

An Exploratory Study on Career Aspirations and Self-Esteem Among the Conflict Affected Youth of Manipur

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations among the youth of a conflict-ridden state - Manipur. Here, researchers attempt to explore the kind of aspirations the youth from Manipur have pertaining to their career and then find out the relationship between self-esteem and their career aspirations. The sample comprises individuals staying in the state of Manipur only (N = 122 in the age group of 18 to 35 years, with slightly more males (N = 69) as compared to females (N = 52). Data have been analysed in two stages viz. correlations between variables have been calculated for finding associations among them. In the next stage, linear regression analysis is carried out between independent variable, self esteem and career aspirations(dependent variables) and then again using same regression technique , self esteem and three sub-dimensions of career aspirations i.e. achievement aspirations, leadership aspirations and educational aspirations are analysed . The study also explores influence of gender on relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations as well as attempts were also made to qualitatively identify the most and least ideal careers that Manipur youth aspire for; while civil services and teaching are the most ideal, politics and medicine are the least ideal choice for them. Regarding what career opportunities are available to them in the state, medical, teaching, entrepreneurship, engineering and civil services emerged as the most frequently identified. As in findings of research, self-esteem is a significant predictor of career aspirations and its three dimensions among the youth of Manipur; there is a need for future researchers to explore other variables also that may have an important bearing on the variables of interest in this study.

Keywords: *Self-esteem, career aspirations, achievement, leadership, educational, the Manipur youth*

Introduction

Career aspirations often have been operationalized as an individual's desire to select a specific career (Farmer, 1985). More specifically, they may be

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understood as “an individual's orientation towards a desired career goal under ideal conditions” (Domenico & Jones, 2006). Quaglia & Cobb (1996) define aspiration as students' capacity to be able to identify and set future goals for themselves while in the present being motivated to work towards these goals. An important distinction is made between aspirations and expectations by Ashby & Schoon (2010) such that aspirations describe what one would like to happen, while expectations address what one thinks will happen. Gregor & O'Brien (2015) have further operationalized career aspirations in terms of three components: a) leadership aspirations (seeking leadership

positions); b) educational aspirations (planning to go for advanced level education in the chosen field); and c) achievement aspirations (the desire to be among the top individuals in one's field).

Super (1980) views career choice and development as a process of developing and implementing a person's self-concept. Savickas (2002) also postulates that a relatively stable self-concept serves as a guide in terms of career. Research has also indicated that students who are committed to career jobs, have an increased self-esteem (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2006). Similarly, Schmit, Amel, & Ryan (1993) find that self-esteem shows positive correlation to assertive and self-confident career seeking behavior. Rojewski and Yang (1997) find general self-esteem to have a minimal and diminishing effect on American adolescents' occupational aspirations, even though occupational aspirations and expectations have been regarded as proxies for career self-efficacy (Rojewski & Hill, 1998).

Self-esteem

Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self such that an individuals with high self-esteem respect themselves and consider themselves as worthy. Self-esteem, thus, is the judgment of worthiness related to the concept of self. Sedikides and Gregg (2003) refer to self-esteem as an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of their own self-worth, their feelings of self-respect and self-confidence, and the extent to which they hold positive or negative views about their self. According to Murphy, Stosny, & Morrel (2005), self-esteem is also defined as a global barometer of self-evaluation involving cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experiences of the self that are linked to these global appraisals. Branden (1969) maintains that self-esteem consists of two components: (a) to consider oneself effective;

have trust in one's ability to think, learn, choose and make correct decisions; and to overcome challenges and bring about changes; and (b) to respect oneself; have confidence in their right to be happy; and trust that people are worthy of the respect, love and self-fulfilment coming their way. Reasoner (2005) again views self-esteem as composed of two distinct dimensions- competence and worth- such that self-esteem may be understood as the experience of being capable of meeting life challenges and being worthy of happiness. Finally, self-esteem can be understood as a form of acceptance, appreciation, and subjective respect for oneself (Morganett, 2005).

