

The Gendered Challenges of Transition from Education to Work

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the academic literature relating to transitions of young people from education to work, critically evaluating the historical and contemporary issues of the transition. The study identifies job changes, employer shifting, periods of unemployment, less apprenticeship choices, adult authority, patriarchy, racial and social discrimination, education, training, social support, and disability as common challenges to both genders. It has then explored some specific and extra challenges for female school leavers, and identified these as surrogate motherhood, marriage, motherhood, family, household, stereotyping, realism, materialism, single parent families, and gendered segregation. It has also been found out that the transition from education to work for both genders was almost as challenging in the past as is today, though the nature of challenges is slightly different. However, the additional challenges for female worker during transition make it a gendered process. The study makes policy recommendation for smooth transition from education to work, in addition of identifying the gender inclusion as the way forward for social and economic progress.

KEYWORDS

Transition, Apprenticeship, Gendered, Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Transition system describes features of a country's institutional arrangements which shape young people's transition from education to work (Elias & Qureshi, 2019). From a social science research perspective, the term 'youth' depicts a period between childhood and adulthood (Ettinger, et.al., 2021). This is an intermediary simple stage before full time employment, and after full time schooling, traditionally referred to as rite-de-passage or the transition period (Hannan & Werquin, 1999). It has become complicated in the recent times because of unpredictability of job matches, job shifts and longer periods of unemployment (OECD, 2000). Furthermore, the need to continue school with or without employment for extended periods of time and age made it an even more complex phenomenon. This was not the end. As the nature of jobs changed from simple mechanical output to complex knowledge-based decision making every day, there have been serious challenges as regards to long term education, vocational training and employment.

The policy makers and academics of the west have generally considered transition in youth as a problem instead of a dividend, as considered by the East (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The entire discourse of research carried out on youth has been on the processes they went through during their transition from education to work eventually ending up in a certain job or career (Unwin & Wellington 2001). This concept changed to longer duration of stay at home in the industrialization and urbanization period because of an extension in the schooling period and exclusion from labor market (Lee & Mason, 2006). However, much lately, the debate shifted on to extending the period of youth from 16 years of age to 26 or even 30 all owing to the choices of education, proper job search, dependence on parents leading to a career progression (Kliethermes, et.al., 2021).

In the past two decades, the young people have experienced a significant change in the labor markets primarily appropriated to the global economic changes and the stipulation of labor (Walwei & Deller, 2021). The social disadvantages of the past continued to prevail despite the fact that opportunities for advanced training and education became significantly more prevalent (Botirovich, 2022). With the development of labor market periphery, young people from ethnic minorities and working-class families continued to remain disadvantaged. (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) The least qualified remained susceptible to episodic joblessness because of the 'flexible' working systems. The collective traditional values and union memberships died down because of the emergence of many small service sector organizations with much lesser number of employees. This changed the perception of youth from long term and stable employment to that of risk and uncertainty thus making transitions more individualized (Scandurra, Cefalo, & Kazepov, 2021).

This study has reviewed the relevant literature to identify the challenges faced by the youth for transiting from education to employment / work. These challenges have first been seen regardless of the gender, followed by discussion of the additional challenges faced by young girls in the same context. It is important to operationalize the inference drawn from the review of literature, for which three centuries have been taken as unit of analysis including Malaysia, Hungary, and Pakistan.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

YOUTH TRANSITIONS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMON CHALLENGES

