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### WOMEN VOICES ABOUT GENDERED SOCIAL CAPITAL: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN CAREER PLANNING

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#### ABSTRACT

The study attempts to explore the role of social capital (informal networks; family, friends and neighborhood) in women career planning. Ownership of economic resources by women is considered important for their empowerment. Social capital plays a significant role in economic development. The study can be significant in identifying the motivations and hindrance factors in women empowerment through their career planning. Thirty in-depth interviews and 2 FGDs were conducted by Using purposive sampling. The findings of the study suggest that the family role is vital by encouraging and providing job-related information to women. Friends also provide positive social capital for females in planning their careers. However, networking with neighbors tends to be a strong predictor of women career adoption as families give importance to their opinions. The data is showing weak comminution, interaction and lack of trust among neighbors.

#### INTRODUCTION

Social capital is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. Women remain active suppliers/producers and consumers of the social capital. Therefore, women's consumption of social capital in their career planning has been analyzed in the current study. Social capital is manifested through the relationships and networks of individuals. It is considered an important asset and catalyst for socio-economic development by addressing the contemporary issues of poverty,

stratification, and inequalities. So, it can be taken as an assurance of prosperous days for individuals, groups of people, and society (Grootaert et al., 2002).

Further, social capital can inculcate the value of helping each other and taking the initiative for actions based on the 'Mutually Beneficial Actions' principle, especially regarding Considering the components of trust and reciprocity (Uphoff, 2000). Various actors and agents play their roles in the production of social capital, but women's role as active producers of social capital at the micro-level cannot be ignored. Therefore, it can be said that social capital is not gender-neutral. Women are one of the most important key players in the production of social capital. They play a vital role in making and maintaining relations. They make children aware of the social relations, their social roles and responsibilities of reciprocity. These relations, networks, associations generate social cohesion and thus create a type of capital, i.e. social capital. Therefore, the return benefits of social capital for women need to be explored very cautiously.

Social capital can be understood in social relations, and social capital brings advantages for its members, such as reducing information transactions and expediting the helping process. Social capital has both micro and macro-level implications. It can be understood as it offers compliance of social structures, social organizations (trust, norms and networks) and social processes to facilitate coordinated actions for improving the efficiency of the society (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Portes, 1998). Grootaert (2002) distinguished social capital through the structural and cognitive manifestations (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002). The structural dimension is the tangible dimension of social capital that refers to the position of actors in the network. The roles of the network members are defined by the rules, procedures and precedents that enable mutually beneficial collective actions (Hitt et al., 2002). The cognitive, social capital refers to the shared norms, beliefs and attitudes. It is the intangible dimension of social capital (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002; Uphoff, 1999). Social capital's structural and cognitive dimensions are mutually dependent, reinforcing and overlapping (Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000).

Moreover, depending upon the nature of the flow, the social capital has two types that are bridging capital (vertical linkages) and bonding capital (horizontal linkages) (Aldridge, Halpern et al., 2002). According to the World Bank (2000), social capital can be broken into five key dimensions at the practical and operational level: groups and networks, trust and solidarity, collective action and cooperation, social cohesion and inclusion, and information and communication. These dimensions need to be thoroughly examined as every actor of the network does not have equal access to the stock of social capital. The network relations are not egalitarian. The power imbalance and hierarchy exist in social networks. Due to patriarchy, men are mostly controlling, organizing, and defining the normative orientation of the networks. It keeps women's access restricted to powerful networks, and they cannot extract the equal benefits as men can do from the social networks (Silvey and Elmhirst, 2003). Collectivism is the dominant value of the society of Pakistan that creates a system of mutual dependence among the members of the society by improving

their interaction and social cohesion. Social cohesion develops common goals and discourages conflicts among people.

They can resolve differences peacefully and act as a support system for individuals in difficult times. Every group and network have its norms and values, whereas their members try to conform with the values to increase their acceptance and reputation. The practice of confirming the group values is reflected in networks' configurations and shapes human attitudes and behaviours. Pakistan is a patriarchal society, and usually, women are in a subjugated position. The collectivism and the patriarchal structure of the society create a hurdle for women in making decisions of their life. People's opinions matter. In this regard, "what will people say?" is the most heard sentence.

