

Social Capital and Educational Aspiration of Students: Does Family Social Capital Affect More Compared to School Social Capital?

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Abstract

Resources from multiple social contexts influence students' educational aspiration. In the field of social capital a neglected issue is how students obtain social capital from varying contexts and which contexts benefit them more to shape their future educational plan which consequently affects their level of aspiration. In this study, we aim to examine whether the students' social capital, which is created by their families, has an extensive effect in shaping their educational aspiration compared to the social capital which is created in schools. We use the information collected from 553 students, their parents and 225 teachers from 12 selected secondary schools in Bangladesh. We conduct a series of multiple linear regression analyses to estimate the influence of family social capital and school social capital on the dependent variable of educational aspiration. To compare the effect size of family social capital and school social capital we consider the standardized Beta (β) weights of these two variables. The results show that beyond the socio-economic status, both family social capital and school social capital positively affect students' educational aspiration. In addition, when we compare the effect size of these two variables, results show that family social capital has more strength compared to school social capital to predict the educational aspiration outcome of students.

Keywords: aspiration, educational, family, school, social capital

1. Introduction

Educational aspiration has long been considered as an important psychological aspect of students' propensity of attaining a high level of education which significantly impacts adolescents' future life. In respect of influential factors, Gottfredson (2002) posits that student's educational aspiration is influenced by multiple interpersonal and systemic factors. Social capital is the most important contributor in improving the educational aspiration which mediates the effects of students' socioeconomic background and educational aspiration. It serves as a channel to convey values, norms and knowledge to students (Buchmann & Dalton, 2002). Colman (1988) first introduced the conceptual framework of social capital as an influential factor on children's educational development. Colman recommends that strong family and schools backgrounds are important for the educational development of children. Colman also suggests that social capital serves as a mechanism to transmit family human capital from parents to children. Several studies found that social capital is the foremost predicting factor of academic outcome. Teachman, Paasch, and Carver (1996) also found that social capital protects students from early dropout problems in education. Post and Pong (1998) demonstrate that students' improvements in mathematics and reading achievement are the consequent of their individual family social capital. Furstenberge and Hughes (1995) divide social capital into two spheres, within and outside the family. Within-family denotes the family ties or bonding of family members in a family; on the other hand, out-side family denotes their involvement with schools. Their study shows that social capital has many positive academic outcomes. Crosnoe (2004) argue that family and school, both of institutions facilitate students' academic outcome. Author also examines that family and school capital affect independently and together on students' academic outcome. Hoffmann and Dufur (2008) observe that high-quality schools have lower juvenile delinquency especially among low-achieving students because of high parental involvement in schools. Though social capital positively affects students' academic outcome, we observe two limitations in the literature and our objective is to examine the following research

questions:

- i) Beyond socioeconomic factors, how do family social capital and school social capital individually affect the educational aspiration of students?
- ii) Between the family social capital and school social capital, which is more likely to predict the educational aspiration of students?

2. Literature Review

Sanders et al. (2001) demonstrate that students' post-secondary educational aspiration is linked to their educational attainment but this relationship is complex. Goldeberg et al. (2001) found that the association between students' aspiration and educational attainment has two unidirectional aspects; one is driven aspect and the other is performance aspect. The aspiration driven aspect suggests that aspiration has no achievement. Conversely, the performance aspect suggests that differences in academic performance are cause for a variance in educational aspiration when students' academic self-concept and educational attainment have a strong association. In fact, students' individual perception of their own performance massively influences their own decisions, whether they continue their post-secondary education or not. In this respect, Sirin et al. (2004) observe that students' self-reliance is highly related to their educational continuation since self-reliance creates awareness about the ability of students to achieve their future goals. Marjoribanks (2003) observes that students' academic performance significantly impacts their self-concept which later enhances their educational aspiration. Another study observes that students who have higher test scores have higher academic aspiration compared to students those with low grades (Lippman et al., 2008). Collman et al. (1998) observe that students in Catholic schools had higher academic outcome compared to students in public schools. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) conclude that closeness of social relationship between students, families and schools enhance the educational aspiration of students. Authors point out that social capital in response to family relations and community social organizations, is useful to develop social capital of students.

3. Methods

3.1 Source of Data

This study is based on a survey carried out in the sub-district of Pirgonj in Bangladesh in February, 2014 through interviews and questionnaires. We chose 12 secondary schools to collect our data. We selected students from grade 9 and their parents as respondents using questionnaire interview at each school. The population size was 603 students. We selected all of these students but received responses from 553 students and their parents. In addition, this study included the responses of 255 teachers from our selected schools.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

3.2.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this study is the level of students' educational aspiration and to determine this, students were asked "How far would you like to go to school?" The answers were chosen from the following scale: 1 = less than high school graduation, 2 = high school education only, 3 = less than two years of college, vocational or business school, 4 = two or more years of college including two year degree, 5 = graduation degree, 6 = Master's degree or equivalent and 7 = Ph., MD., or other professional degrees.

