

# The Role of Socioeconomic Factor in Promoting Higher Education in the State of Kuwait

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to determine the level of influence of parental education, social and financial status on their senior college students by encouraging them to pursue higher degrees. The sample of the study was 313 senior college students randomly selected from private and public universities in Kuwait to answer the questionnaire. Then followed by interviewing some of these 313 students for triangulation. The result of the findings shows that the impact of parents on college student's academic achievement should be mediated through college student's own self-perception and the environments in which students grew up. The findings show that there is a strong influence and positive motivations on the development of the students' own beliefs. Moreover, the study shows other factors such as the family socioeconomic background, the students' social influences, the students' academic achievement, in addition to the educational achievement of both parents which all have impact on students' decisions to pursue higher degrees.

**Keywords:** senior college students, parent's involvement, parent's education factor, socioeconomic factors, gender factors, genetic factors, students' achievements, motivations

## 1. Introduction

It is not just the responsibility of the government to implement education in the community. As long as children get their first education in the family followed by shaping their future educational interests, beliefs, and motivations, then, parents have the same obligation as the government (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994). We assume that parent education would be linked to the progress of their adolescent and college students' academic success and achievement, which in turn would be associated to higher levels of adult educational execution. We also assume that there is an association between parents' education and their children's academic accomplishment in which it relies on the notion that parents gained a lot of information and knowledge through the period they were in school that had impacts on the ways in which they interacted with their children (Davis-Kean, 2005).

Thus, a student who is exposed to parents who obtained advance academic degrees, read frequently, encouraged a strong work ethics, and provided achievement-oriented opportunities should develop the guiding belief that achievement is to be valued, pursued, and expected (Gonzalez-DeHass, Alyssa, Willems, Patricia, & Holbein, 2005). This belief should then in turn promote successful outcomes across students' academic development, including high school graduation, and then earning college certificate, which leads to the pursuit of higher learning, and the acquisition of high-prestige occupations. Not surprisingly, educated parents will be different in how to react and motivate their adolescent and college students than low educated parents.

Even though the impact of the mass media, textbooks, teachers, and voices of the society may influence college students to pursue higher degrees once these students graduate from college, but their parent's characteristics such as genetic factors, the level of education, occupation, income, etc., may also have influence into shaping the students future and their final endeavor. We need to know to what extend do these college students have the intension to pursue for higher degree depending on what influences their decisions. Therefore, our main goals in the current study are to examine long-term effects of the parents' educational level on their college students' educational and occupational success while looking and discovering other keys such as the family socioeconomic status and the college students' own intelligences and motivation.

## 2. Rational

Some parents assume and believe that knowledge and information can be gained through education within the school premises (Somadayo, 2014). However, parents' involvement may benefit their children and college students' learning and academic success (Gonzalez-De Hass et al., 2005). They feel more efficient to master educational knowledge in college specially if there is an association raised between college and home environment. Stipek supported that by being confident of success is an indispensable ingredient for active learning, and lacking this, college students will not take part in diligent learning behaviors (1998). College students' knowledge and educational success is supported by their parents' involvement. Consequently, high educated parents have different ways and means in inspiring knowledge development in their college student's life. Consequently, college students' cognitive skills and college performance which leads them to succeed in college is highly associated with social and family back ground factors such as parents level of education, parents income, and genetic impacts. Though these and other factors influence the achievement level of students in general, and are changeable in time, but do these college students' motivation for learning gained from the family, forms the college students' education level and personalities and provides a reflection for their educational performance and personality style in the future.

The purpose of this paper is to examine under the umbrella concept of who or what has the key role in influencing the college student to pursue higher educational degree: parents' education, college students' own motivation, career, or the financial impact, and to do so we need to find out the answers to the following research questions.

## 3. Research Questions

- 1) To what extend does the college students' motivation is effected by the educational level of their parents?
- 2) What are the factors that have influence on the students' high academic achievements?