The respect, honor and regard of the family are associated with the females. Their every act is scrutinized very carefully. Such expectations usually keep women making decisions of their lives as per their will; rather, the consideration of family repute becomes most important. Thus, it can be said that social capital may not provide women with equal access to opportunities by removing the barriers to participation. Bourdieu's theory of social capital highlights the significance of social capital as the accrual of past relations, which play a vital role to configure the future.

Moreover, his theory suggests that the accumulation of social capital helps the dominant class to retain its position in society. Allik (2004) suggests that the components of information and communication cannot be ignored from the social capital. The information flows to strengthen the relationships, develop trust, reduce time, and allow ideas to exchange. In our society, women are considered homemakers. Childbearing and rearing, taking care of family are her prime responsibilities.

These responsibilities mostly limit her access to domestic chores and create dependency on male members and media for public domain information. The limited or incorrect information could deprive her of opportunities thus, could hinder her success. Moreover, it can serve as a tool of her oppression and can become the source of; decapitalization of social capital, breaking of trust and rupturing the social cohesion. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the role of her informal networks in disseminating the information. Social capital is manifested in a mechanism in which networks and relations define the norms, rules and roles for the members of the networks. The network creates obligations for its members to follow these rules. Any non-conformity with the defined norms may lead to sanctions as they are reinforced through informal but rigid social control systems created by the network members (Halpern, 2005). The informal social control system consists of sanctions and rewards. Therefore, the most improbable practices by the networks are negatively stigmatized.

Social exchange patterns, interactions and relations develop norms of trust, reciprocity and obligations among people. The obligations aim to ensure the activities which create mutual benefits and assures the implicit commitment of people to help each other. Individuals are bound to fulfil their expected

responsibilities as their behavior is confirmed by the sanctions/incentives (Hazleton and Kennan, 2000). Sanctions/ incentives are informal and unwritten; thus, they may vary with the level of familiarity and closeness. Familiarity further outlines the level and type of trust among individuals and thus affects the types of obligations. The importance of social bonding is also reflected through Hirschi's theory of social control. It is based on the assumption that a strong 'social bond' confines the acts of social deviance. Hirschi's concept of "social bond" is based on the idea that mutual linkages of an individual with society (attachment) encourage man to invest structured time (involvement) in social structures and institutions (commitment).

It was made possible due to trust and acknowledging of society's shared norms and values (beliefs). Social bonds, linkages are the source of social capital. Therefore, the stock of social capital in informal networks could be an important contributor to women career planning. Natalie (2006) explored that adolescent occupational choice is influenced by many factors, including life context, personal aptitudes, and educational attainment. The cultural and social context of family and community was influential in how youth learn about careers and the choice process. Tomas and Sharon (1991) findings suggest that the career choices (science and engineering) of students (male and female) are influenced by the parents and teachers. Agarwala (2008) studies about the career choices of Indian management students suggests that "Skills, competencies, and abilities" was the most important factor and "father" was the most significant individual influencing the career choice of Indian management students. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) identifies self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goal representations as important factors through which people develop, pursue, and modify their career-related interests over time (Lent et al., 1994, 2000). According to SCCT, the greater level of expectations is connected to the areas with high self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Developing intentions or goals for further activity exposure is based on these expectations (Lent et al., 1994). Personal factors, such as race, sex and intelligence, and cultural and gender role socialization have a great influence and are considered important factors in career development. Furthermore, Lent et al. (2000) suggested that environmental feasibility and limitations could be a powerful predictor of career choice behaviours because they can limit or give access to learning experiences which can help create a diversity of choice in career selection. As a result, the contextual factors directly affect the development of self-efficacy beliefs and an individual's learning expectations. Contextual factor includes the dimensions of an individual's environment and his way of perceiving and utilizing those dimensions to facilitate career choice and development. Various researches were conducted over the past using the SCCT, which shows that roles of environmental supports and barriers, feminist attitudes, parental support, older siblings, other people, work experiences, volunteer experiences directly affect career adoption and choice. Among this role of parents has come out to be most influential on students, and parental involvement in career-related issues is one of a series of factors that leads to young people engaging in more intense and effective information-seeking activities (Lent et al., 2005; Flores and O'Brien, 2002; Bender, 1994; Cochran and Kush, 1993; Kracke, 2001; Young et al., 1997).

