Original Research Paper

Management

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION CHOICES AMONG COLLEGE WOMEN– AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT The study explores into the examination of social influence on the decision-making processes of college women, to a limited extent from a small population and sample. This exploration is predominantly conducted through the aid of the Planned Behaviour theory and its variables. The variables utilized in this research have been drawn from existing literature, with a notable reference to Agnis Stibe's 2019 study. Furthermore, an additional variable, labelled "family influence/pressure," has been integrated into the research instrument for the Indian context and influence on decisions of college women. This variable encompasses statements related to parental educational qualifications and siblings' education to justify the above influence in link with Family influence/pressure. It is assumed that qualified parents would have more influence on the decision of college women in the Indian context. 97 students from a Business school were studied on this research area by interviewing them with major statements on their decision-making and their choices. The researcher perceives that the inclusion of this variable would significantly amplify the study's comprehension, particularly with regard to the decision-making processes of college women. This research extends the application of the planned behaviour theory to explain the reciprocal aspect of social influence on the decisions and choices of college women. The constructs under investigation are also scrutinized in conjunction with the "qualification variable" to recognize any noticeable differences between them.

INTRODUCTION

The term "social influence" is a global concept in research endeavours. In this particular study, the socially influencing system is derived from Agnis Stibe's 2019 research, lending increased robustness to its foundation. Additionally, a supplementary mediating variable, labelled "perceived behaviour control," is thoroughly examined to assess its influence on the factors that shape social influence dynamics. This inclusion is intended to contribute to a more thorough and all-encompassing comprehension of the details inherent in social influence. It particularly seeks to shed light on the relationship between perceived behavior control and the broader landscape of social influence dynamics.

Review of Literature

Marko Pitesa et.al. (2013) Decision-makers find themselves embedded in hierarchically structured groups, where diverse levels of social power dynamics operate. The hypothesis posits that decision-makers with higher levels of power are inclined to be less susceptible to the influence of social factors within their organizational milieu, whether these factors are ethical or unethical in nature.

The above review opined on that, this study focuses on the decision-making processes of college women regarding their higher education choices. It suggests that the impact of these decisions on ethical or unethical choices may be limited. Instead, the determinants of their higher education decisions are likely to be rooted more in their social environment, peer interactions, and contextual factors. This deviation signifies a departure from the predominant influence of familial pressure on their decision-making processes.

Donald C Hambrick et.al. (2018) "The theme-aligned executive actions carry symbolic weight—a form of extreme action undertaken with the intent of conveying a message in support of a new theme". These actions are taken on behalf of college women, aiming to predict their choices in higher education based on the proportions of their anticipated responses to such decisions.

With the opinion from the above review, this study explores into the choices and decisions made by college women by predicting the social influence and familial pressure on their decision-making processes. Very few reviews have explicitly

specified respondents to study social influence and its impact. The appropriate constructs for this research study are drawn from previous literature, supporting a new investigation into social influence, particularly among college women. More specifically, behavioral variables are employed in the study to establish their appropriateness for understanding social influence as a behavioral variable.

The research study utilizes variables related to family and perceived behavioral control to shape and explore the influence of other variables in the study.

Elizabeth B. Goldsmith et.al. (2011) "With research utilizing this theory, we continue to contribute to a robust tradition that recognizes the significance of interpersonal connections— acknowledging that social networks play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life. This perspective is highly relevant to the ongoing research study on the choices made by college women for their higher education. Whether it pertains to the quality of life or the trajectory of their future, social influence is viewed as a positive factor influencing certain decisions we make."

Noriyuki Tsunogaya et.al (2017) "Female auditors appear to be more willing to make ethical judgments than their male counterparts when faced with obedience pressure. Studies on social influence have given very little significance to gender variables. This current study focuses on college women and their choices influenced by social factors. The variable emphasizing social influence serves as a focal point for the study."

Visweswaran Venkatesh & Michael G Morris (2000) conducted a thorough examination of gender differences in social influence, technology acceptance, and usage behavior. His research revealed that "women were more significantly influenced by the perception of ease of use and subjective norm, although the impact of subjective norm diminished over time." This underscores the noteworthy role of gender in research studies, particularly in the realm of social influence. The sway of societal factors continues to wield greater influence over women than men in decision-making.

The present study gathered responses exclusively from a female college population, limiting exposure to male

perspectives on choices and decisions. This research endeavors to explore the association and impact of social influence on higher education choices among college women, assuming an equal likelihood of influence from both societal and familial factors. In the context of technology usage or the tech adoption model, gender is identified as a potentially crucial factor, particularly at the initial stages. This study takes this gender factor into account for further investigations into the interplay of social influence and decision-making.

While the overarching focus remains on gender, the key constructs also offer insights into the role of gender in the "family pressure" variables. The educational qualifications of the respondents' parents notably exert influence on their decision-making processes, a trend more pronounced in women when it comes to making choices.