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Parental Education Factor

Some researchers suggest that there are many factors that may have influence on the academic success of an individual than how involved a parent is in an individual's education (Shapiro, 2009). Educational level of the parents as one of these factors, might have a significant indirect effect on their children in the adolescent stage (Demir, Kilic, & Unal, 2010). Besides, parental education is an important index of academic achievement status, and as noted, it predicts students' educational and behavioral concerns. Many researchers agree that success at school or college level is associated with social background factors as parents' education, financial support, and students' cognitive skills (Giddens, 1997). The investigation of parental education done by P. Dave and J. Dave (1971) on performance with their students' academic achievement have found that parents with high educational degrees have higher impact than the parents with lower education which consecutively their adolescents have academic failure. Furthermore, many theorists and researchers claim that student educational progressiveness and achievement are deeply ingrained in the processes of socialization, such as learning through observation of parental modeling, others struggle that through their personal qualities, children actively shape the parenting they receive (Alomar, 2006).

In terms, there are positive relations between parents' levels of education and parents' expectations for their college students' success (Davis-Kean, 2005). This relation suggests that more highly educated parents actively encourage their college students to develop high expectations of their own. Moreover, Epstein (1995) for example sets the stage by defining parent involvement as families and communities who take an active role in creating a caring educational environment.

Demir, Kilic, and Unal (2010) demonstrated that students whose parents were highly educated and exposed to variety of information including reading short stories to novels, mathematics, science, etc. tended to show more success in these areas than their peers whose parents were less educated and not being exposed to diverse information. The reason for this association is because highly educated parents knew the learning requirements and had the opportunity to provide the best educational environment for their college students (Alomar, 2006). Also, Bicer, Capraro, and Cetin found that obtaining and understanding curricular information from schools and/or teachers followed by monitoring college syllabi enables parents to track the progress of their college students; thus they can help their college students with problems related to their subjects learning (2012).

Parents can increase the potential development of their college students' knowledge and skills by setting high expectations and providing stimulating environments (Cross, Woods, & Schweingruber, 2009). Parental expectations and aspirations also have been suggested to have effects on their college students' achievement.

This rational concept has been backed by prior research and has been “confirmed in numerous studies over multiple decades” (Carpenter, 2008, p. 165). For example, positive correlations between parental expectations and student achievement have been documented in several recent studies (Davis-Kean, 2005; Pearce, 2006; Vartanian et al., 2007; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). However, students’ successive academic achievement had no relationship with the parental expectations (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001).

#### *4.2 Socioeconomic Factor*

Parent education and family income which would influence parents’ schooling expectations for their college students which is considered as another factor for college students to pursue higher educational degree. Benson et al. found that school students whose parents are active and involved in school activities achieve more in school regardless of their socioeconomic status (1980). Conger et al. (2002), McLoyd (1989), and Mistry et al. (2002) claim that parental education and income affect the students’ behavior through the level of actual interactions within the family. It is well recognized that students’ behavior is influenced by their parents (Huesmann, 1998). Importantly, on the other hand, Sirin (2005), White (1982), and McLoyd’s (1998) review found that parents who experience difficult economic times have children who are more pessimistic about their educational and vocational futures. Likewise, parents from the middle socio-economic class tend to think that their college students are the primary drivers for their own success (Peterson, Elizabeth, Rubie-Davies, & Christine, 2011).

#### *4.3 Genetic Factor*

The biggest requirement one needs to consider in thinking about all of these links is the potential role of genetic factor in accounting for at least some of the associations that have been identified. The amount and kind of education that parents get is time consuming and it is influenced by the parents various genetic support. College students get their genetic cravings which are linked to intelligence, motivation and personality and are passed to them from their parents (Rowe et al., 1999). Motivation usually concerns human behavior which comprises two scopes—direction and magnitude (intensity)—which in turn is responsible for the choice of a precise action, as well as, the determination expended on it and the persistence with it (Dornyei, 2007). Accordingly, Dornyei (2007) added that college students’ motivation explains why they decide to do something as pursuing higher degrees and how hard and long they are passionate to tolerate for receiving this higher degree. In addition, Dornyei (2007) explained that self-efficacy which reinforced by each individual who judges by him/herself of his/ herself capability to convey certain specific tasks, and accordingly, his/ her sense of efficacy will determine their choice of the activities attempted, the amount of effort exerted, the outcome of their efforts and the persistence displayed. Consequently, self-efficacy has impacts on the academic achievement, motivation, and learning (Pajares, 1996). Similarly, human action is caused by determination, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice. Goals that are both specific and difficult (within reason) lead to the highest performance provided the individual shows goal commitment.

