



To Study the Higher Educational Aspirations of the Minority Group of Christian Student of Ferozepur Distt.

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ABSTRACT

We know that our Indian society is a collection of cultures & communities and the Christian community is a vital part of our society. Educationists are aware that orders of social group, economic status, class, background, gender associations, and ethnic multiplicity Symbolize Indian society to profoundly affect access to education and aspiration of children in School. It is truism that almost every remark or declaration in education policies in current times have some mention of pupil aspirations. As we live in a multicultural and multi- religious society, it become imperative for us to be aware of the aspirations and potentials of the students belonging to the minority communities. A minority is a sociological group that comprises a constitutionally prevailing voting mainstream section of the total population of a given society. Christians as a minority community constitute about 2.3% of the total Indian population in which 40% reside in urban areas and 1.26% belongs to the Punjab population. The students who belong to the Christian community also have their own goals in life. However, their higher educational aspirations are an area that needs to be researched to get a better insight. This paper probes into the current status of higher educational aspirations of Christian student in Punjab

KEYWORDS

Aspiration, Higher education, Christian students, Minorities

1 Introduction

Higher Education plays an important role develop the personality of the human. Aspiration is a prominent concept in debates regarding higher education. Reference to this concept is often made in a passing way as to the need of aspiration in students and the responsibility of schools and universities to work to instill educational aspiration in students. Carter V. Good's Dictionary of Education defines 'aspiration' as 'the level of performance or the goal that a person or a group desires or hopes to reach in a specified activity.' Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines it as 'a strong desire for the realization of ambitions, ideals or accomplishments.' In simple terms aspiration is a strong desire to have or achieve something important. Higher educational aspiration relates to the desire for the realisation aspiration of ambitions, ideals, or accomplishments of all education beyond the secondary level leading to a formal degree.

Educational aspiration is an imperative factor in forecasting educational accomplishment and can be perceived as an component in academic achievement motivation, concentrating as they do on the yearning for triumph and the shaping of academic aims to do well in education, particular educational fields or to gain a particular degree. Aspiration is a concept that is inevitably associated with future education of a child.

It is truism that almost every remark or declaration educational policies in current times have some mention to pupil aspirations. Since long time teachers and educationalists have acknowledged the value of pupils who fix aspiring aims and venture constantly to advancement toward those aims. It is also know that such pupils who establish high Objectives develop themselves to turn into activity and endeavor inclined individuals with a strong logic of resolution to study further. It can thus be gleaned that nurturing the aspirations of pupils has a widespread urgency.

One of the greatest challenges that we are confronted with in our education in current times is to consider how we can really make our young boys and girls capable of leading a successful and contented life in a fast changing world. Studying at school is no longer a mundane or routine activity which the student has to undergo for a given number of years. The whole concept of education and the objectives which it has to fulfill have undergone a radical change in recent years. In this

light, from a historical perspective, it may be noted that the Christian missionaries who came to India and were responsible for the establishment of various educational institutions, including some of the prestigious institutions of higher education.

As we live in a multicultural and multi-religious society, it becomes imperative for us to be aware of the aspirations and potentials of the students belonging to the minority communities.

The students belonging to the Christian community, a minority group, of our society have tremendous potential to become highly productive and contributing members of our society, thereby, this research has tried to dwell into this topic. The findings and conclusions have led the researcher to suggest significant implications as well.

2. Rationale for the Study

It is generally observed that certain students in the senior secondary level high goals in life and also aspire for such higher educational courses and programmes that would enable them to attain their cherished goals. They may show interest in fine arts, in a career in business or in a specific professional field such as medicine or engineering. Further academic learning and advanced knowledge is fundamental to get ahead in life and an individual's aspirations play a significant role in this domain.

According to the 2011 Census, Christians as a minority community constitute about 2.3% of the total Indian

Population in which 40% reside in urban regions and 1.26% of this belongs to the Punjab population. The

decadal growth of population of the Christian community in India in 2011 was reported to be 15.5% and within Punjab was 12.7%. They have a higher literacy level of 80% as compared to other religious minorities and a commendable national literacy rate of 65%. The gender ratio of Christians is 1000 men per 1045 women in India. Moreover, the census report reveals that approximately half, that is, 46%, of our nation's Christian population resides in the southern states. Out of the total 2.78 crore Indian Christian community, 1.28 crore

reside in the states of Kerala (22.07%), Tamil Nadu (15.88%), Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. 28.1% reside in seven

North-eastern states and 1.3T in Goa. Thus, less than 25% reside in the rest of the nation. Analysts state that education has a

significant role in Christians residing in the south. The church and educators from the Christian community manage numerous

educational organizations and give employment to people from the community here. Also, the historical reason of centuries old

Christian educational organizations is a significant factor for this. According to the survey conducted by the All India Association of Christian Higher Education in India in 2011 it may be noted that only 2.9% of colleges in India are run by Christians and only

37.2% of students and 60.7% of teachers in the Christian colleges are Christians. In this light it can be said the students belonging

to the Christian community, a minority group, of our society have tremendous potential to become highly productive and

contributing members of our society.

