

SOCIAL CLASS AND OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF RURAL YOUTH

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This study identified the occupational aspirations of rural high school students. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires from 229 high school seniors in six high schools in rural areas of Faisalabad District. As anticipated, social class, grades and parental encouragement were found to be positively correlated with occupational aspirations while family size was found to be negatively correlated in the case of females. Social class and parental encouragement proved to be good predictors while family size and grade proved to be weak predictors of occupational aspirations. Male-female differences were found when social class, grades and parental encouragement were correlated with occupational aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that students belonging to high social class carry high educational and occupational aspirations. The motivation to advance in the economic structure is often very low among lower class people. In Wisconsin, Sewell, Haller and Strauss (1957) studied level of educational and occupational aspirations associated with social class of 4187 randomly selected non-farm seniors in 1947-48. They found that at all intelligence levels, students with high status families were more likely to have higher level of educational and occupational aspirations.

Bennett and Gist (1964) studied career plans of 800 urban high school students in Missouri, U. S. A. To them only occupational plans varied significantly with social class. Reissman (1959) concluded that striving for success was the strongest among those who belong to the middle or upper classes.

Caro (1966) studied youth's occupational aspirations in relation to social class and concluded that those from high social strata tended to aspire for more prestigious occupation than those from lower strata.

Treiman (1977) points out that the division of labour gives rise to differences among occupations with respect to knowledge, skills, economic control and authority.

The present study is an attempt to determine the occupation aspirations of high school students in relation to their social class origin. Student's occupational aspirations will also be determined in relation to their family size, grades and parental encouragement.

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present study :

Hypothesis 1. Students of high social class families will have higher occupational aspirations than students of lower social class families.

Hypothesis 2. Students from small families will have higher occupational aspirations than students from large families.

Hypothesis 3. Students having high grades will have higher occupational aspirations than students having low grades.

Hypothesis 4. Students with more parental encouragement will have higher occupational aspirations than students with less parental encouragement.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted in the rural areas of District Faisalabad. The selection of the district was arbitrary, but typical of many districts where both farm and non-farm employment opportunities are limited and students seek employment in areas other than their home communities. The population for the study consisted of high school seniors studying in six high schools, three each for boys and girls. These schools were located in Chak No. 2/JB, and Chak No. 103/JB.

A very carefully designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire was pre-tested and some minor modifications were made before actual data collection. Questionnaire was administered in a class room situation, 229 students completed the questionnaire for this study in August and September of 1987.

To analyse data, methods of gamma statistics and full regression were used.

The reason for using gamma statistics was that it gave us direction and magnitude of the relationship between two variables, see Nachmias and Nachmias (1981).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data presented in Table 1 show correlation between predictor variables and the dependent variable, occupational aspiration, when controlled for sex (male and females).

Table 1. *Gamma association between occupational aspirations and predictor variables by sex of the respondents*

Predictor variables	Males	Females
Social class	.48*	.60*
Family size	.17	-.28
Grades	.28	.19
Parental encouragement	.38	.40*

*Chi-square value significant at .05 probability level.

The data reveal that a positive correlation exists between social class and occupational aspirations for both males and females. Correlation between social class and occupational aspirations is positive and significant at chi-square critical limit set at .05 both for males and females. The degree of association is .48 for males and .60 for females. This shows that we are unable to reject our hypothesis 1.

Data in Table 1 reveal that family size and occupational aspirations are positively correlated in the case of males but correlation is insignificant. In the case of females, the correlation between family size and occupational aspirations is negative but insignificant. Thus we are unable to accept our hypothesis 2.

Grades are positively correlated with occupational aspirations, showing that students obtaining higher grades have high aspirations for upper class occupations. The degree of associations is .28 in the case of males and .19 in the case of females but the association is weak. Thus we are unable to accept our hypothesis 3.

Parental encouragement is positively correlated with occupational aspirations, showing that students having high parental encouragement have high aspirations for upper class occupations. The degree of association is .37 in the case of males and .40 in the case of females, and are significant at Chi-square critical limit set at .05 level. Thus we are unable to reject hypothesis 4.

