CHAPTER – II

THE PROBLEM

It is generally perceived that there exists some relationship or influence of parental encouragement on the educational and vocational aspirations of children during adolescence. During this period they form their views on the choices they would like to make in future. The degree of influence may vary from individual to individual, the section of the society they belong to, their economic, social and cultural level in the society. It is commonly known that the socio-economic level influences the nature of the parental behaviour and attitudes towards the adolescents. The educational and vocational aspirations of the adolescents could generally be influenced by the interaction among these three independent variables - parental encouragement, peer group acceptability and socio-economic status. The current study is an attempt to evaluate the influence of parental encouragement, peer acceptability and socio-economic status on the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents in the Indian context.

Level of aspiration is a psychological construct which reflects a cognitive type of motivation of the individual. James Drever explains it as a frame of reference involving self esteem or alternatively as a standard with reference to which an individual experiences i.e. has the feeling of success or failure. Thus four main points are distinguished in a typical sequence of events in a level of aspiration situation:

1) Last performance

2) Setting of level of aspiration for the next performance

3) New Performance
4) Psychological reaction to the new performance

The difference between the level of the last performance and that of the new goal is called ‘Goal Discrepancy’ whereas the difference between the goal level and that of the new performance is called ‘Attainment Discrepancy’. The greater the discrepancy, whether goal or attainment, the lesser the chances of attaining the goal and the wider the frustration that the individual may experience. Thus, neither the over-estimation, nor the under estimation, whatsoever they may be, but it is the realistic estimation in terms of least goal or attainment discrepancy, that brings home the highest level of satisfaction ascertaining his reality oriented personality and consistency between his goal setting behaviour and his ability and his efforts to attain the same (Sharma, V.P. and Gupta, A., Educational Aspiration Scale).

Vocational aspirations and choices do not appear all of a sudden during adolescence but as a result of a developmental process. The vocational preferences of the developing child are subject to continual change. For the young child, the chosen occupation is often the one which is identified with adults. Stated preferences may be the child’s indentification with that part of the adult world which he or she sees as being most pleasurable. As the child develops a greater degree of individuality, a growing awareness of the self evolves interests, capacities and values which begin to influence preferences. At a later stage, the need to face the reality of the occupational world and to find a place therein may again significantly influence choice.

The vocational development of the individual, which is a continuous process, beginning in early childhood and continuing into the late years of life, appears to be as much influenced by his family as are other aspects of his development. The abilities, interests, physique and personality
of an individual play an important role in his vocational development (Kochhar, S.K., 2000).

Parental encouragement as a term in education has very explicitly been defined by Rossi (1965) in these words “when father and mother approve or appreciate any activity related to education or revoke any hurdle felt by the student in the process, or guide him the right and wrong – this entire spectrum activity comes within the purview of parental encouragement”. Parental encouragement is of great significance in developing psychological as well as academic behaviour of a child.

Parental encouragement consists of parental help for the child, guidance and coaxing him so that he may not feel disheartened at particular points of difficulties. It may be in the form of approval or it may be in the form of asking the child to modify his behaviour. In case it creates avoidance behaviour in the child, that accounts to discouragement (Sharma, R.R., Parental Encouragement Scale).

Parental encouragement is an important factor affecting the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents. The adolescent sees his parents as role models. In case of educational aspirations he needs a certain level of encouragement from his parents in terms of guidance, help etc. When he receives this type of positive response from his parents he may feel motivated to aspire for higher academic qualifications. He may feel that he is appreciated and recognised for his honest efforts and meritorious success. As a result he may feel that he is noteworthy and has something worthwhile to give to the society. This may build up a confidence in him that he can tackle all the problems in life successfully. Eventually, he may feel that he can aspire for reaching heights in his academic career.
Vocational aspirations of adolescents are also affected by parental encouragement. While the adolescent is planning a career, he needs the support of his parents. He seeks the opinion and advice of his parents regarding his career aspirations. He would always want to be aware of the point of view of his parents concerning his future occupational aspirations. He would value their ideas more because they would have more experience than him. Accordingly he would be made aware by his parents about the pros and cons of various occupations. He could modify his occupational aspirations according to the parental encouragement he receives.

