

*Educational Aspirations and Expectations of Rural
Youths in Rautahat District of Nepal*

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Vital information on rural youths in Nepal, such as their educational aspirations and expectations is still wanting. One may ask several questions about the rural youths. Such as what are their educational aspirations and expectations? Answer to these questions are still lacking.

In 1978-79 the enrollment of children was 65.3, 18.6 and 13.7 percent at primary, lower secondary and secondary levels respectively (Gurung in *The Children of Nepal*, 1981: 88). This low and decreasing enrollment highlights the increasing drop-out ratio of the youths in the country. From this, it is inferred that a high proportion of our youths belong under the category of out-of school and no-schooling youths.

Hence, the situation is rather grave that the misery in youths lie in the corner of the Nation. If we look towards education and culture, the drop-out and the no-schooling youths remain the number one problem of the elementary schools in spite of free elementary (Prathamik) education. While this drop-out and no-schooling pattern is distressing, it is worsened by the fact that most are unskilled and are, therefore, either unemployed or underemployed. This is because, the phenomenon is at its height when the youngsters finish elementary education, especially in the rural areas. Like other developing countries, youths constitute a major percentage of the population in Nepal. These youths do not get adequate opportunities to gain knowledge and to develop skills to make themselves responsible and productive citizens. There is an urgent need, therefore, to provide them with the necessary opportunities and alternatives for their proper development.

In this line, Castillo (1971: 16) opined that as a residual category, the out-of school youths ipso facto tends to be viewed as a problem. Such a conception unfortunately reinforces merely the stereo-typical belief of the common man, which may be stated simply as "in as much as they are of school age and they are not in school, then efforts must be made to get them back to school; and if that is not possible then the second best thing would be to devise programmes which would compensate for their lack of schooling."

Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to determine the educational aspirations and expectations of rural youths in Rautahat district which lies on South-Central Terai belt of the country. First and foremost this paper aims to define these two variables. Educational aspiration refers to level of schooling the youths want to attain. Whereas, educational expectation refers to level of schooling the youths could have attained, considering their economic and other opportunities.

Selection of Village Panchayats and Respondents

Out of the nine Panchayats which had high schools, three were randomly selected. The three Village Panchayats were Potihahi Bharahari, Santapur, and Pipra Bhalohia. The following were the criteria for the selection of the study area

- a Village Panchayat having a high school;
- a school within the Rautahat district; and
- agriculture as the main occupation (livelihood of the populace).

From the list of three different sampling population, (in-school, out-of-school, and no-schooling youths) a proportionate sample of 10 percent from each category was drawn using random tables. These constitute the respondents. Finally, 122 youths became the respondents of this study.

Hypothesis of the Study

To determine the educational aspirations and expectations of the rural youths the following null hypothesis (H_0) was formulated.

The educational aspirations and expectations of rural youths are not associated with the following independent variables which were taken into consideration in this study.

Demographic-socio-economic factors:

1. age
2. sex
3. civil status
4. sibling position
5. religion
6. caste
7. level of schooling
8. size of farming land of parents
9. tenure status of parents
10. income of parents.

Family Background

1. Educational attainment of parents.
2. Occupations of parents.
3. Number of Children.
4. Parents' influence on the youth.

Research Design and Research Instrument

The research design followed in the study was the Ex-Post Facto Design, because the researcher was not in a position to control the variables as they already took place.

The data were classified, and analysed in terms of their statistical meaning and significance taking into consideration the objective of the study. The Chi-Square (X^2) statistic was computed to test the validity of the null hypotheses. The hypotheses were accepted or rejected to 0.05 level of significance.

Method of Analysis (Categorization of Variables)

Age was dichotomised into teen or young. Respondents whose age were 15-19 were classified as teen, while those whose age ranged from 20-25 were classified under young category.

Sex was categorised as either male or female.

Civil status was categorised as either single or married.

Sibling position was classified as eldest, middle, and youngest children of the family.

Religion was categorized as either Hindu or Muslim.

Caste was categorized as Brahmin (or equivalent), Kshyatriya (or equivalent), Vaishya (or equivalent) and Sudra (or equivalent).

Level of schooling was classified into four groups based on the number of years of schooling, namely, illiterate, primary (1-3 yrs. of schooling) middle (4-7 yrs. of schooling) and high (8-10 yrs. of schooling and above).