In Table 2, regression tests between occupational aspirations of males and their social class, family size, grades and parental encouragement are presented. The data show that in the case of males, social class, family size and grades proved to be strong predictors whereas parental encouragement proved to be weak predictor of occupational aspirations. Adjusted R square is .125, showing that

Table 2 *Regression of occupational aspirations on social class, family size, grades and parental encouragement when controlling for males*

Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient	T(DF = 160)	Prob.
Social Class	.2473	8.489	.00063
Family Size	-.1667	-2.373	.01784
Grades	.1743	2.636	.00932
Parental Encouragement	.906	0.763	.44679

Adjusted R Square = .125

F. Ratio = 6.842 (Significant at probability level .000041).

about 12.5 percent variance in occupational aspirations is explained by social class, family size, grades and parental encouragement. F. ratio is 6.842 which is significant at probability level of .000041, showing that overall the regression model is significant.

Table 3 presents regression of occupational aspirations on social class, family size, grades and parental encouragement in the case of females. Data show that social class, family size, and grades proved to be weak predictors while parental encouragement proved to be strong predictor of occupational aspirations. Regression coefficient of parental encouragement is .3210, showing a positive and significant relationship between parental encouragement and occupational aspirations of females. Adjusted R square is .023,

Table: 3 *Regression of occupational aspirations on social class, family size, grades and parental encouragement when controlling for females*

Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient	T(DF = 59)	Prob.
Social Class	-.0069	-.0063	.95035
Family Size	.1362	1.041	.30234
Grades	.0679	.763	.44822
Parental Encouragement	.3210	2.109	.03921

Adjusted R Square = .023

F. ratio = 1.372 (Insignificant)

showing that about 2.3 percent variance in occupational aspirations is being explained by all the independent variables. F. ratio is 1.372 (insignificant) showing that overall regression model is insignificant.

CONCLUSION

When social class was correlated with occupational aspirations, a positive and strong correlation was found. Our hypothesis was based on the notion that rural high school students from high social class would have high occupational aspirations. The results were in agreement with Sewell, Haller and Strauss (1957); Bennett and Gist (1984). Caro (1966) Male-Female differences were found when social class was correlated with occupational aspirations. Degree of association was stronger for females than males.

Family size proved to be a weak predictor of occupational aspirations. The correlation between family size and occupational aspirations is positive and weak in the case of males whereas it is negative and insignificant in the case of females. The finding of the study did not agree with Burchinal (1961); Christianson *et al.* (1962); Halsey and Gardner (1953). No male-female differences were found when family size and occupational aspirations were correlated.

Grades, another predictor variable, proved to be weak predictor of occupational aspirations. Correlation between grades and occupational aspiration is positive for both males and females, but is insignificant. Male-female differences were found when grades and occupational aspirations were

correlated. Degree of association between grades and social class was stronger in the case of males than females.

Parental encouragement proved to be a good predictor of occupational aspirations. Parental encouragement was positively and significantly related with occupational aspirations for both males and female. The finding of the study agreed with Rehberg and Westby (1967). Sex differential was found when parental encouragement was correlated with occupational aspirations. Degree of association between parental encouragement and occupational aspirations was stronger in the case of females than males. This seems true in Pakistan when more females are joining colleges and universities as compared to previous years and are competing with males in the job market.

The study has a limitation. Since it is based on small sample, it is not possible to draw broad generalization about the students population of Pakistan. However, the study can be repeated in different areas of Pakistan for drawing broad based generalizations.

SUGGESTIONS

Occupational aspirations have been found low among rural youth when compared with their counterparts in urban areas, see Burchinal (1961); Burchinal (1965). It seems that many culturally determined characteristics of the rural youth themselves work against their having high level of occupational aspirations. However, keeping Pakistani situation in view following suggestions may be considered.

1. Rural youth know less about occupational opportunities. Occupational guidance programme should be especially helpful in making rural youth aware of the range of job appropriate to their talent and informing them of the educational requirements of these jobs.
2. Programme of occupational counselling should be introduced in rural high schools. This should involve not only rural youths but their parents as well.
3. Rural areas are deprived of facilities of higher education and majority of the poor students can not afford to attend college and other vocational institutes located in urban areas. More college and vocational institutions should be established in the rural areas for the socio-economic uplift of rural youth.

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