Human beings are the most dependent upon social relationships for their happiness and growth. One of the important functions of education, therefore, is the development of capacity to enter into social relationships with others. Education is considered to fall short of it’s aim if the individual remains incapable of establishing rapport with others to a degree necessary to coordinate the common activities of his life with others. By suitably directing the growth process, education attempts to broaden and deepen the manner and kind of his participation in the social milieu of which he remains a part.

Adolescence is the period of social adjustment. In this period the individual learns many lessons in social relationships. In the early part of this period his or her friendship is developed with intense emotional bond. In later adolescence individualistic and intimate friendship develops. There are strong feelings and firm loyalties attached with friendship.

The main objective of classroom activities is to help pupils learn skills and information effectively and economically. The social and environmental factors in the classroom are the product of interaction between teachers and taught and between the taught and the taught. The
students who are not accepted by the peer group cannot take adequate interest in the work.

A socio-psychological approach in education, therefore, implies study of school and classroom groups. Classroom group is a kind of working group and the participants are joined together with a purpose. The teacher provides leadership and controls the activities of the group and members of the group are bound together by explicit and implicit relationships. If the teacher wishes to change his pupils into intellectually developed, socially active, emotionally balanced and creative individuals he must have proper understanding of the social processes going on in his class. The best way to gain knowledge of these processes could be through study of social interaction.

In the classroom the happiness and effectiveness of the individual child depends upon the degree of cordiality of his relationship with the classmates. If they are able to cooperate and develop friendly relationship with the classmates they can work more effectively. Those who are not able to have cordial relations with others are isolated.

Sometimes the students who are not accepted by their classmates may try to mend their behaviour to become socially more acceptable. But some of them when rejected, may react adversely. They may develop hatred for others and may start indulging in antisocial activities. It is therefore necessary that the students should be acceptable to their classmates and the teachers should pay adequate attention to the phenomenon of social acceptability so as to be able to help those who are socially less acceptable (Chopra, S.L., The Test for Social Acceptability Among Peers).

Peer group acceptability may also influence vocational and educational aspirations of adolescents. The peer group is very important for
the adolescent as he spends a lot of time with them. Most of his ideas, thoughts, beliefs etc, tend to be modified according to his peer group. As a result, he could build up his educational and vocational aspirations according to the beliefs and values of his peer group. He may modify his aspirations according to his peer group to win their approval and to be included in it. If his peer group engages in socially approved activities, then it is constructive. It may have a good and positive influence on the adolescents. He may also participate in constructive activities to win their approval and acceptance. As a result his educational as well as occupational aspirations may also be high.

Social status is an indication of one’s position of respect, prestige and influence in the social structure (Rogers, 1962). Apart from his personal attributes which may either inhibit or enhance an individual’s access to sources of information and his willingness to deviate from group norms and may even vary with the groups. The word ‘economic’ is used generally for the motives involving earning and livelihood, the accumulation of wealth and the like (Drever, 1964).

The economic endeavour entails cherishing of things because of their material value and the pursuer, by virtue of this activity, carves for himself a place in society recognised as economic status. Economic status thus stratifies modern population according to the amount and source of income which is usually derived from a set of occupational activities, the ownership of property or both. The socio-economic status is obviously a blending of two statuses as enumerated earlier. Though none of the two can exist without each other yet they are distinctly different.

The socio-economic status of the family appears to exercise the most potent influence of all. The level and quality of education available and aspired for, as well as the level of work accessible and aspired
for are greatly affected by the family's finances and social contacts. The upper middle class parents tend to have higher educational and vocational aspirations for their children than do the lower class parents. Thus, their children have higher aspirations either as a result of pressure from their parents or as a result of internalising parental pressures or both.

Among very affluent families, the level of educational and vocational aspiration may be low, and a person with good abilities may not be sufficiently motivated to concentrate on studies and strike out a vocational path for himself, thus may fail to actualise his potentialities. Persons who belong to families from the higher socio-economic strata also have better chances of finding employment at a higher level because their parents, and they themselves have more contacts with people who are well to do and influential, people who are employers rather than employees. In setting up a professional practice or business too, individuals from the higher socio-economic strata are at an advantage because of the capital available to them as well as the well to do friends and acquaintances who are potential clients. Economics too plays an important role in the vocational choice and development of an individual. While planning the career, the individual, naturally, avoids the vocations with low wages and low prestige even though these may be the ones in which he is interested the most (Kochhar, S.K., 2000).