Of course, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) socialization model specifies that there are other characteristics that intervene the impact of parents’ behaviors and expectations on the college student’s academic performance. In particular Eccles and her colleagues have argued that academic performance is influenced most directly by individuals’ confidence in their abilities to succeed and by the particular task value that individuals attach to the field being studied (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Integrating this perception with the socialization factors which leads to following prediction: parents’ education should influence college student’s academic achievement, in part, through its direct and indirect influence on their college student’s academic ability self-concepts. Gonzalez-Pineda, Carlos Nunez, and Gonzalez-Pumariaga (2002) found that student academic self-concept to be related to academic achievement.

#### *4.4 Individual Factor*

Another factor that may have an influence on college students’ pursue for obtaining higher degree is the individual experiences and satisfaction that takes place, and whether the consequence is devastation or victory (Bandura, 1997). Through satisfaction, the college students are more likely to persist and show better academic performance, as well as, be more willing to continue the learning process because the personal needs and expectations are fulfilled within the college environment (Rashidi, 2014). Moreover, Astin (1993) found out that students’ satisfaction is linked with students’ individualities and students’ life. Donohue and Wong (1997) added that college students’ future destruction is highly affected by their satisfaction and academic performance.

### **5. Methodology**

In order to achieve the purposes of this research study, a questionnaire (see Appendix) and structured interview

was conducted.

### *5.1 The questionnaire*

#### 5.1.1 Participants

The participants of this study included 313 college students their age ranged from 21-25 years old and who were all college seniors. Of the 313 students participating in the study, 219 were females which are equivalent to about 70%, and 94 were males.

#### 5.1.2 Instrument

A questionnaire was designed and an interview was administered. The questionnaire was distributed to college students within all majors. The questionnaire was interpreted to the first language of the students (Arabic Language) so that it will be clear to them and comprehensible. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of controlled-choice questions for the purpose of collecting information related to the participants' personal background. The participants were asked about their gender, age, and the years they spent in their college. The second part contains five categories based on the student-parent relationship and on the student's academic achievements. These categories include the parent's educational level, parents' employment status, parent's involvement in academic issues, students' involvement in cultural activities, and student's acquaintance with the market demands.

#### 5.1.3 Data Collection

In the beginning of fall semester 2014/2015, the researcher visited the only 6 public and private universities in the State of Kuwait. Each visit took place in the morning for two hours per day for five days. During the visits, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to students without any exclusions of their stage of enrollment in the university. Once the researcher collected all the questionnaires, it was sorted out according to the stage of the student's college enrollment. Out of 870 participants answering the questionnaire only 313 were identified as senior college students and their questionnaire was selected and analyzed. The reason for this selection of participants is because this group of students, senior level students, is in a stage for academic and cognitive challenge as well as they are well informed and retain mature attitudes, motivation and self-esteem.

### *5.2 Interview*

#### 5.2.1 Participants

In order to triangulate and possibly extend the findings of the present research study, structured interview was conducted with 18 college students who were seniors and enrolled in public and private universities in the State of Kuwait. In order to insure reliability in this study, the researcher interviewed randomly selected 18 individuals who participated in the questionnaire and were asked prior to the interview if they were senior students (Al-Darwish, 2006).

