



INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND HOME ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF INDIAN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Educational aspirations have been identified as a main strategy for widening educational participation in the lifelong learning process. The present study explored the effect of gender and home environment on educational aspirations in a random sample of 200 adolescents studying in +1 class in the government and private schools located in Patiala, the district of Punjab. The data were collected with the help of educational aspirations scale and home environment inventory. The results of the t-test revealed significant gender differences in educational aspirations among adolescents. Further, it was found that educational aspirations among adolescents are negatively and significantly correlated with the negative dimensions of home environment viz. deprivation of privileges, rejection and permissiveness. However, the educational aspirations among adolescents are significantly and positively correlated with positive home environment dimensions of reward and nurturance. Implications of the results are discussed.

Keywords: adolescents, educational aspirations, gender, home environment

Introduction

Educational aspirations refer to the early impressions of one's own academic abilities and the highest level of education an individual expects to

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attain has also been linked to academic achievement. Today's modern society expects everyone to be a high achiever. The key criteria to judge one's true potentialities and capabilities are perhaps scholastic/academic achievements. Academic achievement has become an index of a child's future and is the resultant of various factors like personal, social, economic and other environmental factors. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, expectations may start out high, but may eventually be lowered as they observe the successes and failures of those around them, thus leading to social reproduction (Hanson, 1994). Thus, children do not form aspirations by rational analyses, but by looking at those around them and at their own chances of mobility in a subjective manner.

Social psychological theory posits that educational aspirations strongly influence scholastic outcomes and there have been many studies that cite educational aspirations as being one of the most important determinants of eventual educational attainment (Wilson & Wilson, 1992). However, several studies have shown that educational aspirations do not translate into comparable attainment among students from different racial, ethnic and gender lines (Gottfredson, 1981; Duran & Weffer, 1992; Kao, 1995; Ponec, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Trusty, 2000). Kao and Tienda (1998) and Trusty (2000) suggested that students from lower socio-economic classes may express high educational aspirations because that reflects the dominant ideology. They may not take suitable steps toward achieving these aspirations because the culture around them may not be able to provide them with concrete models and support. Geckova et al. (2010) observed that both school and the family have the potential to stimulate educational aspirations across all educational tracks. The attitude towards school and social support from the father are the most consistent predictors of educational aspirations across all three types of education.

In general, adolescent educational aspirations are found to be strongly related to their perceptions of parental support, parents' aspirations and their own early attitudes to school experience. Parental education and resources at home have an influence on aspirations, and influence adolescents' educational and occupational aspirations, whether the youth come from urban, suburban, or rural areas. Wilson and Wilson (1992), Smith (1991) and Taylor (2002) stressed the importance of the home environment on adolescents' educational aspirations. Buchmann and Dalton (2002) found a significant influence of

home environment on the educational aspirations of the adolescents in twelve countries. They found that in both developed and developing countries with relatively uniform secondary school systems, significant other such as parents and peers can play a role, whereas in countries with secondary school systems exhibiting greater diversity, such effects are lost.

Adolescents' educational aspirations could, to some degree, be predicted by parental expectations and were significantly related to contributing home environment and family systems (Marjoribanks, 2003; Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2010; Ibtesam, 2010; Nicholas, Kotchick, Barry, & Haskins, 2010). Hence, it is the home which sets the pattern for the child's attitude towards people, society, it aids intellectual growth in the child and supports his aspirations and achievements. Educational aspirations were found to be enhanced by bringing change in environmental and personal factors (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, & Urajnik, 2002; Grieve, 2009; Salami, 2009; Nicholas, Kotchick, Barry, McNamara, & Haskins, 2010). Also, students belonging to the majority/ethnic groups were found to possess higher level of aspiration, whereas the rural students or the students belonging to the poor families have lower aspirations (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Khattab, 2003; Zhou, 2005; Geckova et al. 2010; Strawinski, 2011). However, single parent adolescents were found to be having lower levels of aspiration (Roberts & Moss, 2007; Park, 2008) and support of the family was found to be the significant predictor of educational aspirations among adolescents (Plunkett, 2003; Lakshmanan, 2004; Li, Li, & Zong, 2006; Williamson, 2007). Adolescents' perceptions of home environment were found to show varied and conflicting results (Svedin, Back, & Soderback, 2002; Leigh & Gill, 2004; Kaur & Jaswal, 2005). Barry, Chaney, and Chaney (2011) indicated that as students engage in increased alcohol use and/or truancy, educational aspirations decrease. Thus, students who indicated a desire to attend a 4 year college/university were less likely to engage in high-risk drinking behavior and/or truancy.

