

DETERMINANTS OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS – A LITERATURE STUDY**Article Particulars**

Received: 20.03.2018

Accepted: 07.04.2018

Published: 28.04.2018

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Career aspiration is the path in which one wishes to take his/her career. An aspiration as such is a construct that is influenced by a wide range of social, cultural and psychological factors. Among these numerous variables influencing career aspirations of students, the extensively studied ones like personality, gender, family involvement etc are reviewed and the notable aspects are presented

Keywords: *Career aspiration, influencing variables, social, cultural and psychological factors*

Introduction

Career aspirations develop in a person at a young age and remain relatively stable throughout his life. The decision of career choice and aspirations is complex and is influenced by numerous variables. Common influences include gender, self-efficacy and parental expectations and inputs. Some common career aspirations may be thirst to enhance professional skills in order to advance in the organization, attaining job security, growing as an expert in the chosen field, obtaining autonomy in the work and better work-life balance.

Early Theories on Career Aspirations

Bandura's (1975) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposes that learning experience is formed as a result of interactions between person and environment. The so-formed learning experience creates an impact on one's perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations in one's career pursuit. From the relevant self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations develops career related interests, goals and aspirations.

Wisconsin model developed by Sewell, Haller and Portes (1969) postulates that levels of educational and occupational aspirations affect success levels in education and occupation. The levels of aspirations are indirectly influenced by the parents'

socio-economic status and one's mental ability through the influence of academic performance and encouragement from significant others.

Weidman (1989) proposed a conceptual framework describing the influence of socialization on career choices and aspirations. Students enter college with their own background characteristics like social Economic Status, values, preferences and personal goals; but later get influenced by social relationship with friends, college faculty and parents. As a result of their influence, they either change or maintain their values, aspirations and personal goals which they possessed when they entered college.

Gender and Career Aspirations

Gender stereotyping is a critical aspect while considering career aspirations. Students, whose parents say certain careers are for men and certain others are for women, tend to adopt such attitudes themselves. This has a direct impact on their career preferences.

Among the wide range of career choices available, females prefer careers like nursing, secretarial, catering and clerical jobs. On the other hand, males prefer careers like engineering & Medicine. Gottfredson (2005) puts forth that students tend to eliminate occupational choices based on gender & Prestige levels. For Instance, female students tend to avoid careers that are masculine in nature such as mining & they also eliminate choices that have low social prestige status.

Research also shows that girls aspire for a narrower range of occupations than boys as they think many jobs are unsuitable for them. On the other hand, boys have a better understanding of the occupations and they look at more occupational opportunities than girls (Creed, Conlon & Zimmer, 2007)

Schools are in the most strategic positions to impact on career aspirations and expectations. The results of a study in Kenyan secondary schools by Kithyo&Petrina (2002) show that boys tend to be more equipped and oriented towards science and technology. Also boys in mixed schools are motivated to enroll and perform well in these subjects. In girls' schools, technology based subjects are not offered. But they offer domestic sciences and secretarial subjects. While getting educated in such schools, these students at the time of choosing careers have internalized gender norms. Males and females tend to take different career decisions as a result of their socialization experiences and the ways in which the available opportunities are structured to them by social forces (Astin, 1984)

Personality and Career Aspirations

A theory proposed by Holland (1997) categorizes people into different career types like realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising and artistic. Realistic people are physically strong and they are best for practical careers such as farming,

truck driving and construction. Investigative people are apt for careers in mathematics and science. Social individuals perform well in people oriented professions such as teaching, social work and counseling. Conventional category of people is well suited for jobs like sub-ordinates. Enterprising people are good at persuading people and so they enter careers such as sales, politics and management. Artistic people avoid interactions and prefer careers such as arts and writing.

Family Involvement and Career Aspirations

Researches show that parents who have less financial resources tend to possess lower aspirations for their children and young people from socially poor background have lower aspiration than their counterparts (Schoon, 2006). Salami (2006) in his work found that family involvement is one of the most significant predictors of career aspirations in gender dominated occupations. Here, family involvement describes the extent to which parents provide encouragement, approval and financial support in matters relating to children's career plans. The variable taken to study family involvement were family size, parental occupation, parental supervision, career shaping and influence from other siblings.

Career Aspirations in the Developing Countries

Moody (1996) conducted a study among university students of China to find out their career aspirations and expectations. His study focused on identifying how far career aspirations and expectations are influenced by five predicted variables- family background, geographic location, the level of educational institutions, academic major and gender. In general considerations, students tend to aspire to as much higher a career as possible as that of their parents. This general trend was notable in China as family background in the form of parental influence had a significant impact on career and educational aspirations.

In Indonesia, an educational and career aspirations study was carried out by Smith and Carpenter (1974) taking 554 students from three public universities. The results of the study show that only students from high status families have the opportunity to attain higher education. It was also found that the highest economic status occupations perceived by students were private industry, private trade and medicine.

Career Aspirations in the Developed Countries

In the US, a study of occupational and educational aspirations was carried out by Howe & Weaver, 1977, Arbona&Novy, 1991 &Luzo, 1992). The result findings concerning occupational aspirations showed that there was a significant difference between the occupational aspirations of the white and black students with the white students exhibiting lower occupation aspirations compared to their counterparts.

Chung, Loeb & Gonzo (1996) studied a group of college men to discover factors predicting educational and career aspirations. The four independent variables considered for the study were background, behaviour, personality and environment. The results were consistent with the status attainment theory. The socio-economic level of father's occupation had a positive impact on career aspirations of the respondents.

A research study by Weidman(1979) was done taking prestige of career chosen as dependent variable and family background, parental socialization, career values, career preferences, college choice, departmental environment, college attainment, assessment of college experience and upper division career values as independent variables. The research indicated that parental socialization had little to do with career orientation and aspirations of the college student.

Conclusion

On analysis of the review, it is understood that career decisions differ among males and females as consequence of their socialization experiences. People's in-built personality also has a significant impact on one's career choice and success. In general, family aspects like parents' education, social status and their occupation play a major role in formation of one's career aspirations. Other contributing factors include peer influence, life style, aptitude and values, health status and prestige attached to career.

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