#### 5.2.2 Instrument

The researcher used only one question which is "Do you intend to pursue higher education (Masters and Ph.D) in your major? Why?" The reason for the one-on-one interviews with senior college students was to substantiate their motivations, and attitudes toward their academic future. The language used in the interviews was mainly Arabic (first language of the participants). Each of the 18 interviewees provided one individual interview with the researcher in the university, lasting about twenty minutes. During the interview, participants were reminded that the information they were sharing was confidential, not to be repeated or presented to other individual. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

## **6. Data Analysis and Discussion**

### *6.1 Questionnaire*

This study investigated the concept of who or what has the key role in influencing the college student to pursue higher educational degree. The results of the statistical analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire and the findings of the interview shows that a significant proportion of the participants (70%) are females and (30%) are males. Given that Kuwait is a conservative Muslim society, and women in these societies must strive to acquire essential life skills that would make them self-reliant, therefore, it is of paramount importance to identify parents influence on females' education. Different academic qualifications of the respondents' parents give good basis for comparison. Therefore, in Table 1-A which shows that almost 20% of the respondents' fathers have high academic degrees (Masters and PhD). The vast majority of the respondents (62.3%) completed Bachelor degree and higher. The table also demonstrates that almost 38% of the respondents' father only

completed diploma or high school. However, if we look at Table 1-B it shows with cumulative percentage of 61.7% of the respondents' mothers hold Bachelor degrees and higher. However, 37.7% of the respondents' mothers hold high school diploma or less which is the same percent as the respondents' father.

Table 1-A. Father educational level

		Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PhD	26	8.3	8.3	8.3
	masters	36	11.5	11.5	19.8
	bachelor of arts/science	133	42.5	42.5	62.3
	high school diploma	77	24.6	24.6	86.9
	less than high school diploma	41	13.1	13.1	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	313	100.0	100.0	

The father educational level revealed various levels, fathers who have PHD had final ratio of 8.3%, and those who acquired masters got 11.5, bachelor of arts / science 42.5%, but the highest ratio was for high school diploma and above which was almost 87%. Those who had less than high school diploma were 13%.

Table 1-B. Mother educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PhD	8	2.6	2.6	2.6
	masters	15	4.8	4.8	7.3
	bachelor of arts/science	170	54.3	54.3	61.7
	high school diploma	68	21.7	21.7	83.4
	less than high school diploma	52	16.6	16.6	100.0
	Total	313	100.0	100.0	

The mother educational level came as was expected; mothers with masters and above was 7.3%, Bachelor of Arts/science 54.3%, the high school diploma mothers and above acquired 83.4%, and those who had less than high school diploma got almost 17%.

Furthermore, a major percentage of the respondents' parent (43.1%) work in the public sector (Table 2-A). This reflects the nature of the Kuwaiti society since Kuwaitis believe that job security is more guaranteed in the public sector. Similarly, not only mothers occupied positions in the public sectors, but also, the findings revealed mothers as housewives had almost the same percent as employees in the public sectors. Because Islamic laws and cultural customs impact various stages of a Muslim women's life, including her education, employment opportunities, rights to inheritance, etc. women became publicly visible and their lives changed. Accordingly, they want to pursue their professional careers after having achieved university degrees. Although this may be true, working wives have to do most, if not all, of the household duties in addition to their full working load under employment commitments. The natural gender role-expectations always demand her to do her natural duties too. Thus, it is practically difficult for dual career women to accommodate both house and outside work. This, therefore, makes a working woman incompetent both at her working place as well as at home and may even cause serious difficulties in her married life. Therefore, mother chooses between being housewives or career women.

Table 2-A. Father employment status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid employed in the public sector	135	43.1	43.1	43.1
employed in the private sector	78	24.9	24.9	68.1
retired	100	31.9	31.9	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

For fathers' employment status, we found that those who are employed in the public sector are about 43.1%, and those of 25% were hired in the private sector. Meanwhile, retired people got 32%.

Table 2-B. Mother employment status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid employed in the public sector	105	33.5	33.5	33.5
employed in the private sector	37	11.8	11.8	45.4
retired	61	19.5	19.5	64.9
housewife	110	35.1	35.1	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

For mothers' employment status, we found that mothers who are employed in the public sector are about 33.5%, and those were hired in the private sector had ratio of 12%. Meanwhile, retired mothers got 20%. And mothers who are staying as housewives got 35%.

