

An Investigation of Exploring Social Expectations of Newly Enrolled University Graduates

Mubashara Akhtar

Assistant Professor, University of Narowal, Pakistan

Nimmi Abid

Ph.D. Scholar, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Atif Khalil

Ph.D. Scholar, University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Abstract

Transition from school to university can be a cause of concern for many students when students encounter stressful situations as new entrants. One of the obvious reasons might be the gap between students' prior expectations and the realities of university life. This research study examines the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students, with particular focus and influence in terms of family, peers, and school. For this purpose, the responses were collected from 400 students of eight different departments. The data was collected by administering a questionnaire (QNEGS) developed on five-point Likert scale consisting of closed-ended format questions. The expert's opinions were taken to ensure the validity of instrument while internal consistency of the instrument was measured through Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha = 0.891$). The findings were explored across three factors of SE i.e., family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI). The findings of the study showed that a significant difference exists in the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students (NEGS) in terms of different demographic variables. Among three factors, one factor of social expectations i.e., family influence (FI) has significant difference regarding gender while other factors like family influence (FI) and school influence (SI) have significant difference based on socio-economic status. However, age and experience does not influence social expectations of students. Based on the findings, it is recommended that universities need to incorporate the parameters of social expectations so that students can go along smoothly and improve their performance.

Keywords: Newly Enrolled Graduate Students, Social Expectations, Family Influence, Peer influence, School Influence.

Introduction

It is generally believed that education brings social prosperity, political stability, and economic wealth to the life of an individual. In the modern and competitive society, individuals seem to be unsatisfied with their fundamental education and decide to get higher education (HE) because according to them, higher education plays a significant role in providing quick relief against various societal problems and in nations building (Calder & Clugston, 2003). In Pakistan, students are considered tomorrow's leaders after completion of their graduation (Toor, 2003). No

doubt, HE institutions (i.e., colleges and universities) play a pivotal role in educating the individuals of a society (Beringer, Malone & Wright, 2006).

Expectations are drawn from the individuals' past experiences and are the dominant interpreters of their future behavior (Howard, 2005; Cook & Rushton, 2008). According to Kreig (2013), students have more unrealistic expectations when they get admission into the institutions. Miller, Bender and Schuh (2005) found a number of studies which are relevant to the university student's expectations. If the students' expectations are not fulfilled, then they become disappointed and feel regret for the institutional choice. According to Kirst and Venezia (2004), and Kahlenberg (2004), educational resources, socio-economic status, access to HE, high school organization, financial concerns, and family influences encourage pupils to get HE.

Previous research studies on student's social expectations explored the dimension of expectations towards student's background characteristics (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt & Hunsberger, 2000), socio-economic status (Bloom, 2007; Louie, 2007), personnel cooperation and awareness, social opportunities, economic considerations (Bajsh & Hoyt, 2001; Bradshaw, Espinoza & Hausman, 2001), and college experience (Miller, Kuh, & Paine, 2006). Various sources of information influence newly enrolled student's expectations which include family, media, peers, and employees of educational institutions (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt & Hunsberger, 2000; Keup, 2007; Meyer, Spencer, & French, 2009; Mehboob, Shah & Bhutto, 2012). Pimpa (2004) states that parents also influence student's social expectations due to several factors, but the most important factor is financial factor which comprises of family support for living costs, tuition fees, and other related expenses.

According to Joseph and Joseph (2000) and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), family, peers, and instructors (faculty members) influence students to get further education and affect their persistence in educational institutions. Bowles, Dobson, Fisher and McPhail (2011), Harvey, Drew and Smith (2006) and Katanis (2000) identify the aspects which influence financial support, peers as well as instructor's influence. Previous educational experiences and socio-economic status affect expectations of students about higher education (HE) and as well as their process of transition from college to higher education. Chickering (1993) describes that social experiences, expectations and career are the three main causes which motivate students to get higher education. Students, hence, enter institutions with several experiences, goals, and expectations about getting higher education and are mostly influenced by media, family, and peers (Tinto, 1987). These expectations of students are continuously re-evaluated and challenged after entering an institution through interactions with other individuals in their surroundings. No doubt, university life of a student is complex and his/her priorities may be related to his current academic, social employment responsibilities and family, regarding completion of university studies and maintaining a lifestyle which may be helpful in satisfying their social as well as personal needs. Pithers and Holland (2006) stated that students' expectations have a significant difference with their experiences. As students spend time at university, unrealistic expectations of students develop. Their unrealistic expectations may also arise because institutions care more about institutional expectations rather than students' expectations.