A number of studies on educational aspirations have been done on higher secondary students or groups based on ethnicity or in other words, minorities. For instance,

Jethwani, Mincy and Halance (2013) in their study examined the educational aspirations of a minority community of Blank Bermudian adolescent boys. Byun, Irvin and Hutchins (2012) investigated the educational

Hutchins (2012) investigated the educational aspirations of rural youth. Misra (2010) conducted a study of occupational aspirations of female students studying in technical

and non-technical institutions. Medvide and Blustein (2010) explored the educational and career plans of urban minority students in a

Dual Enrolment Programme. Thus, the review of several

studies reveals that research on the minority group of Christian students and their higher educational aspirational aspirations.

The students who belong to the Christian community also have their own goals in life, however, their higher educational aspirations is an area that needs to be researched to get

a better insight into all those factors and reasons which directly or indirectly influence their choices of higher education. These facts and observations provide the need and

rationale for conducting a scientific study in this area. This study probes into the higher educational aspirations of the Christian students in Punjab.

3. Objective of the study

To study the higher educational aspirations of Christians students in Punjab.

4. Research Design

The present study is qualitative in nature which has been employed to obtain information concerning the higher educational aspirations of Christian students studying in the

schools of Punjab at the senior secondary level.

4.1 Methodology

The present study employs the survey method, which is small scaled. The focus of the study are schools as the educational institutions, thus, it is a school survey. The data

was collected using a questionnaire and a standardized test in the present study.

4.2 Sampling Technique

Random probability sampling was employed for the present study at two stages, namely, for selection of schools from the sampling

frame and then selection of students from classes IX and X.

4.3 Tools and Techniques

1. Questions for students

2. Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) by Yasim

Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT, 2011) is a standardized test by Dr. Yasmin Ghani Khan. Its Test-Retest Reliability

is 0.92 and the Split -Half Reliability is 0.88. The research tool has been validated against Dr. M.H. Singh and Dr. Govind Tiwari's

Level of Aspiration Scale and the coefficient of Aspiration Scale and the coefficient of correlation was found to be 0.66 by Pearson's product moment correlation.

The questionnaire was self-constructed and validated by experts.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established through the test-retest method. It was administered to the try-out group of 50 Christian students of classes IX and X. The coefficient of correlation was calculated to be 0.81

4.4 Sample

The details of the sample of the sample taken for the present study are as follows:

Ten senior secondary schools run by Christian management were chosen through random probability sampling technique from the sampling frame obtained from the directory of Archdiocese of Punjab.

Three hundred Christian students of Classes IX and X, that is around thirty students from each school were chosen through random probability sampling technique.

5. Findings of the Study

It was found that the Christian students aspired for a number of fields of higher education. The major ones among these are:

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Computer Application / Information Technology

Modern Medicine and Surgery

Dental Care

Nursing

Out of the sample of 300 students 12% aspired for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 36% aspired for Computer Application / Information Technology, 14% for Modern Medicine and Surgery, 6% for Dental Care and 7% aspired for Nursing.

The maximum number of these students, that is, 59%, aspired to attain the highest level of higher education up to Post-graduation. However, it is to be noted that most of them

aspired for opting a Professional degree immediately after school.

Table 1: Details of Student Education Choices of Present Study

Area of Higher Education	% of student chose
Arts, Humanities and Social Science	10
Commerce / Business Studies / Accounting / Finance	5
Natural Sciences	1
Physical Education	1
Fine Arts/ Art Education	4
Performing Arts	0
Engineering & Technology	4
Computer Application / Information Technology	30
Management / Business Administration	6
Architecture / Planning	5
Modern Medicine & Surgery	12
Dental Care	8
Homeopathic Medicine	1
Avurvedic Medicine	2
Unani Medicine	0
Pharmacy	1
Nursing	8
Physiotherapy	0
Agriculture / Fisheries / Veterinary Sciences	0
Law	2

Table 2: Details of Student Choices for Highest Education Level

Highest Level of Education Aspired to Obtain	% Of Students Chose
Graduation	58
Post-graduation	24
Pre-doctoral (M. Phil.)	3
Doctoral (Ph.D.)	7
Post-doctoral (D. Litt., D.Sc.)	0
Advanced Diploma	4
Diploma	3
Certificate	1

Majority of the students, 67% felt that getting a higher education is very important for their future. It was also found that there is a significant association between gender and the feeling that higher education is important for future. Female students feel it to be more important than male students.

In relation with higher education, it is pertinent to note that neither male nor female christian students would prefer to go for religious services. Only a very low number of students, that is, 6%, opted to enter into religious services after school.

On administration of the test of LEAT, it was found that a remarkable percentage, 63%, of christian students had high level of educational aspiration that is, they were highly realistic and had well defined academic goals. Much less than half of the students, 21%, had average level of educational aspiration, and are well-adjusted and optimistic. And very few of them, 16%, had low level of educational aspiration, that is, they are unrealistic and are carefree towards academic achievement.

