



Educational aspiration of adolescent learners: A comparative study in Assam, India

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 6th September 2021, revised 23rd April 2022, accepted 20th April 2023

Abstract

Educational aspiration refers to the educational goals a person sets for himself. Level of educational aspiration means where and how an individual sets his targets for achievement. The present study intends to have a comparative study of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' adolescent learners in terms of gender, locality, involvement of teachers and parental encouragement. Descriptive survey method was employed. 200 samples were collected employing stratified random sampling technique. Data were analyzed using statistical techniques like Mean, SD, t-test and Chi-square (χ^2). The results showed that there is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students of classes XI and XII with respect to gender, locality and involvement of teachers. But significant difference was found between them in case of parental encouragement at 0.01 level of significance. This research is expected to disseminate information to the stakeholders to pay more attention to increase level of educational aspiration of adolescent learners.

Keywords: Educational aspiration, Adolescent learners, Gender, Locality, Parental encouragement.

Introduction

Aspiration refers to a goal or an ambition of the individual that might be achieved through personal effort. Khoo and Ainsley (2005) describe aspiration as a cognitive state that motivates or drives adolescents to strive for academic success¹. Level of aspiration means where and how an individual sets his targets for achievement i.e., the degree of quality of performance which an individual desires to achieve. Boyd explained level of aspiration as an individual's goals or expectation in regard to the goodness of his own future performance for a given task². On the contrary, educational aspiration reflects educational goals an individual sets for himself which encourages and energizes the individual to achieve them³ and represents a relatively abstract, idealistic plan; a person's desire or hope to achieve high levels of education⁴. As a motivating predictor, aspiration level of the students influences their behavior in the educational setting. It is a frame of reference involving self-esteem or alternatively experiences that is the feeling of failure or success⁵.

Education is the only instrument for all round development of the individual. But it has no meaning unless and until the learners have the required amount of educational aspirations. Basically, three groups of educational aspiration exert influence on learners viz., background factor (social and demographic components like age, gender, socio-economic status and family structure), personal factor (personal attitude towards education, school and work) and environmental factor (social support as parental involvement). Researchers have proved that there is a significant relationship between level of educational aspiration and performance of learners. Therefore, 'aspiration' and

'expectation' should always be considered when educational performance of learners is taken for investigation⁶. Adolescence is a crucial period or stage in the process of development of human life leading to maturity or adulthood stage. Occurring rapid psycho-physical changes during this period make the adolescents more sensitive, restless and anxious. G. Stanley Hall, the 'Father of Adolescence' viewed this period as "Storm and Stress"⁷. Amongst the various problems faced by the adolescents, educational problem is also a vital one. Thus, it is the duty of all stakeholders to be sympathetic, supportive and helpful to them and provide opportunities and encouragement to inculcate necessary motivation among them so as to overcome the problem. At all, their level of educational aspiration needs to be increased at any cost for better future which will contribute to the national development in future as a whole.

Assam is situated in the extreme north-eastern part of India. This state lies between 24-8 N latitude and 87-42-E and 96-E longitude and forms the core of the north-eastern region. It has a geographical area of 78, 4381 sq. km. So far education is concerned; it is one of the educationally backward states of India. Out of total 35 districts at present, the upper Assam comprises of six districts namely Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat. The investigator took in account three districts for the present study and considered the adolescent learners studying in class XI and XII in different state government, provincialised, govt. recognised and permitted educational institutions there. An attempt has been made to have a comparative study of level of educational aspiration between the boys' and girls' students by selecting certain variables of educational aspiration.

Review of related literature: Various studies have been conducted by the*researchers in different times on level of educational aspiration of students. The investigator reviewed the following related literatures:

Wilson and Wilson conducted an in-depth study on educational aspirations of male and female students and established that male high school students were significantly higher than by female classmates⁸.

Mau *et al.* showed in their study that male students had significantly less educational aspirations than female students at both the 10th and 12th grades⁹.

Kishor, V. did a study on parental encouragement where he found that private high school students have better parental encouragement and academic achievement than those from government high school students but there is a positive and significant relationship between parental encouragement and academic achievement of government and private high school students¹⁰.

Bashir L. and Kaur R. did a study on interrelation of educational aspiration with school environment of secondary school students and revealed that there exists no significant difference between rural and urban secondary school students in their educational aspiration¹¹.

Alam, M. Md. investigated about educational aspiration and socio-economic status of secondary school students where he showed that educational aspiration is significantly and positively related to socio- economic status of secondary school students¹².

Chawla, M. in her study on educational aspirations of secondary school students in relation to their achievement scores examined that there is no significant difference in educational aspiration of secondary school students with respect to gender and nature of school as government and private¹³.

Raja, A.Senthil undertook a study on level of educational aspiration of high school students where he found low level of educational aspiration among the students and suggested the teachers as well as parents to pay special attention and involve actively in students learning process¹⁴.