3.2.2 Independent Variables

1) Family Social Capital

Several scholars have identified several indicators as components of family and school social capital to measure social capital. From them, we use the indicators after considering the aspect of either bonding or bridging social capital, which outlines the previous theoretical treatment of social capital. Within the family, social capital composites of the interconnectedness among family members, especially between parents and child. In this regard, Smith et al. (1995) and Coleman (1988) propose several indicators that could measure family social capital, including (i) parental discussion on school matters with children (ii) parents check or help students' homework, (iii) parents attend school activities, (iv) parental educational expectation of children and (v) parents' discussion of future career. Parental discussion of school matters with children is based on the question of how parents often discuss school matters with children. Likewise, parents' helping or checking the homework is based on the question of how often parents help or check children's homework. In the respect of parental attendance at school activities, parents were asked how often they attend their children's school activities. To know the responses of parents' educational expectation of their children, parents were asked how they expect to enroll their children in college. We also asked parents how often they discuss the future career plans of their

children. All the responses were measured with a 5 point Likert-Scale ranging from 1 (not at all in agreement) to 5 (totally in agreement). Higher scores on the scale for those respective questions indicate more strength compared to lower scores. A family social capital index was estimated by adding the values of all 5 items for each participant. Hence, the index of one participant ranged from 5 to 25. The family social capital scale was found to have acceptable internal consistency with an alpha of .83.

2) School Social Capital

Israel and Beaulieu (2004) identified some indicators of school social capital in their studies. We measured school social capital using their indicators which are (i) student-teacher relationship, (ii) student participation in extracurricular activities in school, (iii) school contacts for parents, (iv) experienced teachers in schools and (v) highly educated teachers in school. In respect to the student-teacher relationship we asked students how many teachers do they have good relations with. To obtain the frequencies of students' participation in extracurricular activities we asked how many times in a week they usually participate in those activities in school. To identify parents contact with school, parents were asked how often they contact the school. In respect to students' access to teachers outside the class we asked students how many teachers permit them access outside class. We also counted the total number of teachers who had a postgraduate degree in each school. All responses were measured with a 5 point Likert-Scale. Higher scores on the respective questions indicate more strength compared to lower scores. A school social capital index was estimated by adding the values of all five items for each participant. Hence, the index of one participant ranged from 4 to 20. The school social capital scale was found to have acceptable internal consistency with an alpha of .85

3.2.3 Control Variables

Previous studies on aspiration examined how children with low socioeconomic status are likely to have low educational aspiration compared to children from high background (Schoon et al., 2006). From this view, we control parental income and the level of education. They have also argued that children with dropout peers tend to be aspired less and hence, we control the number of dropout peers of these students.

4. Family Social Capital and Educational Aspiration

The term family social capital was first used by Coleman (1990) to determine the feature of norms and relationships among family members which is essential to improve educational attainment for children. In this respect, Teachman et al. (1997) also found that family social capital has a vital role to improve the educational aspiration of children. Authors argue that the family acts as a rational actor that sometimes enhances or sometimes discourages educational outcome of children. Smith et al. (1995) demonstrate that social capital creates a favourable environment which develops the educational attainment of children. In this respect, the authors emphasize two foremost features of family social capital; one is structure and the other is process which help to improve the environment of educational achievement for children in the family. Structure refers to the opportunity of interpersonal interactions between parents and children while process emphasizes on the quality of parental involvement with their children. Process also refers parents to various nurturing activities for children, such as helping their homework and discussing future plans and school activities which improve educational aspiration for children. In this respect, Qian and Blair (1999) also found that parental involvement in education has a significant impact on the educational attainment of children. Schneider and Stevenson (1999) posit that in families where social relationships between parents and children are strong, students are more likely to have parental norms and perception, and in this circumstance, if parents have high educational aspiration, then students are also likely to have high educational aspiration.

5. School Social Capital and Educational Aspiration

Many studies have found a positive relationship between school social capital and students' educational aspiration when school social capital enhances the academic achievement of students. Some of the scholars have extended the concept of family social capital to the school context. For instance, Parcel, Dufur, and Zito (2010) examined that the connectedness between parents and schools improves the educational outcome of children. They also found a significant positive relationship between parental involvement in school and math achievement of students which enhances their overall educational aspiration. Pianta et al. (1995) observe that a positive relationship between students and teachers in schools enhances the academic and cognitive achievements of students by getting social support from teachers which consequently improves educational aspiration and personal development. In this respect, research also observes that parental involvement in school is positively related to higher grades and lower rate of behavioral problems of students in schools. Cavanagh and Dellar (2003) demonstrate that social capital in school improves the learning performance of students. Willms (1985) indicates that school social capital encourages improvement of academic performance of students. Golby

(1993) and Hornby (1995) claimed that school social capital not only improves the academic development of students but also enhances schools' effectiveness in the long run.