Table 3: Categorization of the sample on basis of LEAT

level of educational aspiration	Description	% of students
High	highly realistic and had well defined academic goals	66
Average	realistic and normal and are well-adjusted and optimistic	19
Low	unrealistic and are carefree towards academic achievement	15

The findings with respect to the objective can be related to the study by baker, Sammons, Sylva and t Taggart (2014) who reported that educational aspiration is a significant issue in policy

discussions about educational disparity where they explored

the significance of their findings for the prevailing literature and public policy discussions about the importance of nurturing educational aspirations. In particular, they probed the way in which low aspirations are outlined by policy-makers as a major problem in debates around educational disparity. Prodnovich, Perry and Taggart (2014) reviewed research relating to aspirations for higher education as a cultural capacity and talked about the educational aspirations of students from under-represented backgrounds in higher education. They said that appreciating the social and cultural elements and dimensions of aspirations for higher education is important as they are progressively becoming part of social commentary and more recently educational policy, research and practice. Benjamin and St. Clair (2011) also talked about effect of policies and higher educational aspiration of less privileged students. The study states that the image that emerged from the data is not a picture of low aspirations. The young people in this survey seem to take work and education seriously. They are concerned about getting a job and have high aspirations.

The findings of the present study also show that the students have reasonably high level of higher educational aspirations. The education of minorities is an important issue in Indian educational policies as well. The relatively high and varied educational aspiration of Christian students found in this study shows that this aspect should be fostered further.

6. Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have certain implications on all the stakeholders, namely, students, teachers, school administrators as well as parents.

The major task before education of any child is to enable and equip the child to learn how to adjust him or her to several challenges

and demands of the society in which the child lives. Concurrently the child is to be primed through education to lives a life which

would be individually gratifying and socially beneficial. What it implies in essence is that the child has to be facilitated to improve intellectual, social and technical skills, along with building a personality and character to become integral to the values and ways of

life which as a citizen he or she is called upon to do. As we live in a multicultural and multireligious society, it becomes imperative

for us to be aware of the aspirations and potentials of the students belonging to the minority communities as in the case of this study,

the Christian community students.

It has been found that Christian students have an appreciably good level of higher educational aspiration.

The major fields of higher education that the Christian students aspired for were Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Computer Application or Information Technology; Modern Medicine and Surgery; Dental Care and Nursing. However, this implies that the students need to be guided towards opening up their avenues to other fields like Commerce, Business Studies, Accounting, Natural Sciences, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Pharmacy, Law and other fields and not restrict themselves to only a few. The maximum number of these students aspired to attain the highest level themselves to only the master's level program me; hence, there is a need to encourage them to aspire above and beyond this level. However, it is interesting to note that most of them aspired to opt for a Professional degree immediately after school.

This is an indication that further corroborates their strong higher educational aspirations.

In relation with higher education, it is pertinent to note that mostly neither male nor female Christian students would prefer to go for religious service. Only a very low number of students opted to enter into religious services after school. This implies they have a more worldly view and are not much in favour of becoming a priest or a nun.

As far as teachers are concerned, the relatively appreciable level of higher educational aspirations of Christian students implies that the teachers must take efforts to study the student's innate faculties and to determine the courses that are likely to suit the student's

capacity to develop interest and abilities and eventually lead to the best possible avenues for a self-satisfying and socially industrious life.

Studying at schools is no longer a routine or monotonous activity which the student has to endure for a prescribed number of years.

The whole concept of education and the objectives which it has to fulfill have undergone a radical change in recent years. In this light,

it may be noted that there are a large number of schools that are run under Christian management wherein a considerable number of Christian students go. It is the responsibility of these schools, in particular, that they hold seminars or even small scale gatherings to inform these students about various scholarships and other aids that are available for them to realise their higher educational

aspirations. In addition, schools can also come up with monetary and other aids of their own to nurture the higher educational

aspirations of these students.

The role of parents of parents of the Christian students is undeniable. The parents need to have a positive impact and be largely

supportive of their children regarding their higher educational aspirations. They must discuss their higher education plans and it also implies that the students consider the views and opinions of their parents while taking decisions about higher education. The parents should encourage their children and extend any possible help for them with their higher studies. However, the children should not

become unduly burdened by parents' anticipations. The parents need not dominate in their educational choices but effectively guide

them with their decision of educational choices, thereby; it implies that a significant role is played by their parents in this matter.

7. Conclusion

The research study has revealed that Christian students studying in the schools in Punjab have reasonably high levels of aspiration for attaining higher education. From the earliest educational commissions to NCF 2005 to the most prominent latest ones have all

recognized the significance of educational aspirations of students and also acknowledged the significance of uplifting the minority communities of India. The education of minorities is an important issue in Indian educational policies as well. The relatively high and varied educational aspiration of Christian students found in this study shows that this aspect should be nurtured further by all the stakeholders in the field of educa-

tion.

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