According to Longden (2006) institutions should care about social expectations of students. Because students' retention and engagement in institutions are mostly influenced by their previous

experiences and expectations. If institutions are interested to enhance and maintain retention rates, then it is needed to find out the issue from several sources. There is a need to align students' experiences with their expectations as well as to facilitate them by changing their expectations and needs with the real environment and situations as well.

Students' future behavior may be determined by their choices and expectations of getting higher education. The researchers decided to conduct study at graduate level because it is generally believed that if social expectations of students regarding institutional reputation, learning environment, study timing, and availability of resources are counted then they are more eager to do something progressive for the betterment of society. If social expectations are not fulfilled, then it would be problematic and a big source of disappointment. The focus laid here is on the recognition of understanding students' social expectations to satisfy students and motivate them to succeed and compete in their programme in the future.

Objectives of the Study

To achieve the desired purpose of the study, following research objectives were formulated:

1. To explore the social expectations (SE) of newly enrolled graduate students across factors i.e., family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI) based on different demographic variables.
2. To find out the difference in the various factors of social expectations (SE) among newly enrolled graduate students based on different demographic variables.

Methodology

The present study is quantitative in nature and the survey-based research design was used to identify the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students at university level. Multistage sampling technique was applied to select the sample. At stage one, four faculties were selected out of eight by using simple random sampling; at second stage, two departments from each faculty were selected by again using simple random sampling. In this way, a total of eight departments were selected. At third stage, at least 50 students from each department were selected by covering both morning and self-supporting programs. In this way, a total of 400 students were selected as the sample.

Researchers developed a questionnaire to investigate the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students at university level. The questionnaire (QNEGS) was developed after doing an extensive review of literature and three factors of social expectations were drawn i.e. family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI). The questionnaire comprised of two parts: The first part included items on demographic variables i.e., gender, age, experience and socioeconomic status while the second part consisted of 5-point Likert type scale which contained 17 closed-ended format questions on three sub-factors of Social Expectations such as: a) family influence (8-items), b) peer' influence (4-items) and c) school influence (5-items).

The instrument was validated by taking the opinion of experts from the field of educational psychology and teacher education. They validated the instrument in the domain of language, content, and relevancy. After getting experts' opinion, the instrument was improved in terms of style, format and language as recommended by the experts. After validation, it was piloted on 70

students to ensure its reliability. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured through Cronbach Alpha 0.891. Overall reliability of the instrument was 0.891 but factor-wise reliability values vary such as the reliability of a) Family influence was at 0.783, b) peer' influence was at .566 and c) school influence was at .812.

The sample departments were visited by researchers. First, permission from the head of sampled departments was sought. After permission, data was collected by the researchers to ensure its authenticity. After data collection, data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA).

Results

The results of the study are as follows:

Table 1

Social Expectations of NEGS on the basis of Gender and Age

Variables	Demographic Variables		N	M	SD	t-value	df	sig(2- tailed)
Social Expectations (SE)	Gender	Male	89	64.44	9.956	-2.390	398	.017
		Female	311	66.42	9.341			
	Age	20 or Less	340	66.01	9.608	1.363	398	.173
		21-25	60	64.36	9.146			

Table 1 shows the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students in terms of gender and age by applying independent-sample t-test. The results show that gender has significant difference with social expectation at the value of $p=.017$; whereas age has no significant difference at $p=.173$ with social expectation towards getting HE at university level.

Table 2

Social Expectations by Factors of NEGS based on Gender.