Explanations for the differences in importance of personal values are emphasized in Table 3 which shows how people come to value what they do not have. Table (3) reveals that the level of parents' income for 56.9% of the respondents is below KD 20,000, and these parents feel deprived of certain needs (money), therefore they come to value education more. Major proportion of the respondents' income (13.2%) is relatively high and exceeded KD 40,000, 136,000 Us Dollar. Once again variations in the parent's level of income give good base for the outcome of the analysis.

Table 3. Parents' average yearly income

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid less than KD 20.000	178	56.9	56.9	56.9
KD 20.000-40.000	92	29.4	29.4	86.3
KD 41.000-60.000	30	9.6	9.6	95.8
more than KD 60.000	13	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

For the yearly income of parents we found that 56.9% of parents have less than KD 20.000, 29% get 20.000–40.000. And 10% 41.000–60.000, and those who have more than 60.000 got 4%.

Although given that most of the respondents' fathers have high levels of education, this seems to be reflected in their involvement in discussing academic issues with their children. Almost 86% of the respondents' parents either always or sometime discuss academic issues with their parents. This is expected to influence their academic performance. On the other hand, Table 4-B shows mothers' involvement in their kids' education is more than the father. This result is not surprising for two reasons. Mother works closely with her children at home while the father spent most of his time at work. Second, the vast majority of those who took part in the survey are females, it's very likely to witness close discussion between a female and her educated mother.

Even though Agrawal and Hundekari (2013) suggested that socioeconomic status is one of the best predictors of student achievement, still in this study the development of personal abilities and skills and social factors were mainly the main goals of the respondents' academic achievement. Financial motives appeared to be behind these two factors. This result is not surprising in a rich society like Kuwait. As mentioned earlier, besides the country's wealth, high levels of education helps in enhancing the economic social positions of the respondents. In addition, given that the fathers are highly educated, employed, their social relations in Kuwait as reflected by Diwaniya, which is an old name in Kuwait for reception area and where a man receives his business colleagues and male guests, and the small size of the society make the fathers familiar with the job market. This enables them to give informative advice to their kids. Similarly, mothers' education and close social relations enable respondents' mother to understand the market and assist their kids in dealing with it.

Table (4-A) father's involvement in the discussions about academic issues

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid always	126	40.3	40.3	40.3
sometime	143	45.7	45.7	85.9
never	44	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

Fathers who are always involved in academic issues got 40%, and those who sometimes do get 46% of whom we asked, then those who are never involved in academic issues & discussions got ratio of 14%.

Table 4-B. Mothers' involvement in the discussions about academic issues

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid always	130	41.5	41.5	41.5
sometime	146	46.6	46.6	88.2
never	37	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

Mothers who are always involved in academic issues got almost 42%, and those who sometimes do get involved almost 47% of whom we asked, then those who are never involved in academic issues & discussions got ratio of almost 12%.

Table 5-A. Fathers' familiarity with the job market

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid always	148	47.3	47.3	47.3
sometime	125	39.9	39.9	87.2
never	40	12.8	12.8	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

This scale revealed that fathers who are always familiar with the job market got ratio of 47%, and those who sometimes are familiar with that 40%, but those who never became familiar with it got almost 13%.

Table 5-B. Mothers' familiarity with the job market

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	always	85	27.2	27.2	27.2
	sometime	136	43.5	43.5	70.6
	never	92	29.4	29.4	100.0
	Total	313	100.0	100.0	

This scale revealed that mothers who are always familiar with the job market got ratio of 27%, and those who sometimes are familiar with that almost 44%, but those who never became familiar with it got 29%.

