
RESEARCH ARTICLE

What Makes them Aspire: A Study on the Educational Aspirations of the Poor

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-constructivist study sought to investigate the social and economic circumstances affecting the 'push' and 'pull' factors that shaped the educational aspirations of the poor. With data collected through interviews of seven (7) participants chosen through purposive sampling and categorized as 'poor' by the City Social Welfare and Development Office, this paper employed the inductive thematic analysis. Results showed that the educational aspirations of the poor were affected by social circumstances such as having no family support, a large family, and limited schooling of the household members, while economic circumstances such as being poor, having low-wage parents, and working at an early age respectively. The poor's educational aspirations were shaped by the 'push' factors of low earning potential and lack of opportunities for advancements and 'pull' factors of high employment probability and better economic conditions. Generally, the participants had high educational aspirations and viewed education as a treasure/tool, support, and protection. Discussions, implications, conclusions, and recommendations were advanced from the themes that emerged from the series of in-depth interviews with the participants.

KEYWORDS

Educational aspirations, poor, push and pull factors, social and economic dimensions

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1. Introduction

Existing evidence shows that educational aspirations may mean different things to different people. They are not fixed but adapt and change in the light of new experiences, choices, and information. It differs among socioeconomic classes and is shaped by many factors, such as the characteristics of young people and their families, peers, schools, and neighborhood, as well as wider social forces like the labor market. High educational aspirations may be expressed by people from the lower socioeconomic class because they reflect the dominant ideology. However, the lack of access to education for low-income groups continued to undermine economic growth and increase income inequality. The results also suggest that poverty has an impact on potential achievements (Tafere, 2014).

The relationship between socioeconomic status and educational aspiration is particularly complicated. Moreover, many scholars agree that education is a vehicle to lift socioeconomic status. Addressing poverty of educational aspirations is, therefore, necessary to build a society of fairness and opportunity. While aspirations are receiving increasing attention in the study of poverty, empirical evidence remains limited (Serneels & Dercon, 2014). The significance of educational aspirations among the poor became an interesting point that prompted the researchers to conduct this study. Taking into consideration the different social and economic circumstances of the poor, the researchers wanted to find out their educational aspirations and the factors that compel and attract them to attain education which is the greatest tool for individual empowerment. Based on this idea, the researchers assumed that different social and economic circumstances affect and several 'push' and 'pull' factors shape the educational aspirations of the poor.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study was anchored on the constructivist grounded approach (Mills et al., 2006). The constructivist grounded approach proposes that both the research process and the studied world are socially constructed through actions, but historical and social conditions constrain these actions. It recognized the active and vital role played by the researchers in the research process, particularly in the developing dialogue between the researchers and data from which themes, and eventually a theory, should result.

Moreover,, this study was also based on the sociological theory of symbolic interaction (Aksan et al. 2009). Symbolic interaction was a loosely structured cluster of fundamental ideas, assumptions, or propositions about human beings in society. It is a perspective that guides the one who sees the social world and can be used to study and understand the larger social structures as well as the nature of individual interactions. It focused on questions of how personal life takes meaning and how meanings are lost, transformed, or renewed. Symbolic interaction was used in this study to transform and give meaning to the educational aspirations of the poor in light of their social and economic circumstances.

This study primarily adapted Leslie and Drinkwater's 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors (Leslie and Drinkwater, 1999). Using Leslie and Drinkwater's 'push' and 'pull' factors, educational aspirations were portrayed as a purely rational assessment of economic and social circumstances. According to Leslie and Drinkwater (1999), educational aspirations were the result of realistic evaluation of both push (lower current opportunities) and pull (greater expected future benefits) factors. These factors helped the researchers understand the educational aspirations of the poor.

3. Research Focus and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine and acquire a comprehensive understanding of the educational aspirations of the poor and to look into certain factors that play a role in their development. It aimed to develop and produce a socially constructed knowledge of the educational aspirations of the poor in a qualitative-constructivist way using the inductive method of thematic analysis. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following research questions: 1. what are the social and economic circumstances that affect the educational aspirations of the poor? 2. How do these circumstances shape their educational aspirations?

4. Methodology and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative-constructivist approach to examine and acquire a comprehensive understanding of the educational aspirations of the poor and to look into certain factors that play a role in their development. It aimed to develop new knowledge and ideas on educational aspirations based on the economic and social circumstances of the poor using Leslie and Drinkwater's 'push' and 'pull'. This research adopted the in-depth interview technique (Books, 1997), which utilizes open-ended interviewing to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. It was conducted face-to-face and involved one interviewer and one participant at each interview session. An in-depth interview in this study was used to explore the perceptions, feelings, value judgments, and attitudes of the participants about the dynamic process of the educational aspirations of the poor, wherein seven individual interviews were conducted.