On the basis of the above studies conducted in the recent past, it may be summed up that adolescents' development and educational aspirations in relation to home environment have remained an area of interest among researchers in education, and like the previous studies, there is a need to look into the effect of gender and home environment on educational aspirations among adolescents.

Objectives

1. To study gender differences in educational aspirations among adolescents.
2. To study educational aspirations among adolescents in relation to home environment.

Method

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant gender differences in educational aspirations among adolescents.
2. There will be a significant relationship of educational aspirations and home environment among adolescents.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The present study was delimited to adolescents studying in government and private secondary schools of Patiala district only.
2. The sample was delimited to 200 adolescent students studying in +1 class only.

Sample

The population of the present study was the adolescents studying in +1 class in the schools located in Patiala city of Punjab. The total sample comprised of 200 students of +1 class taken randomly from the various government and private school of the Patiala city, giving due representation to gender and type of school.

Research Tools Used

In order to collect the data for the present investigation, the following tools were selected and employed by the investigator:

Educational Aspiration Scale by Sharma and Gupta (1996) was used for measuring aspiration of pupils. It contains 45 items designed in paired comparison form. It is a self-explanatory scale and takes about 25 minutes to administer the whole scale. The total score ranges from 0 to 45.

Home Environment Inventory by Mishra (1989) was used to measure the psycho-social climate of home as perceived by children. It provides a measure of the quality and quantity of the cognitive, emotional and social support that has been available to the child within the home. HEI contains 100 items related to ten dimensions of home environment.

Procedure

The data were collected by the investigator herself after getting due permission from the school principals. The students were made aware about the purpose of the study and assured that the information will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. After data collection, the scoring was done as per the instructions given in the respective manual.

Results and discussion

The use of t-test was made to study the gender differences in educational aspirations among adolescents and correlation was used to study the relationship of educational aspirations with ten home environment components.

Gender Differences in Educational Aspirations among Adolescents

The means and SDs along with the t-value for educational aspirations among male and female adolescents are given in the Table 1.

Table 1. Gender differences in Educational Aspirations among Adolescents (N=200)

S. No.	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
1.	Male	100	28.31	6.06	3.07**
2.	Female	100	27.28	5.22	

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

The Table 1 shows that the mean educational aspirations score of female adolescents came out to be 27.78 with SD of 5.22 as compared to male adolescents mean score of 28.31 with SD of 6.06. The t-value testing the significance of mean differences in educational aspirations among male and female adolescents came out to be 3.07 which is significant at 0.01 level. This means that there are significant gender differences in educational aspirations

among adolescents. Further, Male adolescents possess significantly higher educational aspirations than their female counterparts.

Educational Aspirations in Relation to home Environment

The Table 2 shows the coefficient of correlation of educational aspirations and ten dimensions of home environment, namely control, protectiveness, punishment, conformity, social isolation, reward, deprivation of privileges, nurturance, rejection and permissiveness among adolescents. The Table 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation of educational aspirations and home environment dimensions of reward (0.17), nurturance (0.14) and permissiveness (-0.17) are significant at 0.05 level. Further, the table II shows that the coefficient of correlation of home environment dimensions namely deprivation of privileges (-0.25) and rejection (-0.23) is negative and significant at 0.01 level.