Lind L Carli (2001) Concluding that "men have a greater influence than women, and this influence is moderated by the gender composition of groups, the communication style of interactants, and the gender bias of the task." It is assumed that the results of this current research study can be generalized to the majority of choices made by women under the influence of social factors. The study intends to include men in future research to obtain diversified results.

Wendy Wood (2000) distinguishes between public versus private influence as another dimension of social influence. He expressed that "recipients believed that the source of the appeal or members of their experimental group have surveillance over their responses in public settings. This pertains to the choices or decisions made in public, which are subject to judgment by the group, unlike in private settings. This introduces another dimension for respondents to be queried regarding the opinions sought on their decisions."

Hector San Martin et.al (2012) "Social influence plays a significant role in adolescent decision-making. This study concludes that "Adults are sensitive to the quality of social information and carefully integrate it into private decisions." This conclusion strongly aligns with the decisions and choices made by college women regarding their higher education. The institution they choose and the academic stream they pursue are often influenced by the opinions of their peers or relatives, shaping their decision-making process."

Janet Fulk et.al (1990) Many social influence models and constructs vary across different studies, leading authors to deem some as not entirely suitable or aligned with their research objectives. An example is the integration of the technology acceptance model with social influence or vice versa, highlighting the challenges in finding appropriate associations.

Through a thorough review of literature on social influence, numerous constructs and models have been identified for consideration in this current research study. Based on this literature review, there is an assumption that social influence will notably impact public opinions regarding explicit choices or decisions, as opposed to influencing private matters.

Review of Literature - Details

Author	Research Area / Topic	Key Constructs used
Marko Pitesa et.al	Complaint Sinners, Obstinate Saints: How power and self-focus determine the effectiveness of social influences in ethical decision making – 2011	Power, Self-focus, Ethical and Unethical Decisions
Donald C. Hambrick et.al	The role of executive symbolism in advancing new strategic themes in organizations: A social influence perspective – 2015	Consistency with surrounding actions, Social consistency, Executive's apparent investment
Elizabeth B. Goldsmith et.al	Social Influence and Sustainability in households – 2010	Social Communication, Social Influence, Informational Influence, Social influence and sustainable behaviour
Noriyuki Tsunogaya	The Impact of Social Influence Pressures, Commitment, and Personality on Judgments by Auditors: Evidence from Japan – 2017	Conformity Pressure, Professional commitment, Organizational commitment, personality, Gender
Viswanath Venkatesh	Why Don't men ever stop to ask for directors? Gender, Social Influence, and their role in technology acceptance and usage behaviour – 2000	Social influence, Gender, Subjective norm
Linda L Carli	Gender and Social Influence – 2001	Gender Composition effects, Proportion of males and females in an interaction, Communication style used by influence agent, Dominance behavior, Gender bias of task
Wendy Wood	Attitude Change: Persuasion and Social Influence – 2000	Motives for agreeing with others, motives in persuasion, multiple attitudes, Affect and influence, Group and self-identity
Simon Ciranka	Social Influence in adolescent Decision-making: A formal framework – 2019	Social Motivation, Reward Sensitivity, Distraction, Observing others, Being observed, Social Sensitivity
Charles Steinfield	A social influence model of technology use – 1990	Situational factors, task features, direct statements, Vicarious learning, Norms for media behaviour, social definitions of rationality
Robert B Cialdini	Social Influence: Compliance and conformity – 2004	Resistance, Authority and obedience, Social norms, Reciprocation, Consistency and commitment
Bogdan Sojkin	Determinants of higher education choices and student satisfaction: the case of Poland – 2012	Family opinion and Expectations, Student-type of life, Family financial support, Better chances to find a job, Professional advancement

| Joanna Krezel	Social influence and student choice of a higher education institution – 2017	Institutional Communication, Student Related factors, The greater social environment, Family and parental influence, Peer influence and social media
Mukta Kulkarni	Social influence and job choice decisions – 2013	Social comparisons, Social pressures, Social status signalling
Agnis Stibe	Social Influence Scale for Technology Design and Transformation – 2019	Socially influencing Systems (SIS), Learning, Comparison, Norms, Facilitation, Cooperation, Competition, Recognition

Joan L Walker et.al. (2011) The most pertinent review centers on social influence and higher education institution choices, examining variables such as compliance, identification, and internalization as pivotal aspects influencing these decisions. Before delving into these three goals, the author first defines the social influence theory in the context of the research study. It is articulated as "the driving force behind association with social groups, rooted in the theory of social comparison, with the premise that individuals seek approval or evaluation of their opinions, preferences, and dislikes from external reference groups – Festinger.''

Mukta Kulkarni (2013) "The assertion that "personal or moral norms also guide intentions and behaviors" underscores the significance of deliberate decisions and planned intentions in the decision-making process. This research study specifically focuses on decisions related to higher education, encompassing intentions to pursue specific courses or join particular institutions. The decision-making behavior in this context incorporates fundamental concepts, such as the independent determinants of behavioral intentions, including attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control.''