Demographic Variables	N	M	SD	t-value	Df	sig(2- tailed)	
FI	Male	89	30.12	5.299	-2.471	398	.014
	Female	311	31.22	4.777			
PI	Male	89	15.10	2.708	-1.574	398	.116
	Female	311	15.46	2.546			
SI	Male	89	19.22	3.331	-1.828	398	.068
	Female	311	19.74	3.239			

Table 2 illustrates the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students across factors i.e., family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI) by applying independent-sample t-test in terms of gender. The results of the table showed that the gender has significant difference across the factors of social expectations i.e., FI with $p=.014$; whereas, factor PI and SI has no significant difference with gender towards getting HE at university level.

Table 3
Social Expectations by Factors of NEGS based on Age.

Demographic Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>sig(2- tailed)</i>	
FI	20 or Less	340	30.96	4.903	1.056	398	.291
	21-25	60	30.30	5.409			
PI	20 or Less	340	15.41	2.618	1.536	398	.125
	21-25	60	14.90	2.409			
SI	20 or Less	340	19.64	3.323	1.162	398	.246
	21-25	60	19.16	2.827			

Table 3 illustrates the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students across factors i.e., family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI) by applying independent-sample t-test in terms of age. The results revealed that age has no significant difference across all the factors of social expectations i.e., FI, PI, and SI towards getting HE at university level.

Table 4
One- way ANOVA for NEGS’ about Social Expectations by Factors based on Experience. (N= 400)

Variables	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
FI	30.93 (4.961)	.689	.502
PI	29.20 (2.599)	1.831	.161
SI	19.59 (3.273)	1.284	.278

Table 4 represents the difference and variation of newly enrolled graduate students’ (NEGS) social expectations by applying one-way ANOVA in terms of experience. The results of the table revealed that experience has no significant difference with the sub-factors of social expectations i.e., FI, PI, and SI towards getting HE

Table 5
One- way ANOVA for NEGS about SE by Factors on the basis of SES (N= 400)

Variables	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
FI	30.89 (4.961)	3.550	.014
PI	15.34 (2.599)	1.579	.193
SI	19.59 (3.273)	4.626	.003

Table 5 showed the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students across different factors i.e. family influence (FI), peer influence (PI) and school influence (SI) by applying one-way ANOVA in terms of socio-economic status. The results of the table revealed that a significant difference exists across socio-economic status (SES) with the factors of social expectations i.e., FI

and SI, whereas no significant difference exists across factor of social expectations i.e., PI towards getting HE.

Table 6

Post- hoc Test of Difference among Sub-factors of SE in terms of Socio-Economic Status (SES)

SES	SES (a)	SES (b)	Mean Difference	P
FI	25,000 or less	86,000 or more than	1.790*	.025
SI	25,000 or less	56,000 to 85,000	1.194*	.007
		86,000 or more than	1.190*	.023

Post- hoc test (Tukey HSD) was employed to find out the mean difference of social expectations across different factors i.e., FI, SI and PI based on socio-economic status. Hence, it is concluded that the factor of peer influence has no significant effect on students who belong to different SES. However, the students who belong to status “25,000 or less” and “26,000 to 55,000” has significant effect on the students who belong to “86,000 or more than” in FI and SI but the students who belong to “25,000 or less” has significant affect with the “56,000 to 85,000” in SI at value $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance.

Discussion

Research shows that gender has significant difference regarding family influence (social capital). According to Cabrera, Burkum and La Nasa (2003) and Hossler, Schmit and Vesper, (1999), parents greatly influence their children's social capital. Social capital refers to parents' time which they invest in their children. This finding of the study is aligned with the present study. According to Camevale and Rose (2003), Gladieux and Swail (1998), Louie (2007) and McDonough (1997), colleges and universities help to ensure social mobility, social status, and economic security for many students. This finding contradicts the findings of the present research study. However, Bloom (2007) shows that social class of students shapes the choices and experiences that they have during their academic career either inside or outside of the classroom. Hence, Bloom (2007) and Louie (2007) show that the students who belong to low-socioeconomic status, are more eager to get admission for HE in university to earn advanced degrees. On the other hand, it increases their social status as well as earning opportunities. The present study supports the findings of this study, Brechwald and Prinstein (2011) investigate that how friendships provide a context through which peers positively influence each other's educational expectations.