The mediaeval times concept of apprenticeship relates to the period in European history from 5th to 15th century in which apprentice worked for his master for a number of years and received his compensation in the form of lodging and food. After that period, the apprentice was relieved from his obligations. It was then decided by the guilds whether the apprentice is capable of being promoted as a master or he still needs training by roaming from town to town as a journeyman for seeking skills in crafts and then granted promotion as master who can open his own guild workshop. Mediaeval times concept which was supposedly characterized by one step transition from school into the labor market has been traditionally considered to be unproblematic and smooth and hence remained a typical approach to work from 1945 until the situation changed in 1975 (Fortwengel, Gospel, & Toner, 2021). However, Vickerstaff (2003) has argued that it was not a smooth one-step process even in the past. For a considerable percentage of youth, the process took longer than few years and the time was marked with job changes, employer shifting, periods of unemployment, less apprenticeship choices and a great deal of adult authority. In general, it was more of an individual level complexity surrounded by structural issues related to gender and class (Goodwin & Conner, 2003). However, it was generally believed that period of apprenticeship in the golden age provided a favorable environment leading to adulthood and largely characterized by participation, negotiation and active engagement.

Historically, large manufacturing organizations had close links with schools and colleges and used to employ regularly from them as soon as they would graduate and then the organizations would take the extra pain of providing the necessary training on skills required for the job (Osborne, Nasi, & Powell, 2021). However, the recession of the late 1970's changed the attitude of the employers who either completely stopped recruiting from schools or started supporting government youth training schemes instead (Fuller & Unwin, 1998).

Different sociologists have conceptualized and described the transition from school to work in different ways (Carter, 1962). The positions of young people in the 1960's and 1970's in the labor market depended largely on their race, social class and gender because this background helped them in securing relevant school qualifications and experiences (Roberts, 1968; Ashton & Field, 1976; Willis 1977) In the 1980's sociologists largely believed that youth in transition from school to work had little control over their destinations and the routes to work remained largely complex as early school leavers had serious difficulties in finding jobs quickly (Bynner & Roberts, 1991). The youth transition in the 1990's and later was studded with 'uncertainty and risk', a concept that corresponded very well with the age of high modernity and kaleidoscopic environment (Álvarez & Guerra, 2021).

During their landmark study in 1997, Evans and Furlong concluded that the success of youth in achieving their career goals depends largely on the passages to employment per se and the challenges and experiences enroute. Some pre-conceived notions from school and family may also play a role but a clear strategic thinking involved in career decision can be a decisive winner against 'taking chance' approach. Likewise, youth with weak social support tend to be pulled into a downward career spiral of unskilled work and unemployment whereas those with strong social support tend to demonstrate strategic transition behavior (MacAlister, 2022). The career foundations have strong roots in gender, race and social class, although the English culture allows a bit of 'risk-taking' opportunities as against a rather straight-forward German framework. (Evans and Heinz 1994)

Besides other things, the post-modern era has been labeled as the risk society (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990, 1991). This era is marked by more complexity in youth transitions than earlier generations primarily because the length of the period of transition has increased many folds (Cuzzocrea & Schiermer, 2021). The life of young people thus entails more experiences across a wide variety of areas. Some study full-time for an extended period of time while in part – time employment and some are employed full-time while studying part-time. Instead of marriages, they are more commonly sharing accommodations and expenditures for longer periods of time before settling down and start a stable life. There is far greater scope for young people than ever to establish their characteristic patterns of cultural association and identity in an era of increasing individualization, reflexivity and globalization (Ceislik & Pollock, 2002). This may also be attributable to the research findings of Rudd and Evans (1998) that young people are as optimistic about independence, control and employment in a depressed market as they are in a buoyant market.

Though the primary determinant of debate and discussion on youth issues is the age, it is wise to consider ignore other factors like ethnicity, disability, social class, gender and educational attainment. The reason for an increase in age is attributed to lack of opportunities for the minimum aged, unqualified school leavers in market place which forced them to stay at school for a longer period of time and attain a qualification suitable for job market. Resultantly, the transition from school to work is ever lengthier and more complex with implications for housing and domestic transitions because of its protracted, less predictable and increasingly fragmented nature (Reitz, Luhmann, Bleidorn, & Denissen, 2022).