Debnath, M. and Singh, A.K. found no significant differences in boys and girls' educational aspiration but found positive relationship between educational aspiration of secondary school students with locality and academic achievement¹⁵.

Objectives: i. To have a comparative study of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students. ii. To compare the level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students with respect to their – (a) Locality of educational institutions. (b) Teachers' involvement. (c) Parental encouragement.

Hypotheses: Based on the objectives following null hypotheses were formulated;

Ho₁: There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to locality of educational institutions.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to involvement of teachers'.

Ho₄: There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to encouragement of parents.

Delimitations of the study: i. The study is confined to only three districts of upper Assam. ii. The sample has been delimited to only 200 students. iii. The investigation is restricted to adolescent learners only i.e., students of higher secondary level including classes XI and XII. iv. Only state government, provincialised (run by state govt. fund), govt. recognised and permitted educational institutions have been considered. No private, venture and central government educational institutions are taken into account.

Methodology

Method used in the study: The present study is descriptive in nature. In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, descriptive survey method of research was used as it encompasses the information about the methods of research, population, sample, data gathering techniques (tools) and data treatment techniques that are the basis of the research and depicts a clear portrait of entire study.

Population: The present study comprises of entire state government, provincialised, govt. recognised and permitted educational institutions (classes IX, X, XII & XII) affiliated to Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC), Assam in the three districts of upper Assam namely Sivasagar, Dibrugar and Tinsukia. There are total 186 such educational institutions under ASHEC in these three districts. The students of class XI & XII, their teachers' and parents are included in the population.

Sample: Out of total 186 state government, provincialised, govt. recognised and permitted educational institutions, the study was conducted with 12% from each of the three districts i.e., 22 educational institutions were selected for sample. Total 200 students studying in class XI and class XII in the academic session 2019-2020 were selected randomly in a homogeneous manner as sample in which 100 were male and 100 were female students.

Sampling design: Stratified random sampling technique was employed to collect the requisite samples for the study.

Tools used: Two kinds of tools were used to collect the primary data for the present study: i. Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) constructed and standardized by Yashmin Ghani Khan was used to test of level of aspiration of sampled students. The test-retest reliability and Split-half reliability of this test were 0.92 and 0.88 respectively. It was validated against Dr. M.H. Singh's Level of Aspiration Scale (LAS) and Dr. Govind Tiwari's Coefficient of Aspiration Scale (CAS). The co-efficient of co-relation was 0.66. ii. A self-structured questionnaire containing 30 items was employed to have the information pertaining to the involvement of teachers (17 items) and parental encouragement (13 items) in educational aspiration of the students. This tool was administered to the try out group of 40 students of classes XI and XII. Test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the tool and co-efficient of correlation was found to be 0.82. The content validity of the tool was tested in consultation with some research experts of Dibrugarh University, Assam.

For this study, the secondary data were collected from different sources like books, journals, periodicals, internet etc.

Statistical techniques used: The investigator utilised some statistical techniques to check the authenticity of the collected data. For descriptive analysis Mean and SD and for differential analysis t-test and chi-square test was wielded.

Result and discussion

After collecting data for the present study they were classified, tabulated and analysed objective wise in the following ways –

Objective 1: To have a comparative study of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students.

Hypothesis (Ho₁): There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students.

Table-1 depicts the mean, standard deviation and standard error of difference scores of higher secondary class XI and XII students with gender wise break up on level of educational aspiration. When the t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of both the groups the t-value was found to be 1.17 which is not significant at both the levels of significance (0.05 and 0.01). It indicates that gender (boys' and girls') has no influence on determining the level of educational aspiration of the students. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) is retained.

Objective 2 (a): To compare the level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students with respect to their locality of educational institutions.

Hypothesis (Ho₂): There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to locality of educational institutions.

Table-2 depicts the locality wise (urban and rural) level of educational aspiration of boys' and girls' higher secondary students. When the Chi-square (χ^2) test was employed to find the relationship of locality of educational institutions and level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students, the Chi-values were found to be 0.68 and 0.98 in urban and rural area respectively that are not significant at both the levels (0.05 and 0.01). It indicates that locality of educational institutions have no influence on determining the level of educational aspirations of students' irrespective of sexes. Hence, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) is retained.

Objective 2 (b): To compare the level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students with respect to involvement of their teachers'.

Hypothesis (Ho₃): There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to involvement of teachers'.

Table-3 depicts the mean, standard deviation and standard error of difference scores of higher secondary class XI and XII students with respect to the involvement of teachers' on level of educational aspiration. When the t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of both the groups the t-value was found to be 0.39 which is not significant at both the levels (0.05 and 0.01). It indicates that involvement of teachers has no influence on determining the level of educational aspiration between the boys' and girls' higher secondary class XI and XII students. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho₃) is retained.

Objective 2 (c): To compare the level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students with respect to encouragement of their parents.

Hypothesis (Ho₄): There is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students in corresponding to encouragement of parents.