Based on Bogdan Sojkin (2011) "This study delves into various factors influencing respondents' decision-making processes when selecting a higher education institution. It incorporates "gender" as a critical factor, intertwined with considerations such as family opinions and expectations, student lifestyle, family financial support, better employment prospects, and professional advancement.

The findings suggest that young people, often referred to as the Y generation, are significantly more susceptible to the influence of globalized mental models compared to individuals above 30. These students exhibit social consciousness, utilizing diverse social media networks to inform their choices and decisions for the future. This underscores the study's conclusion that social influence extends to encompass social media influence as well."

Theoretical Framework
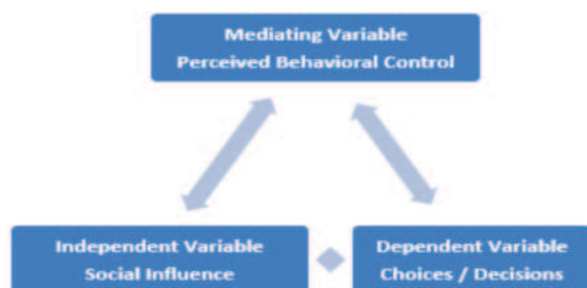
The above theoretical framework illustrates the interplay of three key variables: an independent variable, a dependent variable, and a mediating variable. In this framework, Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) serves as the mediating factor between the independent and dependent variables. The inclusion of PBC as the mediating variable is rooted in the theory of planned behavior, where it is posited to exert influence on both intention and action. It achieves this by distinguishing between psychological interest and actual control. In the context of this research, PBC is employed as a predictive variable to evaluate its impact on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Perceived Behavioral Control
In this study, "Perceived Behavioral Control" functions as the mediating variable bridging the gap between social influence and the choices made by college women. The assumption is that the social influence on the decisions of college women is channeled through the mediating factor of "perceived behavioral control." This variable is derived from the foundational theory of "The Planned Behavior (1991)" by Ajzen, where the social influence construct is purposefully integrated into the framework. The variables considered within this framework include social influence, higher education choices, and the mediating "perceived behavioral control" variables.

Socially Influencing System
SIS framework was introduced by Agnis Stibe (2019) relate to technology. But it has been applied to various studies on making decisions/choices based on the influence. This current research study applies and explains the principles in the framework in this study.

The articles focus on attitude change, persuasion, and social influence. They discuss the dual-mode processing models of persuasion, which emphasize the importance of motivation and ability in processing information. The research also delves into the factors that enhance systematic, thoughtful processing, such as framing of persuasive messages, self-relevance of messages, and the use of token phrases that signal broader values. Additionally, the articles explore the role of social consensus and validity of information in influencing attitudes, as well as the impact of opinion minority and majority groups. The research also highlights the importance of understanding bias correction and motivated processing in attitude change. Overall, the articles provide a comprehensive overview of the various factors and processes involved in attitude change and persuasion.

Fig 1: Source: Stibe, A. – SIS - Research Variables Framework

Research question
Social influence wields significant sway over individuals' choices and decisions in commonplace situations. The present research specifically explores the decision-making processes of college women regarding their higher education. Despite the pervasive impact of social influence, this study

endeavors to demonstrate that Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) assumes a crucial role in mediating between social influence and choices/decisions.

RQ 1: Does a correlation exist between social influence and the choices/decisions made by college women regarding their higher education?

RQ 2: Does Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) mediate the relationship between social influence and choices/decisions? To answer the above questions, this study reviews literature on college women, social influence and choices/decisions. The study found some strong social influence principles and instrument by Agnis Stibe 2019 and adapted.

Table 1: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis

H0 - There is no significant difference between the two groups (MBA & PGDMFS)

H1 - There is a significant difference between the two groups

The p-value is greater than the pre-determined significance level, it is assumed that there is not enough evidence to suggest a difference between the groups.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	1.6	1.555556
Variance	0.463158	0.614379
Observations	20	18
Pooled Variance	0.534568	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	36	
t Stat	0.187101	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.426316	
t Critical one-tail	1.688298	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.852632	
t Critical two-tail	2.028094	

Research Instrument

The research tool is based on Agnis Stibe's 2019 work, the Social Influence Scale for Technology Design and Transformation, with slight modifications that include the addition of statements related to parents' and siblings' educational qualifications. The author of this research study perceives that family influence, particularly through the educational qualifications of parents and siblings, is mediated by Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC).

Key Findings from the research on variables
- 54% of the respondents agree with the Social Cooperation construct for their choices / decisions.
- 54% of the respondents agree with the Social facilitation construct for their choices / decisions.
- 49% of the respondents agree with the Social Learning construct for their choices / decisions.
- 33% of the respondents disagree with the Social Comparison construct for their choices / decisions.
- 49% of the respondents disagree with the Social Norms construct for their choices / decisions.
- 41% of the respondents agree with the Social Competition construct for their choices / decisions.
- 37% of the respondents agree with the Social Recognition construct for their choices / decisions
- 32% of the respondents' siblings have completed School & College Education.

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