Teachers at school provide career guidance to both boys and girls as part of their career education plan (Christoforidou, & Kyriakides, L. (2021). Unfortunately, many of these teachers recognize the trends in the labor market and impart advise to their students seldom making an attempt to intervene in the personal choices. They rather do this as a mere

support and guidance. Therefore, a large number of students lack knowledge regarding the qualification they ought to have in order to pursue their chosen career.

(Scott, 2022) has divided labor into a higher segment, the clerical segment, the skilled segment, semi-skilled and unskilled segment. In the higher segment, they have included technicians, professionals, managers and administrators. Economic changes in the yesteryears have restricted the entry to higher level qualifications beyond the scope of early leavers and a major positive shift has been observed in the professional and managerial segment without a significant bias for males and females. A serious downward drift, however was observed in the very early school leaver males but an interesting observation was that most of them moved into regular employment at a later stage. The most supportive sector of this phenomenon was the craft-related professions whereby the early school leavers did not face intense competition from the overly qualified counterparts or so called the process of qualification inflation (Biggart and Furlong, 1996)

In a major study of young Scotts carried out by Howieson and Iannelli in 2003, it was found out that the achievements in compulsory education determined the path to further qualification or vocational training. High achievers tended to continue with education while low achievers dropped out from the race towards formal education as well as labor market. The low achievement of young people could also be attributed to their family background whereby a significant number of low achievers came from the disadvantaged families. The identification of most vulnerable individuals at an early stage can enable labor market policy designers to effectively target such social group (Danes and McVicar, 2003). An interesting observation was that if the low achievers decided to stay on for further education and achieve next qualifications, their chances of getting employment subsequently increased. Academic qualifications somehow proved to be more rewarding than vocational trainings.

Another barrier that the school leavers find difficult to cross which searching for employment is the absence of social networks (Georgiadou & Syed, 2021). It has been observed in the Britain that there are marked differences in the employability of children from work-rich and work-poor families (Mizen et al., 1990). In industries which are better known for recruiting out of informal networks and with a high turnover, the existence of a parent, sibling, family, or well-wisher can play a key role in employment. Having a mouth to ask around or put a good word in, can increase the chances of employment manifolds. A considerable degree of research carried out in the United Kingdom (Jenkins et al., 1983, Manwaring, 1984; Wallace et al., 1993). Rees 1966, Miller and Rosenbaum 1997, Wong and Salaff 1998, and Okano 1995 have suggested that in the United States and elsewhere the social networks play an important role in finding employment. Modernization and social change could not alter this phenomenon (Granovetter, 1995).

Opportunities for young people to learn through experience about occupations and more specifically the skills involved in each coupled with a regular and direct contact with employers can have tremendous benefits. A kind of tasting opportunity before the final decision can lead to better temptations. This has a bearing on the training organization that can play a role reducing the gendered approach as they are the intermediary step between school and apprenticeship (Hamilton, 2021).

Countries vary widely in the outcomes and processes of education to work despite the continued efforts to converge because of shared policy treatise, modernization and globalization. These differences usually emerge from difference in structures and institutions, rather than distinct economies or composition of the social and educational background of youth, as commonly believed. Rosenbaum et. al.,1990 have used the term 'transition systems', Muller and Shavit (1998) coined the term 'institutional effects', Kerckhoff (2000) explained it in terms of 'dimensions of societal variation', whereas Hillmner (2002), and Blossfeld et. al., (2005) used the phrases of 'coordination regimes' and 'institutional filters' respectively to explain the relatively enduring features of a country's institutional and structural arrangements which shape transition processes and outcomes (Smyth et. al., 2001). While education and training are considered as the main stay of transitions systems, Allmendinger (1989), and Raffé (2008) have argued that organization of labor markets, social welfare systems, family structures, and the institutional & structural factors drive transitions more rigorously than education and training.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS: THE ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES OF GIRLS

Gender plays a significant role in influencing the way in which the school to work transition is experienced (Alammary, Alshaikh, & Alhogail, 2021). All studies of transition from school to work focused on boys or the male gender until the 'Typical Girls' (Griffin, 1985) was published which was ascribed as a female version of Paul Willis (Willis, 1977). This marked the beginning of research whereby the female gender was taken into account while considering school to work transitions. However, the transition from school to work was not a one-stop gap process even in those days, but was rather studded with challenges. The girls of those times had little choices for employment between the period of school and motherhood. The scope of employment search remained limited to their immediate local area of residence because of limited qualifications and lack of desired opportunities (Campbell & Hahl, 2022).

