To Assess Students Motivation for Higher Education at University Level

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ABSTRACT

The present study was quantitatively designed to investigate the reasons for higher education and to assess the types of motivation for acquiring higher education. The study comprised of two parts. The first part dealt with the development of an indigenous scale namely Students Motivation for Higher Education Scale (SMHE) for University students. Through factor analysis five factors were extracted. Within the part two, data was collected using SMHE. The sample comprised of 540 university students through purposive convenience sampling. Data analysis was done by comparing means and standard deviation applying statistical method (ANOVA). The findings indicated that university students perceive moderately high level of motivation for acquiring higher education. Mean scores indicated that sub-scales quest for employment and to gain qualification were the most common reasons for gaining higher education. The relationships of parents’ educational and occupational level were found non-significant. Also, there were no gender differences in student’s motivation for higher education. Significantly high and positive relationship was found, on SMHE and all its sub-scales, between socio-economic status and academic achievement. The most important finding from the study shows that university students do have certain motivational factors that leads them to gain higher education.

Keywords: Motivation, higher education, academic achievement

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Pakistan is beset with many problems. The purpose of higher education is multidimensional and may be termed as personal, social, economic and cultural. According to the Robbins Committee the work of higher education in developing individuals is to impart employment skills, develop the general powers of the mind and transmit a common culture and common strands of citizenship [1]. One purpose of higher education is to graduate students who will become productive citizens [2].

An integral aspect of being a productive citizen is employment. Longitudinal research suggests that students believe post-graduate employment is an important outcome of a college education. Students have valued being well-off financially more than being involved in social action, being politically active, or developing a personal philosophy of life [3]. More recent data indicate that students entering college in recent years report that getting a better job and making more money were more important than proving to others they could succeed, improving reading and studying.
skills, and becoming a more cultured person when making the decision whether to go to college [4]. Students seem to be suggesting that a college education should prepare them for a lifetime of gainful employment [7]. There is a lack of systematic evidence, which might be supportive in proving that Pakistan is emphasising on solving problems such as our failure as a nation to upgrade our educational system and meet the demands of the changing times. Insufficient objective and systematic research evidence about the contribution education is making to people, whether adding to their intelligence, intellect, personality, improving standard of living is driving need to do more research. It is observed that with knowledge based economics and globalization, higher education has become more important. The gap between developed and underdeveloped economies is mainly due to the difference of educational development. The problem with developing countries, including Pakistan is that they have given a relatively low priority to higher education [1]. Higher Education Commission as attempted to stick a balance among different areas of higher education need in Pakistan. The present percentage of students entering higher education in Pakistan is approximately 7% 5. Little difference has been seen when comparing part time and full time students [6]. The research is intended to investigate the reasons behind acquiring higher education. Are students’ educations oriented or are there some other psychological or avoidance reasons for acquiring higher education.

2. METHODS

The present research is an observational study to investigate the reason for higher education and to assess the type of motivation for acquiring higher education. It was carried out in two parts, part I and part II. Part I was about development of an instrument to measure the motivation of students for acquiring higher education, whereas part II was about application of the developed tool to the selected sample.

**Part I**

In part I of the study, an indigenous scale “Students’ Motivation for Higher Education” (SMHE) for university students, both boys and girls, was developed. Psychometric properties of SMHE were computed by determining the reliabilities and validity of the scale. For this purpose, alpha reliability coefficient was calculated and split-half reliability was calculated for the stability. Construct validity of the scale was determined through factor analysis. Part I of the study is comprised of the following phases:

- **Phase I:** Generation of item pool
- **Phase II:** Judges’ opinion (face validity of the scale)
- **Phase III:** Selection of final items for the scale
- **Phase IV:** Try out study
- **Phase V:** Factor analysis

**Instruments**

The instruments used in the main study included Students’ Motivation for Higher Education Scale (SMHE), Socio-economic Scale (SES) and demographic sheet. Following is the description of these scales.

- **Socio-economic Scale (SES)**
  Socio-economic scale was originally developed by Mumford & Mirza (as cited in Yaqoob, 2003)7. It consisted of four core items and was used in Chitral study, with rural sample. Hence it was upgraded for use with an urban sample by following same pattern of scoring and categorization.

- **Demographic Sheet**
  The demographics sheet included the information about university, education, mother’s education, father’s education, mother’s occupation, father’s occupation, gender, socio-economic status, social and natural sciences and academic achievement.

**Methodology**

Student Motivation for Higher Education Scale was developed to measure motivation among university men and women students. The SMHE consisted of 40 questions. These questions have five response categories included “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “undecided”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. Codes corresponding to 25th percentile and below are designated as low motivation for higher education, above 75th as high, motivation for higher education between 25th and 75th percentile as moderate level of motivation for higher education.

**Part II**

The sample was selected from three universities. They were asked to read each statement carefully and then respond within the given five-point response categories. Ten objectives were formulated, that included: to investigate frequency of motivation for higher education among university men and women.
students. Relationship of certain demographic variables (mother’s education, father’s education, mother’s occupation, father’s occupation, gender, socio-economic status, social and natural sciences and academic achievement) with motivation for higher education.

Sample
The sample comprised of 540 university men and women students who volunteered to participate in the study. It was taken from three national universities Q, A and P. There were 180 university students (90 men and 90 women) of masters first semester from each university, representing different departments of social and natural sciences. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-10) was used for data analysis [8].

