

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at unveiling the links between higher education, marriage and identity by examining the identity development of married women with higher education. The study further explored the complexities in identity of educated women after marriage when faced with contradictory expectations of affinal family and personal aspirations. Thirty five married women from Delhi, belonging to the upper middle class, staying in joint families and with no children yet were interviewed. All women were Hindus and possessed graduate degrees in varied fields such as business administration, medicine, mass communication, chartered accountancy, and liberal arts. Qualitative data analysis revealed that along with higher education, the employment status, stay in hostel during higher education and early socialization contributed to the identity of self-motivated and professional women, making them 'independent', 'ambitious', 'analytical', 'logical' and 'broadminded'. However, marriage being imperative, called for behavioral and psychosocial changes in women. The prevalence of patriarchal ideology of gender roles for women was evident in creating more challenges for career oriented women as they made efforts to balance their roles as wives and daughters-in-law with their roles as professionals. Higher education to some extent empowered women to negotiate their identities after marriage. There was an indication of social change where few families desired educated and employed daughters-in-law and were not only sensitive but also provided support to manage both home and career effectively. The study unearthed four types of identities of educated and married women, namely, 'double-bind' women, 'asserters', 'acceded' and 'accomplishers'.