Literature Review

Previous researchers have made attempts to study the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations. Mau, Domnick, & Ellsworth (1995), for example, find that female students aspiring for non-traditional careers like science or engineering tend to be high on self-esteem, as well as educational aspirations, academic achievement, internal locus of control, perceived parental expectations, and socioeconomic status. Betz & Fitzgerald (1987) also identify self-esteem as one of the factors that facilitates the career development of women. Mau (2003) find students who persist in science and engineering careers to be high on academic proficiency and math self-efficacy, both of which may be argued to be associated with one's academic, if not global, self-esteem.

McCullough, Ashbridge, & Pegg (1994), while do not find leader and non-leader adolescents to differ in self-esteem levels, observe that among the leaders, those with high on self-esteem are also more likely to have higher career goals. Sometimes gender roles and norms dictate career options to a large extent specifically among women. Hackett, Esposito, & O'Halloran (1989) find performance self-esteem to significantly predict career salience, educational

aspirations, and choice of non-traditional careers. Across a more ethnically diverse sample, Smith et al. (1999) observe self-esteem (along with ethnic identity) to contribute to adolescents' beliefs in their academic abilities, as well as their perceptions of being able to find meaningful careers.

Interestingly, gender may also play an important role in the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations. Patton, Bartrum & Creed (2004) assess optimism, self-esteem, and career expectations, goals, planning and exploration and find different processes occurring among males and females. In males, they find optimism and self-esteem to influence career expectations, which then predict career goals, planning and exploration. For females, however, optimism is found to influence career goals, which then predict career planning and exploration, while self-esteem predict career expectations, which then influences career planning and exploration. Gender is considered to be one of the most powerful and persistent influences on the career development of adolescents (Rojewski & Hill, 1998) and a large body of research has consistently reported gender differences with female adolescents aspiring to either high or low-prestige occupations and males aspiring to moderate-prestige occupations (Davey & Stoppard, 1993; Gottfredson & Holland, 1975; Rojewski, 1996; Rojewski & Yang, 1997).

Such findings bring to attention the fact that the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations may not be a simple one; rather, since gender plays a significant role in determining what career options are available to women, or which careers are seen as more appropriate for women, the relationship should be studied in context of factor like gender. Other researchers have also studied gender differences with regard to our variables of interest: Hughes, Martinek, & Fitzgerald (1985) found that among boys, high self-

esteem was associated with higher occupational gender stereotyping, while among girls, higher self-esteem was linked to a tendency to opt for more non-traditional occupations.

Self-esteem has also been shown to be associated with individuals' educational and occupational attainments not just career aspirations, but (Wang, Kick, Fraser, & Burns, 1999). Further, self-esteem and career aspirations may also be influenced among bystanders and observers of ambient sexism: Bradley-Geist, Rivera, & Geringer (2015) found hostile ambient sexism to have a greater negative impact on female than male bystanders' performance-based self-esteem. This self-esteem then positively predicted the individuals' career aspirations, with gender being a moderator in this relationship. The role of gender thus is again highlighted as a significant factor influencing how self-esteem and career aspirations are associated.

Chiu (1990) further finds both self-reported and teacher-reported self-esteem of adolescents to be higher among those with some career goal as compared to those with no career goal. In addition, constructs related to self-esteem have also been found to be relevant when studying career-related outcomes. Self-concept, for example, refers to one's view of oneself, including their appearance, abilities, values, personality, among other things. It involves one's assessment of oneself and thus can be positive or negative. Andreassen (2017) explored how career aspirations of adolescents are influenced by their self-concept. Following students through 13 to 19 years of age, career aspirations are found to become more and more with time as students become more aware about themselves as well as the world of work, and it is reflect on their self-concept. The transition from idealistic to realistic aspirations was found to be related to changes in self-concept as well. Other researchers also have found self-concept to be related to occupational

aspirations of students (e.g., Alam, 2016; Eremie & Ikpah, 2017). Mapping career aspirations of the youth in India, Sanghi (2017) finds those with high aspirations to aim for careers in fields like building, construction, real estate (in Uttar Pradesh), retail, construction, transportation (in Delhi), building and construction, tourism, hospitality and travel (in Jharkhand), and construction, retail, agriculture (in Madhya Pradesh).