Using the frameworks of Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory (1977, 1990) and the Social Control Theory of Hirschi's (1969, 1977), the researcher explore that the model of social capital produces inequalities and hierarchy among members. Women are more link with families due to their restricted motilities, limiting their freedom to make independent decisions. Inequalities are inevitable in social networks as it provides greater access and ownership to male members. The male members of the network may be controlling social and economic resources (Azeem et al., 2021). The social resources include strong ties within a network (Strong Bonding), access to other networks (Bridging, Linking), control over networks and influence over network decisions. Individuals having greater control over economic and social resources happen to be more influential in defining the norms, rules and roles of the individuals in networks and relations. In the same way, they somehow have power over the whole mechanism of social capital by influencing sanctions/interventions and obligations.

Suppose the same model of social capital is seen with special attention to gender relations. In that case, the observations will depict that the females enjoy different benefits from the social capital as her role seems to be a homemaker within the four walls of the house and to serve a family is her priority which decreases her access and control over social and economic resources. The same issues of women's position in social networks and the gender-differentiated consequences of social capital were raised in empirical studies conducted by Silvey & Elmhirst (2003), Bookman (2004), Molyneux (2002) and Metz & Tharenou (2001). The present study will analyze the influence of the social capital model, focus of informal networks (friends, family and neighbourhood), over the planning of career adoption of women. Using the contextual factor of the SCCT framework researcher sees that predefined roles of women as a serving agent for their families or communities influence her chances of career adoption. Contextual factors not only include the parents, family and friends. It also increases the range of factors to other prevailing norms in the society. Thus, her career planning is controlled by the social capital and contextual factors which influences her access to economic resources. It accordingly affects her social resources access and, as a result, produces the difference.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The qualitative study was conducted to explore the gender dynamics of social capital in **women** career planning. The researchers have selected the oldest and largest public university of Pakistan for conducting the present study. The universe was further narrowed down to Quaid-e-Azam Campus due to limited resources and time for conducting the present study. Multistage sampling was conducted randomly. The selection of faculties, departments, centers and institutes were made randomly. Eight faculties, 15 departments were selected randomly for the present study. The detail of selected faculties with their departments is as follows.

SR. NO	FACULTIES	DEPARTMENTS
1	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	1. Department of History 2. Department of Philosophy
2	Faculty of Behavioral & Social Studies	3. Institute of Social & Cultural Studies 4. Department of Gender Studies
3	Faculty of Education	5. Institute of Education & Research 6. Department of Special Education
4	Faculty of economics and Management Sciences	7. Department of Economics 8. Institute of Administrative Sciences 9. Institute of Business Administration
5	Faculty of Commerce	10. Hailey College of Commerce
6	Faculty of Life Sciences	11. Institute of Biochemistry & Biotechnology 12. Department of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics
7	Faculty of Science	13. Institute of Chemistry 14. College of Earth & Environmental Science
8	Faculty of Law	15. Law College

Source: [www.pu.edu.pk](http://www.pu.edu.pk)

To satisfy the study's objectives, the study population included 30 students from the final year of their respective programs, two from each selected department. Respondents were identified using the purposive sampling technique. Thirty in-depth interviews and 3 FGDs were conducted to collect relevant data. The respondents were informed about the research to take their consent was taken. It was guaranteed that their names and identities would not be disclosed. Interview Schedule was used. The researchers collected the data in Urdu, then transcribed and translated it into English, and Translation and Transliteration were conducted to get elaborative and unbiased results. Then the researchers analyze the data by themes and narratives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Sociodemographic profile of respondents** Any piece of sociological research has to be based on some analysis of the sociodemographic profile of the respondents. Either qualitative or quantitative, the demographic element is an inalienable characteristic of sociological studies. The demographic variables like; family structure, age, marital status, number of brothers and sisters and their occupations, monthly household income, father and mother's occupation were collected from respondents. Parents education, elder siblings' (especially sister) education and career choices were important contributors to making career choices. Respondents belonging to the joint family system were found

more reluctant in making any career choice. They mostly reported that their family traditions do not allow women for working outside the home.