Historically, girls prepared themselves to work until they were married and started their family later on taking the role of a housewife and mother (Morrow & Elliott, 2021; Spender,1982; Gaskell, 1992). Occupational choices for the girls have become far more ambitious than was previously the case, where a growing number of girls believe that their identity will be reflected in the careers they choose (Becky, 2002). Those who previously thought of work as a stop-gap before marriage, now choose professional jobs requiring high qualifications with a long career path (Riddell, 1992; Sharpe, 1994). One possible

explanation of this phenomenon could be drawn from Arnot et. al., (1999) whereby equal opportunities programs have opened up the minds and doors for young girls to think about their work as careers. The awareness has brought change in the thinking that girls can also compete alongside boys in some non-traditional areas of employment and that the discrimination against them from employers and career advisors is protected by the law (Rees, 1999). Moreover, the number of role models for girls in professional careers increased many folds thus raising their aspirations.

The attitudes towards realism and materialism have also forced the girls to think seriously about their careers (Ke, 2022). In single unit families, it is now a common practice for both parents to work full time. Likewise, some social changes like rising rate of divorce and single parent families also seems to have an impact on the girls' careers and employment. An increasing number of females now tend not to rely on a man and look for a career of their own (Francis, 1998). The trends however still favor the notion that girls are choosing the stereotypic female careers instead of predominantly scientific, technical or business jobs. Boys on the other hand, choose gender typical masculine jobs. The most recent debate has been on the differences on the educational attainment of boys and girls whereby the girls surpassed the boys in many academic areas. Despite the fact that women of those times were already emancipated, there were little opportunities to pursue ambitions and broadening of thinking and action horizon. The continuous challenges were faced from families, teachers and youth employment officers. A lot of young women found it impossible to fight against the cultural and social pressure that the long-term commitment of women was at home as mothers and wives (Wallace, 1995).

The transition of girls from working class backgrounds was loaded with financial and emotional constraints and thus the best chance of escape was considered to be a good relationship with a boyfriend or husband where they could live with, instead of their parents (Banks et. al., 1992). Educational and family background played a key role in such attitudes. Girls who came from a background where the father was working for long hours and mothers were paid domestic workers experienced the worst of pressures at home and outside. At home, they had to take up the role of cleaner, cook and sometimes surrogate mothers. Even the siblings would put pressure on them either to contribute to the household budget or move out. Outside, they were given lesser opportunities for a career and a bias towards certain job categories which were paid less than their male counterparts. A good paid employment was probably not considered as a career but rather a means of achieving independence. While the parents expected the girls to earn and contribute towards the household, there were still pressures to some decent work.

It was not only the family that would subject different kinds of pressures on girls. The peers would also subject them to mental and emotional trauma. Out of the group, the quieter girls were teased for being not very social and without a steady relationship. Those who went out regularly to enjoy themselves did so at the expense of being labeled as rowdy. There were cultural connotations associated to almost all acts of womanhood like sexual experiences, engagement, marriage, career, emotional sensitivity and mental toughness. This resulted in different behavioral demonstrations within the group as well as among the groups of girls (Vatuk, 2021).