Size of farming land of parents was classified into small landholding (less than 1 ha.), medium (1-5 ha.), and large (above 5 ha.).

Tenure status of parents was categorized into owner cultivator, owner and tenant, and tenant.

Income of parents was the annual income of the family which was categorized into low (up to Rs. 2,500/-), middle (Rs. 2,501/-, Rs. 5,500/-) and high Rs. 5.510/- and above).

Occupation of parents was classified into farming, employed, business, housekeeping and labour. Respondents who were engaged in farming

were classified under farming. Those who were employed in any kind of employment were classified under employed. Respondents who were engaged in any kind of village business such as vending were classified under business. All kind of farm and non-farm labours were classified under labour.

Number of children was categorized into small family (4 children and less), medium family (5-7 children) and large family (8 children and above).

Educational aspiration was dichotomised into low or high. Respondents who aspired no interest to study and those who aspired for primary, middle school, and vocational education (1 yr. of schooling after 7th yrs.) were placed under low. The respondents who aspired for high school and college education were placed under high aspiration.

Educational expectation was dichotomized into low or high. Respondents who expected no interest to study and those who expected for primary middle school and vocational education (1 yr. of schooling after 7th yrs.) were placed under low. The respondents who expected for high school & college were placed under high expectation.

Selected Factors and Level of Educational

Aspirations and Expectations of Rural Youths

It was hypothesized that the level of rural youths' educational aspirations and expectations would not be affected by demographic-socio-economic factors and family background factors. However, the Chi-square independence revealed that civil status, sibling position, level of schooling, level of schooling of fathers and mothers, tenure status of parents, size of farming land of parents, income of parents, number of children, parents' influence on educational expectation, parent's influence on occupational aspiration, and parent's influence on occupational expectation were significantly related to the rural youth's educational aspiration and expectation.

Caste was found to be significantly related to the rural youth's level of educational aspiration and expectation. Whereas, in the case of the youth's educational expectation, religion, occupation of father, and parent's influence on educational aspiration were found to be associated. The Chi-square test revealed that religion and parent's influence on educational aspiration on the youth were significantly related to the rural youth's level of educational expectation. Occupation of father was found to be especially important. (Tables 1 & 2).

Civil Status

The educational aspiration and expectation of the respondents were highly affected by their civil status; implying that the educational aspiration and expectation of the respondents who were single were "high"

Table 1: Chi-square values for the test of relationship between the Independent Variables and level of educational aspiration of rural youths.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	X ² VALUES	DF	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
<u>Demographic-Socio-Economic Factors</u>			
Age	1.20	1	ns
Sex	1.91	1	ns
Civil Status	47.91	1	**
Sibling Position	12.22	2	**
Religion	3.91	1	ns
Caste	13.13	3	*
Level of Schooling	36.06	3	**
Tenure Status of Parents	23.74	2	**
Size of Farming Land of Parents	50.43	2	**
Income of Parents	27.45	2	**
<u>Family Background</u>			
Level of Schooling of Father	54.37	3	**
Level of Schooling of Mother	19.41	2	**
Occupation of Father	7.04	3	ns
Occupation of Mother	2.92	2	ns
Number of Children	56.06	2	**
Parents' Influence on Educational Aspiration of the Children	2.40	1	ns
Parents' Influence on Educational Expectation of the Children	17.96	1	**
Parents' Influence on Occupational Aspiration of the Children	28.23	1	**
Parents' Influence on Occupational Expectation of the Children	40.22	1	**

* Significant.

**Highly Significant.

ns Not Significant.

Table 2: Chi-square Values for the Test of Relationship between the Independent Variables and Level of Educational Expectation of the Rural Youths.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	X ² VALUES	DF	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
<u>Demographic-Socio-Economic Factors</u>			
Age	1.08	1	ns
Sex	2.09	1	ns
Civil Status	33.00	1	**
Sibling Position	29.03	2	**
Religion	6.32	1	*
Caste	9.66	3	*
Level of Schooling	29.35	3	**
Tenure Status of Parents	17.12	2	**
Size of Farming Land of Parents	56.70	2	**
Income of Parents	23.46	2	**
<u>Family Background</u>			
Level of Schooling of Father	44.73	3	**
Level of Schooling of Mother	20.87	2	**
Occupation of Father	20.16	3	**
Occupation of Mother	4.61	2	ns
Number of Children	29.97	2	**
Parents' Influence on Educational Aspiration of the Children	4.94	1	*
Parents' Influence on Educational Expectation of the Children	12.35	1	**
Parents' Influence on Occupational Aspiration of the Children	24.23	1	**
Parents' Influence on Occupational Expectation of the Children	54.44	1	**

* Significant.