2.1 THE PROBLEM IDENTIFIED AND DEFINED

Attitudes towards various occupations as well as towards work itself are learnt in the home and play their part in developing in the individual preference for certain occupations and dislike for others. This is how people come to consider occupations as ranking high or low in prestige, as clean or dirty, as safe or risky, as purposeful or frivolous e.g. the
individual who grows up in a home where manual work is looked down upon as being uncultured and dirty, is likely to develop the attitude that manual work is beneath his dignity. This single factor is responsible for most of the people in our country seeking white collar jobs and remaining unemployed while jobs requiring skilled and semi skilled work go begging (Kochhar, S.K., 2000).

The adolescent may mould his educational and vocational aspirations according to the basic attitude of his parents towards academics as well as various professions. If his parents support him he has complete freedom and liberty to take decisions regarding his future. Therefore, he would make the right choice concerning his future career, keeping all the aspects in mind. If he is given enough freedom to think about his career he may not feel pressurised and may arrive to the right decisions regarding his educational as well as vocational aspirations. On the other hand, if his parents do not support or encourage him he may feel disheartened and he may modify his educational and vocational aspirations accordingly. Thus, parental encouragement is crucial in influencing the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.

The peer group is also an important aspect of adolescence. The adolescent wants to be involved and identified with the peer group which he admires. As a result, he may modify his educational and vocational aspirations according to the beliefs and values of the peer group which he wants to enter. If the peer group does socially productive and useful work it may have a positive effect on the adolescents. He may formulate his educational and vocational aspirations accordingly. On the other hand, if the peer group is destructive and engaging in some anti social activity it could be harmful for the adolescents. He could be mislead into
developing bad habits. He could lose concentration in his studies and stop thinking about his academic future just to please the members of the peer group. This could be very damaging to his career. He could modify his educational as well as vocational aspirations accordingly. Therefore, peer group acceptability also plays a vital role in influencing the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.

Socio-economic status (SES) also plays an important role in the formulation of aspirations of adolescents. SES of the family basically determines the level and quality of education that can be provided to the adolescents. The extent to which the adolescents can be educated as well as the kind of courses which a family can afford to provide for the child depends on the SES. As the adolescents start becoming aware of the status of his family he may understand the extent to which his family can afford to educate him. He may realize the extent to which his family could support him financially for the progress of his career. He may become aware of the economic constraints of his family regarding the expenses related to various professional as well as non-professional courses. As a result he may modify his educational and vocational aspirations keeping in mind his SES.

All the aspects discussed above are just a few factors which may influence educational and vocational aspiration of adolescents. Besides them, there are a large number of other factors which may affect the aspirations of adolescents but due to lack of time the investigator has studied only a few of them.

2.2.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is concerned with the influence of parental encouragement, peer acceptability and socio-economic status on
the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents (12 –15 years).

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED:

Aspiration:

It is a strong desire to reach something high or great. It also indicate the goals the individual sets for himself in a task which has intense personal significance for him or in which he is ego-involved.

Educational Aspiration:

It is defined in terms of the level of future performance in familiar tasks which an individual, knowing his level of past performance in those tasks, explicitly undertakes to reach.(Sharma,V.P. and Gupta, Anuradha, Educational Aspiration Scale).

Vocational Aspiration:

It is defined as an orientation towards an occupational goal. It is considered as a concept which is logically a specific instance of the concept level of aspiration.(Grewal, J.S., Occupational Aspiration Scale)

Parental Encouragement:

Parental encouragement means the hope, confidence or urge, which parents provide to their children. It includes not only to communicate about work and careers with their children but to show faith in their children’s abilities to be successful.

Peer Group Acceptability:

A peer group is conceived as a small group of similarly aged fairly close friends sharing the same activities who are of equal rank, ability and interest. Social acceptability is the extent to which a person’s company is regarded as rewarding to others in intimate face-to-face relationship. The person’s company is accepted till it is rewarding and reinforcing for others. (Hurlock, E.)
**Socio-Economic Status:**

It is conceptualized as an attribute of an individual or the person's family or household that consists of different dimensions like occupational status, wealth, prestige etc.