On the contrary, respondents from nuclear families seemed more open towards their career choices. Their families were also found supportive and concerned for their daughters' careers and education. The joint family systems follow a rigid patriarchal structure. The unified command is required to run the whole family in coordination. Therefore, it could be suggested that joint families want to keep more control over their females, thus hurdle her career choice.

### ***Family Support Women Career Planning***

#### ***Guidance in subject selection***

The family remained a major source for most of the female students. Most students reported that their families guided them throughout their academic path for the selection of courses. The respondent reflected it as, "My family guided me throughout my whole life and especially when it came to the subject selection, my answer would be that whatever and wherever today I am just because of my family guidance. I was not aware that Punjab University was offering a bachelor's degree in Sociology; my brother explored various best possible options and came to know about it. That time he did not become a source of subject selection but also guided me in all my presentations, assignments and course work." Another considerable aspect is that many female students lack career planning and orientation because in our society, they are not considered breadwinners, and their main role is house maker, and thus the primary responsibility is to care about the needs of her family. Due to the assigned roles by society, their career is considered less important, and no attention is paid to the subject selection and guidance to her career. The same feeling came through an in-depth interview when a respondent reported as, "I do not want to spend my time free unless I got married. Thus, I applied to get my Master's Degree. Fortunately, I got admission and so I am here. It was completely by chance." Another respondent reported that she got admission to university to increase her qualification level and make her eligible for good proposals. On the other side, a good qualification level is an important predictor of getting a good job and improving an individual's socioeconomic status. Thus, youth opt for high-level degrees to get a better job as reported by the respondent, "Good academic degrees from well-reputed organizations open up the way for getting good job scale with handsome salary package by putting very less effort after completing education." The diverse responses about course selection reflect the families' interest in guiding women about career choices. The defined gender roles of women dictate her career planning.

#### ***Motivation***

Commenting on the source of motivation for an educational career, respondents had diversified opinions as, "My only motivational source are my parents, who not only encouraged me in all phases of my life but also stand against my uncle for my university

admissions". One more respondent in an in-depth interview stated that: "I do not have any motivation source; I had to prove myself at **every** point in my educational path that I deserve to continue my studies. My good grades in school, college and now in University gave my parents a reason to be proud of myself and that's why they are not stopping me to continue my studies". Another respondent reported as; "My father is like a candle for me who lightened up my life by always showing right path to me. My father took a stand against my grandfather for me. My Father was of the view to either stop my education or to only take admission in Girls College rather than in coeducation. Whereas my father not only opposed him but also encouraged me to be a lawyer. He is also in favor of continuing my practice in future." This clearly shows that parents' perceptions are being changed towards their daughter job adoption. Another respondent reported that her siblings were strong motivational **sources**. She stated that her siblings are Natural Science students studying Microbiology and Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry. She has always seen them discussing their subjects, which inspired her.

Moreover, their study subject has always been a "high rated" subject in their family, and they considered brilliant students and so she wanted to be. In that case, siblings were not the only motivational source, but the social rating of the subject also influenced and motivated the subject selection. Another respondent further supported this reason who commented that she just wanted to join University as it is a status symbol in society. Responses showed the different types of motivational factors varying from very influential to non-influential. However, the data analysis shows that parents were the main motivational source.

### ***Voluntary Work and Family Support***

Most of the respondents consider their families' moral support important and encouraging for their voluntary activities. While volunteering, sometimes respondents have to work in the late evenings, and their families' support gives them courage and confidence to carry these activities in future. As in an in-depth interview, a response stated that "My family is providing me moral support to carry involuntary activities. They are not only extending their moral support to me but also providing me pick n drop services and bearing all my expenses". Another respondent explained moral support as, "My father does not encourage me for working in an organization, he never provided me with any of information related to jobs and voluntary work, but he also never discouraged me or stopped me from doing such work. For me, this is his moral support which encourages me to attach with the organization for providing voluntary services." Thus, it could be said that family support encourages people to engage in voluntary activities. The responses clearly show that parents have an influential role and association with voluntary working. Family encouragement for the voluntary task could also be an indication of permission for future jobs. Their support in terms of permission, pick n drop etc. is very important to encourage females to join any organization for voluntary services and internships. Most of the time, Pakistani respondents are in a state of the tradeoff between the positive impact of a volunteer on their future job



opportunities and the sense of being exploited by organizations who find convenient and cheap labour in these respondents.