** Highly Significant.

ns Not Significant.

compared to those who were married. The relationship between the two is direct and positive; that is, if the respondent is single, the higher is his educational aspiration and expectation. It is usually presumed in Nepalese society that a single person is more free than a married. One He has less responsibility relating to family affairs. He is free to think only about himself. Thus, it is safe to assume that the rural youths who are single are more likely to aspire and to expect higher education than those who are married.

Sibling Position

Statistically, educational aspiration and expectation of the youth were found to be influenced by his sibling position. The inference that may be made from this observation is that the older (eldest) ones have more responsibilities in the family. In some cases they have to give up their education to be able to acquire employment so that they can support the family including the education of their younger brothers and sisters. In this case, the relationship between the two was found negative; that is, if the respondent is middle or younger, the higher is his educational aspiration and expectation.

Religion

The educational expectation of rural youths was affected by their religion. The majority of the respondents were Hindus. Chi-square revealed that those who were Hindus have higher expectations than those who are Muslims. Generally, in the Nepalese society, the Hindus belong to the upper strata. They have more exposure in society. So, it can be concluded that due to their religion, they can expect more in their education as compared to the Muslims.

Caste

The Chi-square test revealed that belonging to a certain caste significantly influenced the level of educational aspiration and expectation of the rural youths. This finding implies that the caste of the youth affected his educational aspiration and expectation. Youths, who came from Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya had high educational aspirations and expectations as compared to those in the lowest caste, Sudra.

The variations in the level of educational aspiration and expectation of the respondents with varying castes could perhaps be explained in terms of their social status and more exposure to society. The upper caste people have higher prestige in society. Presumably, they have better exposure to the outside world. They perhaps become more knowledgeable and have a better grasp of the importance of education.

The Sudra belongs to the lower stratum in the social stratification. Generally, the Sudra used to perform functions which pay much less. Though they might have been exposed to the importance of education, they cannot afford the same. In Nepalese society, the thinking is that "why

do you think if you cannot afford?" It may be argued that due to these deeply ingrained values in society they are inhibited from aspiring to or expecting higher education.

Level of Schooling

The Chi-square test revealed that the level of schooling of youths was significantly related to the level of educational aspiration and expectation. This means that educational attainment affects the level of educational aspiration and expectation to a great extent. The relationship between the two is direct and positive; that is, the higher the educational attainment of the rural youth, the higher the level of his educational aspiration and expectation. This is to be expected since high educational attainment is usually associated with better performance in any undertaking. It is presumed that an educated person possesses better thinking. Thus, it can be assumed that the rural youths with middle or high school education can visualize more than that of their illiterate or primary educated fellows. So, they aspire for and expect high education.

Tenure Status of Parents

The Chi-square result revealed that youths whose parents were owner-cultivators had high educational aspiration and expectation as compared to those youths whose parents were owners and tenants, and tenants.

From this, it may be presumed that the owner-cultivators cultivate their own land, harvest more, are economically better off and thus possess high status compared to the owners and tenants, and tenants. They are in a better position to send their children to school. Hence, their children might have shown high educational aspiration. Though their expectation was lower than what they aspired for, it was still high compared to the children of the other two groups (owners and tenants; and tenants).

Size of Farming Land of Parents'

It was found that the children from medium-landholding families had high educational aspiration and expectation compared to those of large and small-landholding families. Though the former expected less than what they aspired for, it was still high compared to the latter two groups.

From this, the following argument can be presented. Youths from the large-landholding families are from comparatively higher income groups. They have less strain and stress in their life. They tend to be more easy-going in their ways.

On the other hand, the youths from small-landholdings though they aspired for higher education might not have expected much because of their economic limitations.

Youths from middle-landholdings are from the middle-class family. They experienced hard times in their struggle to maintain the family, as well as to fulfill their aspirations and expectations. They are hard-working and also have comparatively better standing in society. The struggle in their lives might have made them realize the importance of education for upward mobility. They know how hard their parents have tried to support them in their education. This might have made them aspire and expect more as compared to the youths of the other two groups.