The review of the existing literature shows one's career aspirations are influenced by a number of factors like self-concept, self-efficacy, gender and background. In light of this, the current study attempts to explore Manipur's youth's level of career aspirations and self-esteem, along with the relationship between the two.

Method

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the level of career aspiration among the youth of Manipur.
2. To identify most and least ideal career options among the youth of Manipur.
3. To identify career options perceived to be available by the state's youth in Manipur.
4. To explore the level of self-esteem among the youth of Manipur.
5. To explore the relationship between career aspirations and self-esteem among the youth of Manipur.
6. To explore self-esteem as a predictor of career aspiration among the youth of Manipur.
7. To see investigate difference of career aspiration and self-esteem on the basis of gender.

Hypotheses

H1: There exists a positive significant relationship

between career aspiration and self-esteem of the Manipur youth.

H2: Self-esteem is a significant predictor of career aspirations among the youth of Manipur.

H2(a): Self esteem positively and significantly impact Achievement aspiration among the youth of Manipur

H2(b): Self-esteem positively and significantly impact Leadership aspiration among the youth of Manipur.

H2(c): Self-esteem positively and significantly impact Educational aspiration among the youth of Manipur.

H3: There exist differences in career aspiration and self-esteem on the basis of gender.

Participants

Participants for the study comprised 122 youth of Manipur, age ranging from 18 years to 35 years. Out of these, 52 were females and 69 were males. District-wise, our sample comprised individuals from eight districts of Manipur: Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Kangpokpi, Senapati, Thoubal and Ukhrul.

Measures

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). The scale consists of ten items that measure global self-esteem. Rosenberg (1979, as cited in Ciarrochi & Bilich, 2006) demonstrated excellent internal consistency for the scale with the internal reliability coefficient being 0.92, along with satisfactory test-retest reliability over a two-week period; to establish validity, the scale was found to correlate significantly with the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and measures of depression and anxiety. In our study, reliability analysis indicated a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.71.

Career Aspirations Scale- Revised (CAS-R, 2015): The scale, developed by Gregor & O'Brien (2015), consists of 24 items to assess overall career aspiration and its three dimensions: achievement aspiration, leadership aspiration and educational aspiration. Items on the measure had to be responded to on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (very true of me). The authors have shown the scale's three subscales to possess adequate internal reliability, with the r values ranging from 0.74 to 0.84, along with test-retest reliability over a two-week period, with the r values ranging from 0.68 to 0.81 (Gregory & O'Brien, 2015). In our study, reliability analysis indicated a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.89, 0.65, 0.73 and 0.86 for the complete scale, achievement subscale, leadership subscale and educational subscale respectively.

Further, participants are also asked the following question to gain an insight into what kind of careers they aspire for and which ones they do not wish to take up: "What are your ideal career choices? Please list some of your most ideal career choices as well as some of the least ideal career choices in the table below". "List as many careers as you can; be as specific as possible." A second question, asked to identify career opportunities available in Manipur, is : "What are some jobs or career options available in Manipur? (List as many as you know of)."

Procedure

Both the scales were administered in local Manipuri language to members of the youth population staying in Manipur. Care is taken to include specifically the educated youth. Data are collected from a sample of 122 participants as part of a pilot study and processed through IBM SPSS version 21 for analysis. Before the analysis, screening of data is done for any incorrect entries. Reliability analyses are conducted for both scales, along with the three subscales of CAS-R, to ascertain their

internal consistency with respect to our sample.