### ***Perceived Intentions Behind Job Plans***

Perceived intentions behind job plans are an important force driving them and encouraging individuals to choose and follow their career path. Mostly mentioned reasons for doing a job include a source of independence, economic security, and support for family and personal interests. Females also mentioned that they could not work as they had no permission from the family to do work. Respondents during in-depth interviews and FGDs elaborated these reasons. Most of the respondents see that woman doing the job can be independent. By independent, they meant that earning could give women the freedom to make decisions. As one respondent said that, "If she will be earning, she could make her own decisions and will not depend on the male family members and will not have to obey their orders as slaves".

Moreover, respondents also see that their job will provide them economic security, and they could also support their family with their earnings. One respondent reported that "Nowadays when everything is getting expensive, it is not possible to fulfill the household expenses with one earning hand, so our earning could contribute to the family income and will raise our families' economic status." On the contrary, respondents do not have any career plans because females do not work outside the home in their families. Thus, they do not have permission for a job after completing the job. And it was also reported that "females' basic priority should be taking care of her house and family and her job could be a barrier in fulfilling her prior responsibilities".

Moreover, it was also stated that they have to face discouragement for job from their in-laws after marriage. This shows that 'home maker' is the primary role of the females in our society and this defined role of her restrain her to interact her from the outer world as a career woman. The majority of the respondents indicate that income generation is the most important and most stated reason of planning job. Respondents believe that income generation will make them independent, increase their say in decisions and improve their economic status.

### ***Perceived Family Contribution in Career Planning***

Family is the first institution of the child, and his primary socialization takes place in the family. Thus, the positive attitude of a family toward a child career can help the child to excel in his/her career and vice versa. The collected data indicated the positive role of the family as they provide their daughters with the information of market scenarios and vacant positions. The same thing was supported in an in-depth interview with the respondent commented as, "My family is playing a vital role in my career planning, as they keep me well informed with the various job opportunities published in weekly newspapers. However, I am in my last semester, but my brother is sending my CV in various organizations as sometimes the recruitment process takes 2-3 months. In this duration, my studies will be completed, and I will be able to get a job very soon." On the other side, the family also discouraged females by informing them

about the discrimination and harassment that females face in the workplace. As a respondent stated, "My father is against female jobs because at workplaces females are used as an object and has to face exploitation and sexual harassment." Other mentioned contributions of the family were that the females have to face mobility problems and some male member of the family has to schedule their activities according to the job timings of their female members. Moreover, working women have to face problems getting married. Such as, people do not like working women to be their daughter-in-law, as reported by the respondent that "I could face many problems in a job like I have to bear authoritative attitudes of my supervisor, people could try to harass me, my 9 to 5 job timings could have made me tired and above all my job could make problem in my marriage. Because still people do not like working women as their daughter-in-law" Other than these reasons idea of female career adoption was rejected as she has to be mother, wife and daughter-in-law, so she must put all of her efforts to fulfil the needs of her family. Thus, the analysis of the family contribution shows that is the manifestation of social capital; the family has an association with female career planning. Thus, it may be concluded that most families have a positive attitude towards job plans and career options. So, family is a positive social capital for the respondents.