The influence of gender is readily visible in girls who move on to study beyond 16 years of education and follow a career path different from the gendered stereotype career choices. Some of them enter take on business or science, against the traditional domestic careers. Nevertheless, even those who take up a challenging career life do contemplate a two-phase career, winning an extended period of economic and social independence at the cost of a late marriage. However, they tend to choose a domestic career again for a period of time till the children are born and ready to go to school, and later on joining the workplace again for the remaining part of their life. However, there are also intricate connections between gender and culture influenced by social class and family background that cannot be ignored, (Mogstad & Torsvik2021).

Labor markets around the world have shown disproportionate precedents of male and female engagement. (Fuller et. al., 2005). Some professions are labeled as for the males and some as for the females. For instance, childcare workforce, hairdressing, health and social care is predominantly female. Engineering, construction, electric installation, motor industry and manufacturing is predominantly male. These gendered preferences have been influenced by social and occupational conditions as well as educational contents, social attitudes and values (Genderequal, 2003). The association of apprenticeship program to one or the other gender is therefore a norm and not an exception. Males and females seldom cross gender boundaries even in countries like Austria, Germany and Switzerland where the apprenticeship systems are fairly advanced and the representation of both genders is quite high. Gendered pattern of participation in government run apprenticeship programs of Australia and New Zealand is also observed. (Murray, 2004; Smith and Keating, 2003)

Beck et al (2006) have examined the bearing of race and gender on perception of youth on labor and educational opportunities available to them and found out to be segregated by ethnicity and highly gendered. Young people moving out of school do not get a reasonable chance to discuss and comprehend issues relating to gender and ethnic stereotyping. This specifically puts females in a very compromising position as they are traditionally inclined to low levels of training and remuneration.

Segregation on the basis of sex is a vertical phenomenon as well as a horizontal phenomenon i.e., holding back a person in the lower level of an organization, and limiting her to a particular occupation or assignment respectively (Blackburn et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2004). Jackson (2003, p. 374) argues that working-class women will be 'trapped in a cycle of lifelong

learning that centers on low-paid, low-status jobs that are often part-time or fixed term'. There has been increasing controversy on equal opportunities for both genders in the last 30 years, but little has been achieved in reality for this kind of social justice. (Brine, 1997, 1999). Gender segregation among age groups of female graduates has declined in the European Union but for those starting transition early, not much has changed. (Dolado et al. 2002) The level of segregation in the UK, is intermediate to high, and the disparity between boys and girls for their level of educational also make matters worse (EGGE, 2001).

One of the reasons that causes segregation between boys and girls, is the choice of education leading to a certain occupation. A stronger link between education and occupation means stronger impact on segregation (Borghans and Groot, 1999), while there are insignificant differences between male and female high achievers, the female low achievers were at a significant disadvantage over male low achievers in entering labor markets (Howieson and Iannelli 2003).

Beck et al. (2006) have demonstrated that boys are less likely than girls to opt for a job traditionally held by the opposite gender. Employers and mediating agencies are not too keen on actively promoting and advocating an atypical decision because a sudden shift in the genders. This can change the status quo of labor market and they may need to adapt and adjust to the gender they are not already used to. There is a need to develop a strategy for reducing the uneven patterns of gender participation and gender inequalities in labor market. A coordinated and holistic approach to policy formulation by the educational institutions, with a clear objective of reducing gender segregation, is expected to facilitate the young people in opting for non-traditional careers, in addition of improving the organizational capacity of the institutions which encourage such transition.

METHODOLOGY

This study has adopted Multi Methods Literature Review as its research methodology, keeping in view that the appropriateness of the interventions needs to be evaluated in addition the impact these interventions had in the context of gendered transition from education to work. Literature has been reviewed for past 50 years. To operationalize the inference drawn from the review of literature, three countries, i.e., Malaysia, Hungary, and Pakistan, have been selected as the unit of analysis. The factors including job changes, employer shifting, periods of unemployment, less apprenticeship choices, adult authority, patriarchy, racial and social discrimination, education, training, social support, and disability have been analyzed in the context of both genders, while additional factors including surrogate motherhood, marriage, motherhood, family, household, stereotyping, realism, materialism, single parent families, and gendered segregation have been considered to school leaving girls.