In the main analysis, descriptive statistics were obtained for all measures, and simple linear regressions were computed to check self-esteem as a predictor of overall career aspirations, as well as achievement, leadership and educational aspirations. For the open-ended question, an analysis is done using a frequency count to identify which careers were preferred by most of the youth, and which careers were least preferred by them. Sanghi's (2017) report for NITI Aayog on the youth and the labour market of India was then used to identify aspirations of youth from different states of India as well as state-wise sectors that would have high manpower needs. This was compared with the career opportunities available in Manipur as identified by our research participants. To diagrammatically represent these data, a website called wordclouds was used (<https://www.wordclouds.com>).

Results and Interpretation

Quantitative Analyses

The following tables show results of the analyses starting with a demographic profile of the participants, followed by descriptive, normality check, reliability, correlation and regression analyses and t-test.

Table 1: Sample Profile (in Appendix)

As can be seen (Table 1), most of our participants were 26 years or above in age. The male-female ratio was not equal, with the sample comprising more males. With regard to education, most participants had completed their graduation. Occupation-wise, a majority of our sample was still studying and thus was not employed; following which the majority was engaged in professional work. Due to one participant not sharing gender information, the frequencies here do not add up to our total sample

size of 122. Next, data was checked for normality as shown ahead:

Figure 1. Checking normality of data for self-esteem scale (in Appendix)

Figure 2. Checking normality of data for career aspirations scale(in Appendix)

Table 2 : Descriptive statistics for all scales (in Appendix)

As shown in Table 2, because there were no missing responses, the value of N is 122 for all measures. For self-esteem, participants' mean score was 35.81 (SD = 5.45) and for career aspirations, the mean score was 96.34 (SD = 15.55). On the three sub-scales of the career aspirations scale, i.e., achievement aspirations, leadership aspirations and educational aspirations, the mean scores and SDs were 33.2 (SD = 5.08), 31.96 (SD = 5.84) and 31.18 (SD = 6.99) respectively. As can be interpreted from the mean values in Table 2, both career aspirations and self-esteem are high among the youth of Manipur.

Table 3:Reliability analyses for all scales (in Appendix)

As shown in the above table, both self-esteem and career aspirations scales show good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha being more than 0.70. The same holds true for two out of three sub-scales of the CAS-R. Sub-scale Cronbach's alphas range from 0.65 to 0.86.

Table 4: Matrix showing correlations among self-esteem, career aspirations, achievement aspirations, leadership aspirations and educational aspirations (in Appendix).

As shown in the matrix (Table 4), all ten correlations are significant at 0.01 level of significance. The correlation between total career aspiration score and achievement aspiration subscale score is the strongest ($r = 0.90$). The correlation between self-

esteem and career aspirations is moderate ($r = 0.52$). Correlations between sub-scales of CAS-R range from 0.52 to 0.70. Correlations between sub-scales of CAS-R and total score on the scale are high, ranging from 0.84 to 0.90. Hypothesis 1 that there exists a positive significant relationship between career aspiration and self-esteem of the Manipur youth is accepted.

With a high correlation found between self-esteem and career aspirations, next, a simple linear regression was computed to predict career aspirations based on self-esteem. Regression analyses were also run for self-esteem as predictor for the three subscales separately. Results of these are presented ahead in Tables 5

Table 5: Summary of linear regression for self-esteem predicting career aspiration; Achievement aspiration; Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration (in Appendix)

As shown in Table 5 above, a significant regression equation was found for self-esteem as a predictor of career aspirations: $F(1,120) = 45.60$, $p < 0.001$, with an R^2 of 0.275. That is, the model was found to explain 27.5% of the variance in career aspirations. The final predictive model obtained thus was: level of career aspirations = $42.76 + 1.50(\text{self-esteem})$. Hypothesis 2, thus, is accepted.