The findings of the present research study also identify that the expectations held by the teachers and administrators of the school can influence students to get admission for HE. The finding of the present study supports the findings of the studies of Finn (2006), Hossler, Schmit and Vesper, (1999), Mehboob et al. (2012) and Phelan, Locke-Davidson and Yu (1998). Adelman (2006) states that SES of students influence them to get admission in college or university and influence them for degree completion. The students who belong to high SES college more frequently than those of lower SES. The colleges and universities help in ensuring economic security for many students (Camevale & Rose, 2003; Gladieux & Swail, 1998; Louie, 2007) and differences in socio-economic status factors are prevalent when students decide to get admission

at college/university level (Kablenberg, 2004; Kuh, Gonyea & Williams, 2005; McDonough, 1997). The findings of the previous studies contradict the findings of the present study; however, the present study also shows the significant difference in two sub-factors of social expectations i.e., family influence and school influence. Round (2005) finds that students' social expectations have no relationship with academic staff approachability. The findings of the previous study support the findings of the present study.

Chickering (1993) explains that newly enrolled students' expectations and experiences were positive influenced by the instructors as faculty members and the university's focus on research. The findings of the previous study contradict the findings of the present study. However, the present study also concludes that faculty members influence students' expectations based on socio-economic status.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify the social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students at university level. Findings of the study revealed that social expectations of newly enrolled graduate students (NEGS) and one sub-factor such as family influence (FI) has statistically significant difference regarding gender. Furthermore, it is also concluded that two sub-factors of social expectations such as family influence (FI) and school influence (SI) have statistically significant difference regarding income, but age and experience have no significant difference with social expectations and its sub-factors.

Limitation of the Study

The researchers faced difficulty during data collection such as seeking permission from the Heads of Department and on the other hand, some of the students were not willing to fill the questionnaire on the spot because of their busy schedule of classes. They demanded that they fill questionnaire on the next day but the next day, they excused that they had lost the questionnaire.

Recommendations

The study recommends that there should be information and workshop sessions held by the institution for parents of enrolled students so that they can understand their children's social expectations and help them to perform their tasks confidently. In this way, students will be able to take their academic and financial responsibility in future. Further, the data for this study was collected from new entrants of one Public Sector University to fulfill the purpose of the study but in future, the same study may be conducted in Private Sector University or on a large scale at different universities.