Table-4 depicts the mean, standard deviation and standard error of difference scores of higher secondary class XI and XII students with respect to the encouragement of parents' on level of educational aspiration. When the t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of both the groups the t-value was found to be 6.58 which is significant at 0.01 level. It indicates that girls' students' of higher secondary Class XI and XII have better parental encouragement on level of educational aspiration than that of the boys' students. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho₄) is rejected.

Table-1: Gender wise level of educational aspiration of students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	t-value	Result
Level of educational aspiration	Boy'	100	29.21	11.56	1.46	1.17	Not Significant
	Girls'	100	30.92	7.81			

Table-2: Locality of educational institutions and level of educational aspiration of students.

Variable	Locality	Gender	N	df	Chi-value	Result
Educational institutions	Urban	Boys'	64	1	0.68	Not significant
		Girls'	54			
	Rural	Boys'	36	1	0.98	Not significant
		Girls'	46			

Table-3: Teachers' involvement and level of educational aspiration of students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	t-value	Result
Involvement of teachers	Boy'	100	82.21	29.32	4.07	0.39	Not significant
	Girls'	100	86.79	27.70			

Table-4: Parental encouragement and level of educational aspiration of students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	t-value	Result
Encouragement of parents	Boy'	100	55.68	8.90	1.18	6.58	Significant at .01 level
	Girls'	100	63.45	7.80			

Discussion: The present study revealed that gender is not a factor in respect of the level of educational aspiration of boys' and girls' higher secondary classes XI and XII students. It may be due to the consciousness of parents regarding education of their children who never want to draw a demarcation line among their children as male or female. Further, in the age of explosion of knowledge of today, girls' realise themselves as efficient enough as boys' in all spheres of walk which has been fuelled by various governmental and non-governmental programmes on girl child education and women empowerment taken frequently in many ways. Quaglin asserts that the student's aspiration is not a component which can be taken for gender. Further, aspiration level of students is at the heart of students' achievement and positive school climate¹⁶. Chawla and Debnath & Singh also found the similar result in their study. This study observed that locality of educational institutions whether urban or rural has similar influence on the level of educational aspirations of boys' and girls' students^{15,17}. Awareness and strong faith of parents upon children's education may be are of certain elements in such cases for which parents irrespective of areas provide similar exposure. The researchers such as Bashir

and Kaur; Raja and Alam agreed with their findings in this regard. Involvement of teachers in determining the level of educational aspiration of boys' and girls' students was found similar. It is, perhaps, the teachers treat their students with equal amount of inspiration and encouragement for better performance without any gender discrimination. Another significant aspect revealed in the present study that the girls' have better parental encouragement on higher level of educational aspiration than that of the boys' students. It may be due to the fact that girls' are more sincere, obedient and loyal to their parents in comparison to the boys'. Moreover, girls' can be motivated extrinsically with a little effort in comparison to boys'. This result is corroborated with the findings of George and Bashir that girls' have a higher level of educational aspiration than that of their boys' complements^{18,19}.

Educational implications: Keeping in view of the study the following educational implication are forwarded by the investigator for the present study: i. Congenial environment both at home and school should be provided to the adolescent boys' and girls' students by the stakeholders so as to increase

their level of educational aspirations. ii. Educational institutions should keep an eye towards frequent arrangement of guidance and counseling programmes for the students in order to build self-reliance and parents should also be invited to participate. iii. Students should be encouraged instantly to develop intrinsic motivation amongst them. Teachers and parents need to be enthusiastic, highly active and alert, positive minded, adoptable to increase the level of educational aspirations of the adolescent learners. iv. Parents should pay special attention to the adolescent boys' also unlike their girls' learners. They must get involved in children's learning process with certain values like kind-hearted, cooperative, sympathetic, creative and explorative. v. The psycho-physical changes of the adolescents should be well understood by the teachers, parents and elders of the society in order to make them free from unnecessary stress and worries. It will lead the adolescent learners to be high aspirant with building confidence among them.

Scope for further study: i. The present study was confined to only four districts of upper Assam with relatively a small sample size. If a wider geographical area and larger sample is chosen, the validity of these findings may further be sustained. ii. A comparative study can be undertaken between the boys' and girls' students of government and private educational institutions. iii. A correlative study can be made on influence of home and school environment with respect to the level of educational aspiration of undergraduate students.

Conclusion

Educational aspiration is of paramount importance to the adolescent learners especially in the higher secondary level. It is an important variable in predicting academic achievement and may be seen as an element in academic achievement motivation, focusing as they do on the desire for success and the development of goals to succeed in particular educational fields or to gain a particular degree. The present study reveals that there is no significant difference of level of educational aspiration between boys' and girls' higher secondary students of classes XI and XII with respect to gender, locality and involvement of teachers. But significant difference was found between them in case of parental encouragement at 0.01 level of significance. It can be concluded that it is need of the hour to take certain kinds of positive and constructive measures by all the stakeholders so as to enhance the level of educational aspirations of our adolescents learners irrespective of sexes.

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