As shown in Table 5, a significant regression equation was found for self-esteem as a predictor of achievement aspirations: $F(1,120) = 59.18$, $p < 0.001$, with an R^2 of 0.33. That is, the model was found to explain 33% of the variance in achievement aspirations. The final predictive model obtained thus was: level of achievement aspirations = $14.01 + 0.54(\text{self-esteem})$. Hypothesis 2 (a), thus, is accepted.

As can be seen from Table 5, a significant regression equation was found for self-esteem as a predictor of leadership aspirations: $F(1,120) = 24.18$, p

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations among the youth in Manipur. Our sample comprised 122 students, with 52 females and 69 males. As shown in Table 4, a significant moderate correlation was found between self-esteem and career aspirations of the youth ($r = 0.52$). It is likely that individuals with high self-esteem, those who are confident, view themselves as competent and think highly of themselves, would also aspire to high goals and career targets. Those low on self-esteem, on the other hand, are likely to not feel as competent or confident and thus set lower goals or aspirations for themselves.

With regard to self-esteem and the three subscales of career aspirations too, the correlation coefficients obtained are moderate and significant. Among these, the correlation is highest for self-esteem and achievement aspiration ($r = 0.56$). Achievement aspirations are concerned with the extent to which people seek recognition, responsibility and promotion in their chosen career. It makes sense that those who are high on self-esteem and thus view themselves as worthy, deserving and capable, would aspire for positions that give them autonomy, control and acknowledgement.

Similarly, the correlation between self-esteem and both leadership and educational aspirations was found to be 0.41. Studying psychological predictors of leadership aspirations among college women, Boatwright & Egidio (2003) found self-esteem to be one of the variables accounting for significant variance in women's leadership aspirations. Other variables identified by the researchers include connectedness needs, gender role and fears of negative evaluation. They concluded that women high on need for connectedness and self-esteem are more likely to report higher leadership aspirations.

Fedi & Rollero (2016) found self-esteem to have a significant main effect on leadership aspirations of both men and women. Dickerson & Taylor (2002) found women high on task-specific self-esteem to show a greater selection of as well as interest in completing leadership tasks, while those low on it tend to select themselves out of leadership roles or positions. Mason, Mason & Mathews (2018) too found self-esteem to play an important role in determining leadership aspirations, with patriarchal attitudes and gender also affecting the nature of the relationship.

With a high positive correlation found, we next tried to explore self-esteem as a predictor of the youth's career aspiration. For this, regression analysis was carried out (Table 5). As shown, the model was found to be significant with self-esteem explaining 27.5% of the variance in career aspirations. For the subscales too, even though self-esteem was found to be a significant predictor, it explained little variance among the three criterion variables. The t-values were found to be not significant (table 6) which indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female youth of Manipur in terms of their career aspiration and self-esteem. Hence, no gender differences. This result is not in consonance with studies which indicated gender disparity in career aspirations of students (Savickas and Lent, 1994; Bender, 1994 & AAUW, 1992).

Finally, qualitative analysis using a simple frequency count helped us identify civil services and teaching careers as those most preferred by the youth in Manipur, while politics and medicine related careers were the least preferred. Sanghi (2017) describes sectors with high manpower demands in various states of India and while it differs from state to state, retail, building and construction, IT/ITES, hospitality, and travel and tourism emerged dominant.

Thus, a large percentage of variance still remains

unexplained in our models, making it imperative for future researchers to explore other predictors that may be playing a role in determining the aspirations of youth in Manipur. Another limitation of our study that future researchers should try to overcome pertains to the sample size: since ours was an exploratory research, a work in progress research project, we worked with a sample of 122 only.