FINDINGS

In Malaysia's economic development since 1970's women have made significant contribution to the growth of export manufacturing industries as well as social reproduction. Serious attempts were made at all levels to seek greater role of women in labor market as well at home which forms the hallmark of a feminist or gendered economy. The first concrete step towards this was the creation of a competitive and flexible work place with minimal influence of the unions. This was achieved as early as in 1980's. The positive outcome of this influx of women into the labor force was a reduction in poverty and improved status of women in society. Thinking and acting through the financial crises of 1997, Malaysia brought more women into the labor force but this time there were more 'knowledge workers' than women in manufacturing labor. Judd (2021) has also suggested that in order to follow the gendering process of economic liberalization in Malaysia, a theory needs to be developed that must integrate 'labor control in the productive economy and social reproduction of labor' whereby the role and responsibility of women must be recognized as formal workers as well as in the household.

Zieliński (2022) examined a large set of data of young people in Hungary and observed individual heterogeneity for capturing the miscellany of startup predicament faced by youth in labor market and found out a long-lasting impact of education outcomes, good initial career decisions and academic achievement on successful transition from school to work. In one of the very few studies done in Pakistan, Cheema, Firdous, & Ahmad (2021) and Naqvi et al (2004) while exploring the participation of women in economic activities have found out a large number in low skilled and low paid job but at the same time a significant number exists at the top skill end of labor market. Education significantly improves the chances of women in becoming productive and highly paid members of the society but this needs tremendous efforts toward lower fertility, better care of children and support for higher education. Women in rural areas generally support the household through low skill and low paid involvement through working in the manufacturing sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The transition from school to work must be organized in a way that makes certain that both males and females enjoy access to comparable levels of training and vocational education, thereby providing an equitable program for advancement. This study has drawn this conclusion after identifying and discussing job changes, employer shifting, periods of unemployment, less apprenticeship choices, a great deal of adult authority, race, social class, education, training, social support and disability as common challenges to both sexes. It has then outlined and discussed surrogate motherhood, marriage, motherhood, family,

household, stereotyping, realism, materialism, single parent families, and gendered segregation as additional issues faced by girls in transition and concluded that the disproportion and overburdening of females with exclusive challenges in addition to common issues makes this transition a gendered process.

The social reasons for the imbalanced distribution of males and females in the apprenticeship is the perception of certain sectors as males and females as for instance, males working in childcare may be received cynicism regarding their motives for working with children. The informal social circle of friends and family seems to have a strong influence on the occupational choices of young people. In the absence of role models in the family, the awareness regarding challenging the traditional occupational boundaries could not be comprehensively addressed because fathers, mothers, friends and relatives would generally shy away from uncharted waters. The economic reasons are however more challenging as males working in construction and engineering are likely to earn more than their counterpart females working in health and childcare or in the service industry.

Despite the changing stereotypical views of employers about the kind of work males and females can and should do, there are still challenges of enrollment in apprenticeship program against the usual trends. Social barriers still take precedence implicitly while both sexes explicitly challenge the common notions of segregation based on sex. Employers are now making serious attempts to make their workplace favorable for both genders but it is the choice of applicants that makes them frustrated and pulls them back to the orthodox thinking. Fuller et al. (2005) could not find enough evidence to prove that government institutions that facilitated apprenticeship were making serious and systematic attempts to challenge this kind of stereotyping of occupations through their syllabus or career counseling and guidance services.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Khalid Mumtaz Khan: Conceptualization, Methodology, First draft writing, **Awais-e-Siraj:** Review of literature, visualization, Investigation, Reviewing and Editing.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS:

It is declared that both the authors do not have any conflict of interest. It is also to declare that this article does not contain any studies with human participants as test subjects, or in-person interviewing and does not involve any key informants probing.

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