### *Career and Neighbors*

In Pakistani society, the neighbors' opinion is still an important one when it comes to the values system. However, the growing urbanization and the concepts of commuter towns and the other emerging phenomena such as the gated communities and planned towns tend to undermine the role of the neighbours. Thus, this is the presumption of the researcher that networking with neighbours is largely dependent upon. Interestingly it was noted that respondents were treating friends in neighbours differently than their university fellows. Because in spite of having friends in the neighbourhood, the sharing level of respondents with neighbours (friends) is very less. In an in-depth interview's respondent reported that "Yes, I do have friends in my neighbors. We are living in the same vicinity for three years so have a good chit chat with each other in free time. But I do not have the same level of friendship with her as with my university friends, I do not share my personal things with her". The statement mentioned above clearly indicates that while it comes to having personal and primary bonds, our respondents tend to be more associated with their university friends than their neighbours. Clearly the opinion of university friends must be at least more decisive in this regard. Visiting to neighbours is an important determinant of close interaction of neighborhood. The more frequently the visits are made with neighbours the more neighbours will be involved in the life of them. The data show that mostly respondents do visit their neighbours but they mostly make this visit occasionally. The reason of occasional visit was made by respondent as; "I do not find much time to visit my neighbours and I also I don't visit them regularly as this could increase interference in each other's life, which I don't like at all. So, I just visit them occasionally on weddings, khatams etc." The findings depict that people do not like others interference in their personal lives.

### ***Personal Sharing with Neighbours***

In an in-depth interview respondent reported as; "I do not share my personal thing with them, but I do share problems, which I encountered during my studies. The nature of these problems is not very personal." Thus, it could be concluded that the interaction of respondents and their families in the neighborhood do exist, but the sharing level of respondents with neighbours is not of good quality. This shows lack of trust which could lead to the weakening of social fabrication.

### ***Importance of Neighbours Opinion in Decision Making***

Respondents usually do not consider their neighbours opinion important. Major reason for not considering neighbours' opinion important in decision making was identified that they give importance to their families' opinion in decision making rather than neighbours. In an in-depth interview respondent reported that; "I neither feel need of taking their neither opinion, nor give importance to their opinion because only family can give sincere opinion. Our neighbours also never asked for our opinion to solve their matters". However, in Pakistani society, people have to give importance to each other's opinions due to collectivism.

### ***Family Considers Neighbours Opinion Important in Decision Making***

Family shares their problems with neighbours and values their opinions. Supported in various in-depth interviews as, "we discuss problems with our neighbours because we value their opinion. They are well educated and are also aware of the society's good and evils". In another interview, it was stated, "We live in a society where collectivism prevails and people live in groups so people have to give value to their neighbour's opinion as their view towards you make your reputation in society. We do care of our reputation, so we try not to deviate from the general opinion and values that prevail in neighborhoods." To sum up, it could be stated that neighbour's opinion does matter in taking decisions. Neighbours' opinion creates pressure on individuals and thus conforms them to society's prevailing norms and values.

### ***Friends And Social Capital Participants Share Major Time with Their Friends***

The findings suggest that participants share strong relationships with friends. Friends keep on sharing their personal lives and career plans with peers. Market-related job information sharing is high among friends. However, they did not appear to be in strong relation with social capital and career planning. Being of the same age group, they share the same values but do not exert social pressure to influence career choices.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study's findings suggest that important positive attitudinal changes of society toward females are being taken place. Family is supportive towards a female career. Parents are allowing their daughters for the job, but their parents,

siblings, and other family members are also providing them with information, which could help females choose a job and avail themselves of good possible opportunities in the job market. However, not all families were as cooperative. However, the acceptance for family careers in a society like Pakistan, where earnings and independence are only related to males, is itself is a positive change and the spillover of such an attitude in society at large would put Pakistan in a better position to face development challenges like poverty, illiteracy, high maternal mortality rates Etc., Less interaction among neighbours is raising feelings of disbelief and less trustworthiness for each other. It is not very encouraging evidence as this attitude encourages individualism in society and will also harm the strength of social capital. On the other side, it is encouraging to note that people, in general, are encouraging females' higher education and employment, which will bring an important change at the societal level. The interesting finding of the study is that despite all the feelings of disbelief among neighborhoods, they create much pressure to define gender roles. People do care about their neighbours' opinions about themselves. It is also important to note that identified reasons a woman gives importance to do the job include women independence, economic security, exposure and confidence and equality to men. Such reasons are directing that females, their families, and other people (neighbours) are aware of the problem's women face due to their less empowerment and less control of economic and social resources. Thus, such awareness is now changing people attitude toward the concept of 'Chadar and Char Deware' (veil and four walls), and they are equipping their daughters with higher education and good job, so they can face and handle all the problems easily. In summing up, social capital encourages females' employment, but the kind and level of encouragement vary from construct to construct and network to network.

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