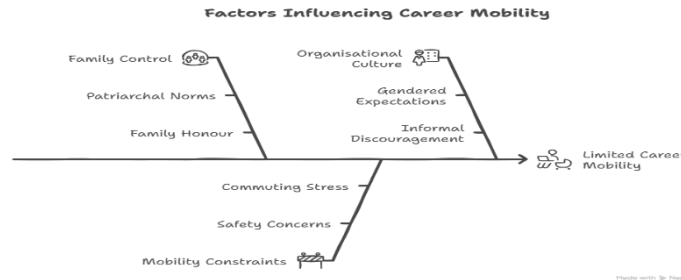


Figure: 4.1.5

This Diagram is created using Napkin AI
 Title: Factors Influencing Career Mobility

4.2 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between patriarchal norms, mobility constraints, and knowledge-based career growth. The analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlation analysis were employed to test the proposed hypothesis.

1. Patriarchal Norms → Mobility Constraints

H01: There is no significant relationship between patriarchal norms and mobility constraints.

H11: There is a significant relationship between patriarchal norms and mobility constraints.

Table: 4.2.1

Variables	r-value	t-value	p-value	Decision
Patriarchal Norms & Mobility Constraints	0.948	42.28	< 0.001	Reject H01

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive relationship between patriarchal norms and mobility constraints. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that higher levels of patriarchal normative expectations are strongly associated with increased mobility restrictions among women employees.

2. Mobility Constraints → Knowledge-Based Career Growth

H02: There is no significant relationship between mobility constraints and knowledge-based career growth.

H12: There is a significant relationship between mobility constraints and knowledge-based career growth.

Table: 4.2.2

Variables	r-value	t-value	p-value	Decision
Mobility Constraints & Career Growth	0.652	12.26	< 0.001	Reject H02

Interpretation

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between mobility constraints and knowledge-based career growth. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that mobility constraints are significantly associated with

women's knowledge-based career growth. The strength of the relationship suggests that mobility limits participation in training programmes, skill acquisition, professional networking and promotional opportunities.

5. Limitations of the Study

- The study addresses issues that may be viewed as sensitive, such as workplace inequity, family customs, and patriarchal authority. Being afraid or judged or facing consequences in their careers, respondents could be reluctant to freely discuss their experiences.
- The accuracy of self-reported data may be impacted by participants underreporting mobility limitations or patriarchal pressures to show themselves or their families in a way that is socially acceptable.
- Due of their lengthy commutes and demanding workloads, corporate women may be less likely to participate in surveys.
- The results may not be entirely applicable to women in rural regions, informal employment, or other Indian cities because the study is restricted to female employees in the corporate sector of the Mumbai region.

6. Implications of the Findings

There are significant organizational implications to the close correlation between mobility restrictions and patriarchal norms

- Companies need to put in place gender-sensitive HR procedures.
- It is necessary to institutionalize safe travel assistance programs.
- More flexible work schedules ought to be offered.
- Assumptions about women's mobility should be aggressively contested by organizational culture.

7. Conclusion

From the view point of policy-oriented perspective, the research study offers important insights for organizations, HR and policy makers. The empirical findings provide strong statistical evidence that patriarchal norms and mobility constraints play a significant role in shaping women's knowledge-based career trajectories in the corporate sector of the Mumbai region. By investigating mobility related barriers, the research underscores the importance of gender sensitive policies which may include safe transport, WLF policies, flexible working hours and hybrid work options. The study highlights how patriarchal norms even in the modern era continue to mediate women's access to career opportunities. By highlighting hidden costs of restricted mobility, the study emphasizes for a shift from Individual level consideration of women's career stagnation to structural and institutional accountability. The study in general contributes to the in depth understanding of how qualified women remain "questioned" in their professional journeys and highlights mobility as a critical element for achieving gender equality in corporate sector of Mumbai region.

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