

Analysing Factors Influencing Career Prospects Among Underprivileged Students – A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Poverty and its reduction have been on the agenda of many developing countries and now more than ever education is seen as a catalyst of upward social mobility. Thus understanding the circumstances and views of underprivileged students and their families is very advantageous in policy decisions as well as local support. The aim of this study was to gauge the perceptions of underprivileged youth, residing in a low-income neighbourhood in Bhilai, regarding their career choices and educational opportunities. Surveys were carried out over 2 weeks and interviews with 23 respondents and their families were conducted. The results were analysed using a quantitative and contemporary ethnographic approach. The findings show that the most important factor influencing career choices among underprivileged youth is their Parental Support. Findings also show that the perception of 'stability' in jobs from generation to generation is different, where the parents of the students preferred government jobs as stable, whereas the students believed that jobs in the private sector offered more stability.

INTRODUCTION

Tackling generational poverty has taken a high priority while deciding global policies, especially through education. Official estimates of poverty in India are at 21.92%. The younger generation that is born into intergenerational poverty see education as a means for upward social mobility. Many times, the perceptions of the parents and the family on different career paths and forms of schooling play a major role in their children's choice of careers.

Assessing the utility of different government programs and resources available to underprivileged communities can be very useful especially as feedback for creating new policies aimed towards education of low-income students.

This study takes a look at the perception of low-income students and their families on their career and educational goals in underprivileged communities in Bhilai. To discuss this topic further, this study also incorporates students' feedback, allowing underprivileged youth to voice what they lack in career resources and what is most desired.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A questionnaire was formulated, which covers general sociodemographic characteristics and questions that asked the respondents to rate the importance and interest of various characteristics on a scale of 1 to 7. The first section covered factors influencing career options. The second section gauged the interest in different career options. The respondents were also allowed to give open-ended answers as to what they desired in the form of career-related assistance.

The criteria for inclusion of the respondents were 12-18 years of age and residence in a low-income neighbourhood. The criteria for exclusion of respondents was being aged over 18 or residence in a middle, high-income neighbourhood.

RESULTS

It was found that 'Parental Support' had the highest level of influence in students' career prospect (6.61/7) This was followed by 'Self Confidence' and 'Academic Performance'.

Businessman and Banker (4.52/7) had the highest level of interest followed very closely by Defense Services (4.4/7). Respondents reported that they considered management and business roles as they were considered "Elite". Others, who reported high interest in the Defense Services, attributed it to the stability that it would provide to them and their family long term.

Furthermore, in an open-ended question regarding desired career related assistance, respondents reported that financial assistance and awareness about different fields was an important issue in their families and communities. 5 respondents who wanted to pursue a career in athletics reported that they were lacking Parental Support in their desired field.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that, in low-income communities, the role of parents is crucial in determining career options for students. This was also evident in the proceedings of the interviews where family members took high interest in enquiring more about the survey.

In low income households that face generational poverty, education is seen as a means of uplifting the socioeconomic conditions of the family. In such circumstances, high parental involvement is quite normal and is something that, if considered while designing policies, will certainly yield better results. Hence, better communication and more feedback from students and their parents alike should be of high significance in educational policies

CONCLUSIONS

Although this paper examined the career perceptions in a disadvantaged neighborhood in Bhilai, its findings are still significant in other similarly placed communities. The findings of this study, particularly the extremely high importance of parents in career choices, marks a significant learning that could possibly be used while designing educational policy for similar underprivileged communities, also taking into account the feedback given by students themselves, where we saw the most notable deficiencies were in lack of awareness and exposure in the student's fields of interest.

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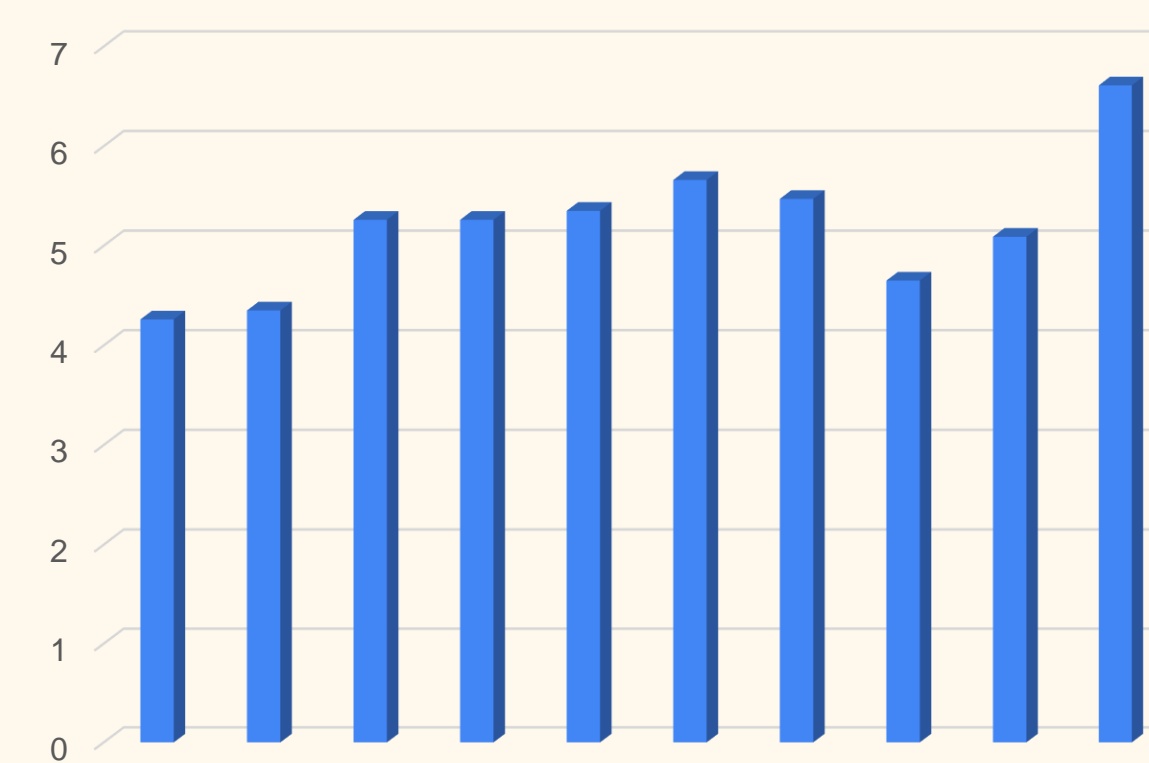


Figure 1. Mean Ratings of Factors Influencing Career Options (Out of 7)

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups					0.0017
Within Groups	97	9	10.78		
Total	773	220	3.51		
	870	229			

Figure 2. ANOVA Table for Factors Influencing Career Options