6. Analytic Strategy

A series of multiple linear regression analyses were performed to measure the influence of family social capital and school social capital on the dependent variable of educational aspiration. We measured the standardized coefficients of our studied variables. Therefore, to compare the effect size of family social capital and school social capital, we considered the Beta (β) weight of these two variables and in this case, Beta which has more value was considered as the more effective variable on educational aspiration in general.

7. Results

Table 1. Multiple linear regression analyses

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model3
Dependent variable = Educational aspiration	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)
Constant	8.32 ** (2.11)	6.44*** (1.68)	4.33*** (1.11)
Parental income	.86*** (.33)	.65** (.28)	.34** (.39)
Parental education	.78*** (.25)	.58*** (.19)	.39*** (.15)
Number of dropout peers	-.69** (.22)	-.53*** (.18)	-.34*** (.17)
Family social capital		.54*** (.15)	.48*** (.13)
School social capital			.41*** (.11)
R^2	.22	.43	.61

P** < .01, P*** < .001.

Results show that parental income has a significant positive effect on the educational aspiration ($\beta = .34$, $P < .01$) of students. This means if parental income becomes higher, students' level of educational aspiration also becomes higher. Similarly, if parental education ($\beta = .39$, $P < .001$) becomes higher, then the educational aspiration of their children becomes higher. Having dropout friends shows the converse result ($\beta = -.34$, $P < .001$) which indicates that if students have more friends who are school dropouts then their aspiration level decreases. However, after controlling these variables we can observe that family social capital significantly and positively impacts on students' educational aspiration ($\beta = .48$, $P < .001$) which indicates that if family social capital becomes higher, the level of educational aspiration of students also becomes higher. Similarly, school social capital also has a significant positive impact on students' educational aspiration ($\beta = .41$, $P < .001$). Hence, school social capital increases, students' level of educational aspiration also increase. Furthermore, we observe that the standardized coefficient of family social capital is higher than the standardized coefficient of school social capital. Therefore, though both family social capital and school social capital significantly and positively impact on educational aspiration, family social capital effects more strongly on educational aspiration compared to school social capital.

8. Discussion

According to the analyses, students' educational aspiration is strongly associated with their socioeconomic backgrounds and their schools in which family social capital and school social capital positively affect students' educational aspiration outcome. We further observe that, family social capital has more strong effect on

educational aspiration compared to school social capital. In fact, social capital is a resource which arises from the intergenerational relationships between parents and children, which in turn increase human capital of children (Coleman, 1988). Parental influence factor on children's education is allied with other factors such as parental expectation, socioeconomic status and parental involvement in schools. These factors affect parents' perception and how parents shape their aspiration about their children's education. Parental expectation has a greater effect on students' educational progress; in this respect, past research also examined how parental academic expectation influences students' own academic expectation and their foundation of educational attainment.

Parental socioeconomic status is the foremost factor of children's aspiration and in this respect, Lareau (1989) found that parents who have low socioeconomic status tend to be separated from schools and they have lower relationship with schools compared to parents who have high socioeconomic status. In fact, middle class parents are more involved in schools and they continuously advise their children in using their social resources which include parental educational values, their class position, social networks and marital status which encourage parents to positively be involved with the schools. Hence, students' educational aspiration is strongly associated with their socio-economic background, expectations and norms of their parents. Though family social capital has a strong influence on educational aspiration, both parents and teachers develop educational attainment of students. In other words, students who have remarkable academic performance, also have high educational aspiration which is developed with the support of parents and teachers. Students' academic aspiration is highly associated with the socio-economic background of the family and with the resources of the schools. Hence, though family social capital has an extensive influence on students' educational aspiration, school resources are also important to enhance the educational aspiration of students.

9. Conclusion

Students' educational aspiration becomes higher when a favorable condition exists in the family, specifically in the by parents of these students. In fact, high family social capital produces high academic expectation of children, especially when family social capital creates a favorable environment in academic performance for students. In conclusion, parents' higher level of socio-economic status is associated with higher family social capital which in turn enhances the level of educational aspiration of students. The limitation of this study is that the data were collected using a self-report method from a small sampling area. To better understand the influence of family social capital and school social capital, it requires sampling in a vaster region. Despite this, the methodology and procedure of this study can be effective directions for future research.

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