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Appendix

Table 1: Sample Profile

Demographic	Categories	Frequencies
Age	18-20 years	29
	21-22 years	13
	23-26 years	33
	26-35 years	42
Gender (n=121)	Females	52
	Males	69
Educational Qualifications	Class XII or below	30
	Graduation	44
	Post-graduation	35
	PhD	2
Occupation	Student	60
	Unemployed	13
	Self-employed	16
	Professional	27

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for all scales

Scale	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Esteem	122	3.58	0.54
Career Aspirations	122	4.07	0.70
Achievement Aspirations	122	4.15	0.64
Leadership Aspirations	122	3.99	0.73
Educational Aspirations	122	3.90	0.87

Table 3: Reliability analyses for all scales

Scale	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale	10	.71
Career Aspirations Scale-Revised (CAS- R)	24	.89
Achievement Aspirations	8	.65
Leadership Aspirations	8	.73
Educational Aspirations	8	.86

Table 4: Matrix showing correlations among self-esteem, career aspirations, achievement aspirations, leadership aspirations and educational aspirations

Dimensions	Self-esteem	Career Aspirations	Achievement Aspirations	Leadership Aspirations	Educational Aspirations
Self-esteem	1				
Career aspirations	0.52**	1			
Achievement aspirations	0.56**	0.90**	1		
Leadership aspirations	0.41**	0.84**	0.70**	1	
Educational aspirations	0.41**	0.87**	0.70**	0.52**	1

Table 5: Summary of linear regression for self-esteem predicting career aspiration; Achievement aspiration; Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration ship aspirations and educational aspirations

Variable :	Self-esteem as predictor of :		
Career Aspiration	B	SE B	β
	1.50	0.222	0.525*
R ² = 0.275; F=45.60*; *p<0.001			
Achievement aspiration	0.54	0.07	0.56
R ² = 0.33; F=59.18*; *p<0.001			
Leadership Aspiration	0.44	0.09	0.41
R ² = 0.168; F=24.18*; *p<0.001			
Educational Aspiration	0.52	0.11	0.41
R ² = 0.166; F=23.84*; *p<0.001			

Table 6. Showing t-test result of career aspiration, Achievement aspiration, Leadership aspiration, educational aspiration and self-esteem on the basis of gender(in Appendix) Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration ship aspirations and educational aspirations

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value &df=119	significance
Career Aspiration	Female	52	3.98	.64	.459	.647 (NS)
	Male	69	4.03	.66		
Achievement Aspiration	Female	52	4.16	.62	.286	.775 (NS)
	Male	69	4.13	.65		
Leadership Aspiration	Female	52	3.96	.78	.487	.627 (NS)
	Male	69	4.02	.69		
Educational Aspiration	Female	52	3.81	.83	.826	.411 (NS)
	Male	69	3.95	.90		
Self Esteem	Female	52	3.58	.57	.044	.965 (NS)
	Male	69	3.57	.53		

Figure 1. Checking normality of data for self-esteem scaletional aspiration and self-esteem on the basis of gender(in Appendix) Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration ship aspirations and educational

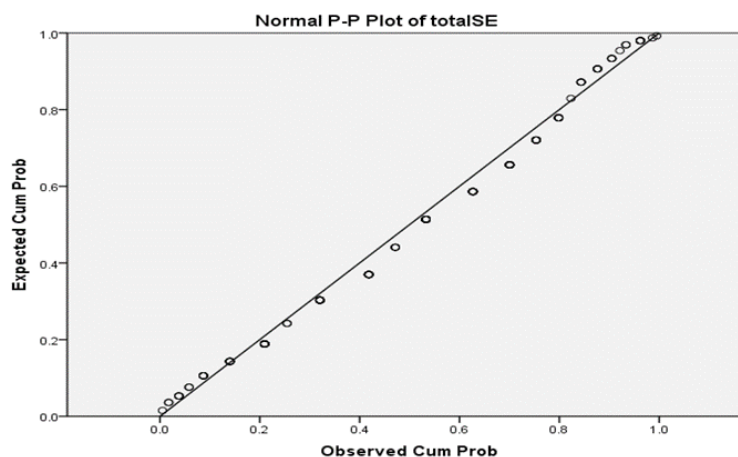


Figure 2. Checking normality of data for career aspirations scalegender(in Appendix) Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration ship aspirations and educational aspirations