Table 6. How would you classify the motive in the environment surrounding you that constitute a driving force behind developing your academic level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	social	50	16.0	16.0	16.0
	economic	36	11.5	11.5	27.5
	both	227	72.5	72.5	100.0
	Total	313	100.0	100.0	

This question showed that people who believed that the environmental motive behind their academic level development is social one were about 16.0%, and those who believed that it is an economic motive are almost 12 but both motives classifiers got nearly 73%.

In Table 7 it is clear that almost relatively two third of all the respondents' indicated that they are unfamiliar with the market. This might be due to the fact that the vast majority of the respondents are females and do not have intensive knowledge of the market as males respondents. Furthermore, the availability of job opportunity according to field of specialization scale revealed that people who believe they have a lot of appropriate ones 37.7%, and those who believe it's not a lot are 57.2, but those who believe it does not exist got 5.1%.

Table 7. To what extent are you familiar with the job market

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	familiar	118	37.7	37.7	37.7
	unfamiliar	195	62.3	62.3	100.0
	Total	313	100.0	100.0	

This question measures the familiarity level with job market that revealed people who are familiar got 38%, and those who are unfamiliar got 62%.

Table 8. I believe that hiring for jobs is solely based on the applicant's abilities and professional skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	strongly agree	61	19.5	19.5	19.5
	agree	140	44.7	44.7	64.2
	disagree	112	35.8	35.8	100.0
	Total	313	100.0	100.0	

Almost 64% of the senior college students believe that there is a fair job hiring compared to 36% who disagree with this statement.

Table 9. Goals for academic achievement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
development of personal abilities and skills	111	35.5	35.5	35.5
financial motives	48	15.3	15.3	50.8
social motives	49	15.7	15.7	66.5
other motives	2	.6	.6	67.1
Valid development of personal abilities and skills & financial motives & social motives	41	13.1	13.1	80.2
development of personal abilities and skills & financial motives	21	6.7	6.7	86.9
development of personal abilities and skills & social motives	20	6.4	6.4	93.3
financial motives & social motives	21	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Are affiliated with a cultural society or club (as a personal effort)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	78	24.9	24.9	24.9
no	235	75.1	75.1	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

People who contributed in cultural society or club got 24.9%, but those who didn't are 75.1%.

The reason for having this high percent of women for not participating in these cultural societies and clubs, firstly, because 70% of the participants in this research paper are females whose status and roles in Muslim cultures and societies such as in Kuwait was profoundly neglected, and their source of information is limited to what they receive at home from family members specially parents. Secondly, almost everywhere in the Muslim world in general and specifically in Kuwait religion-based law is a component of the values, ideas and beliefs that encompasses all spheres of life, including personal and social relationships, economics and politics. Therefore, participating in these clubs in a conservative Muslim country as Kuwait would be unique.

## 6.2 Interview

In this section, the researcher presents a vivid picture using participants' comments to express to what extent they are affected with their college years that forces them to pursue higher degrees. The data gathered pertaining to the interviews revealed that the curriculum is without sufficient planning or careful selection of textbooks and materials, as well as the teachers are not qualified enough to teach their subject matter. Yet, two interviewees added that these university teachers are proficient in their major field, but must also be knowledgeable in the interdisciplinary areas that are related to their major field. This confirms what was mentioned in the descriptive analysis in Table 11 where 75% of the participants in the study were not satisfied with the performance of the educational institutions.

Table 11. Are you satisfied with the performance of the educational institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	78	24.9	24.9	24.9
Valid no	235	75.1	75.1	100.0
Total	313	100.0	100.0	

This question was set to measure the educational performance satisfaction level which revealed that 24.9% were satisfied, but 75.1% were not.

Significant part of the respondents (75.1%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the performance of the educational institutions. The respondents believe that the job market can absorb all skilled college graduates. The respondents believe that hiring is mainly based on the applicant's abilities and professional skills. However, 36% of the respondents disagree with this proposal which is considered a minority.