3. RESULTS
Quantitative data was collected using SMHE (validated questionnaire). Data was analyzed using SPSS 20. Response analysis, t-test and ANOVA was carried out. There were 40 questions on SMHE questionnaire. Gender does not affect the motivational level of students in acquiring higher education with no significant difference on SMHE (t = 0.254, df = 537, p = n.s.). Mean scores show that students scoring grade A (M = 162.30) and grade B (M = 135.74) have strong motivation for acquiring higher education. It reflects that significant difference exists between the motivational levels of the students who get high grades. Results indicate that one of the reasons for acquiring higher education was encouragement from the family 80.3%.

The relationship between the educational and occupational level of the parents with reference to the motivation of students for higher education was found non-significant. Non-significant difference exists on total and all sub-scales of SMHE, on the basis of social and natural sciences group. The reason can be that our educational process is non-influential. In whatever track students move from the very start they go along with it till the end. Secondly, there are no guidelines and no aptitude tests to check the ability of the students for what they are studying.

Table 1: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing Difference of Students on SMHE (N = 540)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMHE Low</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>109.06</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>659.67***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>135.74</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>162.30</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df =549, *** P<.001

As shown in table 1 there was significant difference (F = 659.67, df = 449, p<.001) found for motivation for higher education among students. Findings further indicate that large number of students (n = 276) show moderate motivation (M = 135.74, SD = 8.39).

Table 2 presents differences among students on SMHE, on the basis of their socio-economic status. The results are found to be significant (F =659.67, df = 449, p<.001). It reflects that significant difference exists between the students who belong to different socio-economic class.

Table 2 ANOVA Showing the Differences in Level of Students’ Motivation on the Basis of their Socio-economic Status (N = 540)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Low (n = 47)</th>
<th>Middle (n = 272)</th>
<th>High (n = 131)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMHE</td>
<td>109.06</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>135.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

df =539, *** p<.001

Response analysis was made on five response categories of SMHE. It helped in assessing the strength of the items and to explore the most and least factors for acquiring higher education. It is presented in Table 3.
Results in table 3 show percentages on five response categories of SMHE. The high percentage on agree and strongly agree categories was on item 7 (84.3%). This indicates that to get a good job with a high salary is perceived as a major factor in acquiring higher education. High percentage on disagree and strongly disagree categories was on item 39 (72.2%) This reflects that students disagree with the concept of acquiring higher education just as a time pass. While high percentage on neutral category was on item no. 15 (40.6%).

Table 4 shows mean values of sub-scales of SMHE. High mean was obtained on Quest for Employment (3.48) and to Gain Qualification (3.47) while low mean was on Family Reasons (2.69). Mean scores represent that students perceive Quest for Employment as most common type of motivation and Family Reasons as least common type of motivation in acquiring higher education.

The result indicate that there are certain strong reasons for students in acquiring higher education. Students wants to gain and achieve something from their education and not just waste time and money. This is a very positive sign for the development of a country. This indicates that majority of the students have moderately high levels of motivation for higher education. Clearly it is the most important outcome of the present study which significantly revealed that university students do have certain motivational factors that leads them to gain higher education.

4. DISCUSSION

According to a survey of American freshmen conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, getting better jobs and preparing for a career have become as important as seeking self-improvement through learning among reasons students decide to acquire higher education [8]. Another major reason for acquiring higher education was to extend knowledge and broaden horizons. These findings are broadly consistent with the findings obtained by Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes, and Armstead [9]. Education is considered to mold and polish a person and his personality [10]. That is why students’ motivation for higher education includes the aspects of personality development and studying subjects in depth and developing as a person [11]. Along with this the family plays an important role in the decision for studying higher education. The family plays both a positive and negative role in every aspect of a person’s life similar results were seen in our study as well.

An American research was conducted to investigate “reasons for studying higher education” with university sample of 844 students. The responses were, of course, many and varied, but they were categorized into three main categories, called ‘stop gap’, ‘means to an end’ and ‘personal development’ [9]. Those classified as stop gap students 10%, were studying because they could think of nothing else to do, wanted to defer taking a decision, or simply wanted to enjoy themselves for three years. Those classified as means to an end student 66%, wanted to achieve something through their degree, whether this was a better paid or more interesting job, or simply qualification to put after their names. This was much the most common category, with two-thirds of the sample being classified in this way. Personal development students 24% (nearly a quarter of the sample) were ones who were interested in the subject itself or wanted to use their degree to realize their own potential or to develop their personal skills. Although...
the study did not look into the influence of English as a sound language and its compounding effect on their writing skills but it remains to be seen as an impact factor since most of the students acquire it as their second language [12]. Socio-economic background is the major factor in the variation in student perspectives on the value and attainability of higher education [13]. In addition, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds perceive educational achievement barriers which may impede their access to higher education The Australian Higher Education Council conducted a study which reveals appreciable social stratification in the opinions of senior secondary students about the relevance and attainability of a university education [14]. Overall, young people’s interest in tertiary education is strong. Higher socio-economic background students demonstrated stronger confidence in securing a path to university. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are significantly less likely than other students to believe that a university course would offer them the chance of an interesting and rewarding career [15]. Several researchers have found significant, positive relationship between college GPA and aspirations [16] and our study also supports this finding. Thus, a student’s aspiration or motivation level is affected by prior academic performance.

5. CONCLUSION

The most important outcome of the present study which clearly revealed that university students do have certain motivational factors that leads them to gain higher education Response analysis showed that most commonly cited motivational reasons of the students who participated in the study were to get a good job, to extend knowledge, to develop as a person, to get a high salary job, family encouragement and to broaden horizons Students’ considered getting a job with a high salary as their greatest motivational reason in acquiring higher education. This research is also expected to be helpful in improving the quality of education by identifying the types of motivation. It is further hoped that the scale developed will provide the researchers and psychologists of the field with the opportunity to better understand the phenomenon of students’ motivation for higher education.

REFERENCES