Income of Parents

The relationship of youths' educational aspiration and expectation and the income of parents were found highly significant. Chi-square result showed that youths from the middle-income family had high educational aspiration and expectation as compared to high and low-income families. Though the youths from high and middle-income families could expect equally, youths from low-income groups had very low expectation.

The findings may seem to be in order. In most cases the low-income groups have a hand-to-mouth existence. The parents are usually not in a position to support their children's education. Even though some of the children aspire for high education, they cannot expect it. The youths from high-income group might have an easy-going life. They are not faced with the hand-to-mouth problem. The parents' property is in the back of their lives. They might have thought that they do have their parents' property to support them. This might be one of the reasons why they give less importance to education.

Youths from the middle-income group might be in the stream of struggle. It is a question of survival. They know that their parents had to face hard times to support their education. If they do not perform well, their parents will not support them further. Family situation might have influenced them to realize the importance of education. They might have regarded education as a passport for a job and, ultimately, as support for their family in the long run. This might have influenced them to aspire for and expect higher education than the other two income groups.

Level of Schooling of Parents

In both cases, parents' level of schooling and youths' educational aspiration and expectation were found highly significant. The Chi-square result revealed that as the level of youths' parents' educational attainment increased, a greater number of respondents tended to have high aspiration and expectation.

From this, it can be argued that educated parents were more knowledgeable. They gave importance to education, and they were in a better position to analyze and finalize their children's situations as compared to illiterate and less educated parents. They realized that education can uplift them to a better social standing. In spite of their economic limitations, the educated parents' children could aspire and expect more, when compared to illiterate and primary educated parents.

Occupation of Father

Educational expectation was high among children whose fathers' occupation was farming and employee as compared to the children of those fathers who were small village businessmen and labourers.

Therefore, it is safe to hypothesize that parents who had large land-holdings and who were employed under private or government service were in a better position to send their children to school. This made their children keen for education.

Number of Children

The Chi-square result showed the significant relationship between number of children and educational aspirations and expectations of the rural youths. It was found that the youth from small-size families could aspire for and expect high education more frequently as compared to the children from large and medium families.

The significant relationship between the two variables could perhaps be attributed to the possibility that parents who had a small family could afford the education of their children. The youths from large and medium families might have thought of their family situation and their parents' condition and could not aspire and expect what the youths from the small family had shown.

Parents' Influence on Educational Aspiration

It was found that the youths' educational expectation was dependent upon the parents' influence on educational aspiration for their youth. The relationship between the two is direct and positive; that is, the higher influence of parents on educational aspiration for the youths, the higher the educational expectation of the youth.

It is usually presumed that the youth whose parents had high educational aspiration for him could expect for high education.

Parents' Influence on Educational Expectation

The youth's educational aspiration and expectation were closely related to the parents' influence on educational expectation. It was also found that with parents who could expect for their youths' education, the majority of the youths' would also aspire and expect for their education. Here the relationship was direct and positive. Hence, it is safe to assume that youths whose parents could afford the education of their children would accordingly make the latter aspire and expect for their children.

Parents' Influence on Occupational Aspiration for the Children

It was found that parents' influence on occupational aspiration for children was related to the youth's educational aspiration and expectation.

It was also found that parents who influenced their children for blue-collar jobs would make children aspire and expect low education. On the other hand, parents who aspired for white-collar jobs would make children also aspire for high education.

As these relationships were direct and positive, it was safe to assume that childrens' aspiration and expectation were influenced by the parents.

Parents' Influence on the Youth's Occupational Expectation

The Chi-square result revealed positive and direct relationship between parents' influence on the youths' occupational expectation and educational aspirations and expectations. Hence, it is safe to predict that parents who could influence white-collar jobs for their children would make children automatically aspire and expect for high education, without which white-collar jobs for them is impossible.

However, the youths' age, sex, religion, occupation of father, occupation of mother, and parents' influence on educational aspiration for their children were not associated with the youths' educational aspiration. Similarly, age and sex of the youth and the occupation of mother were also found not affecting the youths' educational expectation.

The above findings reject the hypothesis that the educational aspirations and expectations of the rural youths were not associated with their demographic-socio-economic factors and family backgrounds.

With these above findings it is inferred that within the independent variables taken into consideration in this study, many were associated with the rural youths' educational aspirations and expectations.

REFERENCES

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