References

- Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Bajsh, A., & Hoyt, J. E. (2001). The effect of academic scholarship on college attendance. *College and University*, 76(4), 3–8.
- Beringer, A., Malone, L., & Wright, T. (2006). Sustainability in higher education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 9(1), 48-66.
- Bloom, J. (2007). (Mis)reading social class in the journey towards college: Youth development in urban America. *Teachers College Record*, 109(2), 343-368.
- Bowles, A., Dobson, A., Fisher, R. & McPhail, R. (2011). An exploratory investigation into first year student transition to university. In K. Krause, M. Buckridge, C. Grimmer & S. Purbrick-Illek (Eds.) *Research and development in higher education: Reshaping higher education* (pp. 61 – 71), Gold Coast, Australia,
- Bradshaw, G. S., Espinoza, S., & Hausman, S. (2001). The college decision-making of high achieving students. *College and University*, 77(2), 15-22.
- Brechwald, W. A., & Prinstein, M. J. (2011). Beyond homophily: A decade of advances in understanding peer influence processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 166-179. doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00721.x
- Calder, W., & Clugston, R. M. (2003). International efforts to promote higher education for sustainable development. *Planning for Higher Education*, 31(3), 30-44.
- Carnevale, A., & S. Rose. (2003). *Socioeconomic Status, race/ethnicity, and selective college admissions*. New York, NY: The Century Foundation.
- Chickering, A. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cook, A., & Rushton, S. (2008). *Student transition: Practices and policies to promote retention*. London: Staff and Educational Development Association.
- Finn, J. D. (2006). *The adult lives of at-risk students: The roles of attainment and engagement in high school (NCES 2006-328)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Gladieux, L., & Swail, W. S. (1999). Financial aid is not enough: Improving the odds for minority and low-income students. In J. E. King (Ed.), *Financing a College Education: How it works and how it's changing* (pp.177-197). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Harvey, L., Drew, S., & Smith, M. (2006). *The First Year Experience: A review of literature for the Higher Education Academy*. New York: HEA.
- Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Howard, J. A. (2005). Why should we care about student expectations? In T. Miller, B. Bender & J. Schuh (Eds.), *Promoting reasonable expectations: Aligning student and institutional views of the college experience* (pp. 10-33). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Jackson, L. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., & Hunsberger, B. E. (2000). Great expectations: The relation between expectancies and adjustment during the transition to university. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 30*(10), 2100-2125. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2000.tb02427.x
- Joseph, M., & Joseph, B. (2000). Indonesian students' perceptions of choice criteria in the selection of a tertiary institution: Strategic implications. *The International Journal of Educational Management, 14*(1), 40-44.
- Kahlenberg, R. D. (Ed.). (2004). *America's untapped resource: Low-income students in higher education*. New York: The Century Foundation.
- Katanis, T. (2000). The role of social transition in students' adjustment to the first year of university. *Journal of Institutional Research, 9*(1), 100 – 110.
- Keup, J. R. (2007). Great expectations and the ultimate reality check: Voices of students during the transition from high school to college. *NASPA Journal, 44*(1), 3-31.
- Kirst, M., & Venezia, A. (2004). *From high school to college: Improving opportunities for success in postsecondary education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kreig, D. B. (2013). High expectations for higher education?: Perceptions of college and experiences of stress prior to and through the college career. *College Student Journal, 47*(4), 635-643.
- Kuh, G., Gonyea, R. M., & Williams, J. M. (2005). What students expect from college and what they get. In T. E. Miller, B. Bender & J. H. Schuh (Eds.), *Promoting Reasonable Expectations: Aligning student and institutional views of the college experience* (pp. 34-64). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Longden, B. (2006). An institutional response to changing student expectations and their impact on retention rates. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 28*(2), 173–187.
- Louie, V. (2007). Who makes the transition to college? Why we should care, What we know, and what we need to do. *Teachers College Record, 109*(10), 2222-2251.
- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. (2002). Push-pull factors influencing international students' destination choice. *The International Journal of Educational Management, 16*(2), 82-90.
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Mehboob, F., Shah, M., & Bhutto, N. A. (2012). Factors influencing students' enrollment decisions in selection of higher education institutions (HEI's). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 4*(5), 558-568.
- Meyer, M. D. E., Spencer, M., & French, N. T. (2009). The identity of a “college student”: Perceptions of college academics and academic rigor among first-year students. *College Student Journal, 43*(4), 1070-1079.
- Miller, T. E., Bender, B. E., & Schuh, J. H. (2005). *Promoting reasonable expectations: Aligning student and institutional views of the college experience*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

- Miller, T., Kuh, G. D., Paine, D., & Associates. (2006). *Taking student expectations seriously: A guide for campus applications*. Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
- Phelan, P., Locke-Davidson, A., & Yu, H. C. (1998). *Adolescents' worlds: Negotiating family, peers, and school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Pimpa, N. (2004). The relationship between Thai students' choices of international education and their families. *International Education Journal*, 5(3), 352-359. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ903860.pdf>
- Pithers, B., & Holland, T. (2006). *Students' expectations and the effect of experience*. Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Adelaide, Australia. <http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/pit06290.pdf>
- Round, A. (2005). *Student attitudes, experiences and expectations on selected vocational courses at the university of Northumbria*. Retrieved from <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/worddocuments/ardocs/304165.doc>
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Toor, W. (2003). The road less traveled: Sustainable transportation for campus. *Planning for Higher Education*, 31(3), 137-140.