It is interesting to note here that educational aspirations among adolescents are negatively and significantly correlated with the negative dimensions of home environment viz. deprivation of privileges, rejection and permissiveness. However, the educational aspirations among adolescents are significantly and positively correlated with positive home environment dimensions of reward and nurturance. It may be concluded that home environment of adolescents in terms of its positive and negative reward mechanisms, has a very important role to play in determining the educational aspirations of adolescents.

Table 2. Educational Aspirations among Adolescents in relation to Home Environment

S. No.	Dimension of Home Environment	R
1.	Control	0.04
2.	Protectiveness	0.01
3.	Punishment	-0.02
4.	Conformity	0.03
5.	Social Isolation	-0.01
6.	Reward	0.17*
7.	Deprivation of Privileges	-0.25**
8.	Nurturance	0.14*
9.	Rejection	-0.23**
10.	Permissiveness	-0.17*

Note: * p < 0.05; **p < 0. 01

Conclusions

The results are suggestive of the fact that male adolescent possess greater educational aspirations than their female counterparts. This may be attributed to the differential treatment which is given to the boys and girls in Indian society. Hence, the preferential treatment and the exposure given to the male children as compared to the female counterparts may be responsible for these results. Male children receive more independence and encouragement than females because of cultural roles assigned to both the sexes in adult life (Verma & Ghadially, 1985). Hence, the educational needs and aspirations of the female adolescents should be identified and nurtured. The results of the present study may be seen in the context of some related research evidences. Grieve (2009) revealed a high level of educational aspirations among urban African-American male adolescents. Non-significant gender differences in aspirations were found by a group of researchers (Strand & Winston, 2008; Talawar & Kumar, 2010). However, female adolescents were found to possess higher educational aspirations (Odell, 1989; Mau & Bikos, 2000; Singh, 2011) than the boys. Though these findings support different hypotheses regarding gender differences, the studies encourage the fact that gender differences had played considerable roles in formulating the educational aspirations of the adolescents.

Home environment was also found to be correlated with the educational aspirations of the adolescents. These results are in line with the findings of Garg et al. (2002) who found that the personal factors like home environment had a strong direct influence on educational aspirations. Marjoribanks (2003) emphasized the family background differences among adolescents' achievement, aspirations and their educational attainment. Though Leigh and Gill (2004) found substantial expansion in the educational aspirations of the adolescent student's, their families' environment and background had played no role that. Li et al. (2006) emphasized the creating conducive home environment conditions for students' high educational achievements and aspirations. Further, the results of the study as reported by Roberts and Moss (2007) showed that there was a negative correlation between family environment and educational aspirations. On the contrary, Singh (2011) revealed that home environment and educational aspirations have no significant relationship with each other in a sample of school students.

The results of the present study have important implications for educationists, counselors and parents. The female students should be provided counseling sessions in order to maintain a higher level of educational aspirations. Parents, teachers and counselors need to be aware of the importance of students having high and stable educational aspirations and performing academically well from as early as elementary and middle school. Counselling sessions should be provided to address school and family issues for students with low aspirations. Counselors can help students understand their options, identify their goals and then get into suitable educational programs (academic, vocational etc.) to enable them to actualize their goals.

The results of the study further emphasize upon the significant role played by home in shaping students' aspirations, no matter what the income level or background of the family is. Hence, parents need to be made aware of the various positive and negative reward mechanisms that can be helpful in enhancing educational aspirations of their wards. It becomes a foremost duty of the parents to make every effort to create a conducive and healthy atmosphere in the home so as to sustain high educational aspirations in children. In a nutshell, it may be said that an understanding of the dynamics of educational aspirations development among adolescents would enable educators, parents and counselors to adopt measures tailored to meet the specific needs of adolescents, thus helping enhance their career opportunities and options. It is very much desired in youth, and especially in adolescents, to have high educational aspirations and ambitions for social and scholastic achievement.

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