One interviewee's reason for pursuing higher degrees is to improve themselves professionally and update their knowledge by going abroad and getting real experiences through their interaction with other graduate students enrolled in universities abroad. Another remark was that the standardized external examinations, and the lack of teaching and learning resources that are available in general made the interviewees anxious to search about other means for self-improvement and that would be through pursuing graduate degree. Likewise, four of the college seniors noted that pursuing graduate degrees helps them to integrate research findings with the design of their present major.

In addition to the above comments, some interviewees were worried about not being competent after graduating from university. They expressed their fear and concern due to the competition with other prospective candidates and the expectations from their parents. These senior students strive to develop their competency by pursuing graduate degree.

## 7. Conclusion

Although many students pursue graduate studies for the love of gaining knowledge, learning and discovering new information, but for others, cultural motivation and family impact have an unquestionably positive influence on the student's decision to enter graduate studies.

As noted in the discussion, the researcher believes that the impact of parents on college student's academic achievement should be mediated through college student's own self-perception. Given the environments in which students grow up are likely to have a strong influence on the development of the students' own beliefs (Peterson et al., 2011). External pressures that college students experience may include parental expectations and fear of rejection. Moreover, the researcher believes that certain characteristics: like parents' education and jobs influence parents' beliefs and behaviors, which, in turn, influence the college student's perceptions of their own ability. There are other factors such as the family socioeconomic background, the social influences, student academic achievement, and the educational achievement of both parents affecting decisions to pursue higher degrees. Moreover, the researcher has observed from the data analysis a significant increase in achieving higher degree from college students because educated parents are assumed to create environment that facilitate learning. Besides, a high level of parents' education allows college students to have and develop positive motivation and educational aspirations (Agrawal & Hundekari, 2013).

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire Academic Achievement

The social milieu surrounding students plays a major role in the educational process. Nowadays, there has been more focus on research dealing with the impact of social, economic and cultural factors on the academic achievement. Please choose the right answer.

Age: -----

Academic Stage: (1) Freshman (2) Sophomore (3) Junior (4) Senior

1. Gender

a. Male

b. female

2. Goals for academic achievement

Tick (  ) for the goal(s) behind you academic achievement

- Development of personal abilities and skills.
- Financial motives
- Social motives

- Other motives

If there are other motives, please mention them in the space below

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3. The student-parent relationship related to decision on student's academic achievement.

A. Parents' educational level

Father:

- a. PhD
- b. Masters
- c. Bachelor of Arts/Science
- d. High School Diploma
- e. Less than High School Diploma

Mother:

- a. PhD
- b. Masters
- c. Bachelor of Arts/Science
- d. High School Diploma
- e. Less than High School Diploma

B. Parents' employment status:

Father:

- a. Employed in the public sector
- b. Employed in the private sector
- c. Retired

Mother:

- a. Employed in the public sector
- b. Employed in the private sector
- c. Retired
- d. Housewife

C. Parents' average yearly income:

- a. Less than KD 20,000
- b. KD 20,000-40,000
- c. KD 41,000-60,000
- d. More than KD 60,000

4. Parents' involvement in the discussions about academic issues

Father:

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never

Mother:

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never

5. Parents' familiarity with the job market

Father:

- a. Always                      b. Sometimes                      c. Never

Mother:

- a. Always                      b. Sometimes                      c. Never

6. How would you classify the motive in the environment surrounding you that constitute a driving force behind developing your academic level?
- a. Social                      b. economic                      c. both
- D. Involvement in cultural activities
1. Are affiliated with a cultural society or club (as a personal effort)  
a. Yes                      b. No
  2. To what extent are you familiar with the job market?  
a. Familiar                      b. Unfamiliar
  3. Are you satisfied with the performance of the educational institutions?  
a. Yes                      b. No
- E. Acquaintance with the market demands
1. Job opportunities in your field of specialization are ...  
a. A lot                      b. limited                      c. none
  2. I believe that hiring for jobs is solely based the applicant's abilities and professional skills.  
a. Strongly agree                      b. agree                      c. disagree
  3. I believe that hiring for jobs is solely based on connections and social status  
a. Strongly agree                      b. agree                      c. disagree

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