**2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess the influence of parental encouragement on the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
2. To assess the influence of peer group social acceptability on the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
3. To assess the influence of SES on the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
4. To assess the influence of interactive effects of parental encouragement, peer group social acceptability and SES on the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.

**2.4 HYPOTHESES**

1. Parental encouragement influences the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
2. High socio-economic status adolescents have higher educational and vocational aspirations than low socio-economic status.
3. Peer group social acceptability influences the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
4. Parental encouragement, peer group social acceptability and SES have an interactive influence on the development of educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents.
2.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

During the course of his school days, a child exercises his ability to make choices of a varied nature. At the end of this period, he is expected to make a major choice of selecting a stream of studies that would lead up to a vocation. This may be done with or without help. The help may range from vocational counseling, to teacher and parent support or peer influence. The present study is important in society because parents, peer and socio-economic status of adolescents play a vital role in the formation of their aspirations. The current study is significant in the following ways:

1. Every individual should have a goal in life. Adolescents are also expected to have such goals, aspirations etc. Aspiration is an important aspect of the life of the adolescents. Aspirations play a major role in the future progress of the adolescents. Nobody can go ahead in life without aspirations. Such studies can be used to find out the level of aspirations of the adolescents so that the counselors can advise them to plan their future life.

2. Choice of a vocation is very important because an individual has to live with this decision for a no. of years of his adult life. The future vocational as well as educational plans of adolescents play an important role in the choice of a vocation. These issues familiar to most young people throughout their school years become more critical during adolescence as youths approach major life decisions with respect to further educational and occupational plans. The adolescents are expected a sense of identity. The decisions related to work could be viewed as major concerns around which these young people
establish a view of themselves in relation to adult societal roles. So the present study is important career guidance decisions of adolescents.

3. The adolescents are expected to develop realistic and socially desirable educational and vocational aspirations. Such studies can be used to find out level of aspirations of the adolescents so that the counselors can identify the adolescents who may have unrealistic aspirations. Counselors can convince the adolescents to modify their aspirations to make them more realistic.

4. Parental encouragement is an integral part in formation of the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents. Such studies can be used to assess the extent of parental encouragement, which an adolescent receives at home. If it is found that the parental encouragement, which the adolescent gets, is low, then the counselors can try to convince the parents to change their attitude.

5. Such studies can be used to identify the extent of parental support in the life of the adolescents. This is important for the formation of their educational and vocational aspirations. Counselors can improve the rapport between the parents and their children. They can provide opportunities for increasing the communication between them thereby, laying a strong foundation for their future life.

6. Peer group acceptability has a role in the formation of educational and vocational aspirations. Such studies can be used to find out the degree of peer group acceptability of the child in his class. If a child is an isolate, then the counselors can find out the reasons behind it and guide him to develop socially desirable attitudes. He might be having aggressive attitudes, which may hinder the formation of educational and vocational aspirations. So, the counselors can include them in
group activities of the class and identify their special talents so that the other children may appreciate them. This may bring about change in their attitudes, aspirations etc.

7. Socio-economic status is a crucial factor in determining the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents. Such studies can be used to identify the differences in aspirations of the adolescents of high and low socio-economic status. Counselors can advise the children to modify their aspirations and make them more realistic according to their socio-economic status.

8. Such studies can be used to find out the educational and vocational aspirations of the adolescents and help them to choose a vocation, which would provide them with immense job satisfaction. This would help them to work in an enthusiastic manner, leading to excellence in their performance, as they would be able to utilize their capacities to the maximum extent. This could enhance their creativity too and they would develop a feeling of fulfillment. This could help in the development of their self-esteem and personality.

2.6 DELIMITATIONS

1. There are many factors affecting development of educational and vocational aspirations but in this study only three factors have been taken due to lack of time.

2. Younger age groups of students have not been taken because the development of their educational and vocational aspirations is in an initial stage.

3. Older age group of students have not been taken because their educational and vocational aspirations have already been formed so the effect of factors affecting aspirations is marginal.