In identifying the 'push' and 'pull' factors, the researchers extensively employed thematic analysis. It started with a line-by-line analysis of the transcribed interviews. Then, data or information bearing the same idea or subject, known as code, were grouped as one segment. Thereafter, the main idea or subject that linked the various segments and gave them significance was identified as the theme. After the identification of the themes, quotes from the transcriptions illustrating the themes identified were extracted and used as narratives to support and elucidate the themes. To cover the meanings of how the poor illuminate their social and economic circumstances toward educational aspirations, the researchers used the grounded theory approach. It is a type of qualitative methodology for developing a theory that was grounded in data coming from observations, interviews, and videotape or document analysis systematically gathered and analyzed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this approach, the researchers were responsible for developing a theory or model for the educational aspirations of the poor.

4.1 Participants

The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population, such as size and diversity, determined which and how many people to select. Specifically, the participants were the seven (7) residents in the City of Passi determined and certified by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) as poor. These participants were selected for an in-depth interview. Six (6) of the participants were chosen at the onset of this study, and one (1) was added in the latter part. The addition was done to confirm and corroborate the results of the in-depth interviews.

In deciding the number of participants, the researchers adopted the idea of Guest et al. (2006). They concluded that for studies with a high level of homogeneity among the population, a sample of six interviews might be sufficient to enable the development

of meaningful themes and useful interpretations (Guest et al., 2006). Within this context, the researchers believed that the in-depth interview conducted with the seven (7) participants was already enough to elicit the needed data and information that would ascertain the educational aspirations of the poor. The participants were selected through a purposive sampling method. In this method, participants were grouped according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. Table 1 presents the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. **Inclusion Criteria**

INCLUSION CRITERIA	
1.	Participants must be certified as the poorest of the poor' by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) of the City of Passi.
2.	They must be residing in the City of Passi.

As shown in Table 1, the criteria that would qualify a participant for this study were if he/she was poor and if he/she resides in the City of Passi. Other information regarding the participants just came out in the course of the interview. Participants' ages ranged from 14 to 30. All of them, except two, were of working age, that is, according to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) or persons fifteen (15) years old and over. All of them belonged to a family with 6 to 18 siblings. This means they belonged to a large family of orientation. All of them also had experienced formal education or had been in school, or were still in school. Three of the participants were male, and four were female. Table 2 shows the profile of the participants.

Table 2. **Participant's Profile**

Participant's Profile						
Name	Sex	Age	Order in his/her Siblings	Highest Educational Attainment	Educational Status	Civil Status
1. Mik	F	20	8 th of 11	Grade 3	Stopped schooling at 10	Married at 14
2. Nene	F	25	4 th of 6	Grade 10	Stopped schooling at 16	Married at 18
3. Inday	F	15	5 th of 7	Grade 7	Schooling	Single
4. Nini	M	29	3 rd of 12	High School Graduate	Stopped schooling at 20	Married at 27
5. Toto	M	14	1 st of 6	Grade 6	Schooling/ stopped several times	Single
6. Nonoy	M	16	2 nd of 6	Grade 5	Schooling/ started schooling at 11	Single
7. Gaga	F	14	11 th of 18	Grade 6	Still schooling	Single

The preceding information on the participants was not predetermined since their names were just picked from a list recommended by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) of the City of Passi. The only predetermined information was their socioeconomic status (being poor) which had to be done purposively for this study. After which, participants' consent to be a subject was solicited first then rapport was established to gather comprehensive data. Ensuring the participants' privacy, the researchers considered and observed the principle of confidentiality on demographic data, such as name and the specific place of origin.

4.2 Sources of Data

An interview guide was prepared with open-ended questions. The 15-question instrument was designed to gather information on various issues relating to the educational aspirations of the poor based on their economic and social circumstances and the 'push' and 'pull' factors affecting their educational aspirations. Moreover, the in-depth interviews were structured around a common set of questions, but the researchers were flexible enough to allow the participants to pursue their particular lines of interest during the discussion of their educational aspirations.

4.3 Procedures of the Study

To conduct this study on the educational aspirations of the poor, the researchers utilized a thematic analysis and grounded theory approach. Consistent with constructivism, an in-depth interview was the primary method of data collection because it allows for comparable data to be gathered across participants. Moreover, this data collection method allows the researchers to obtain data in the participants' own words, from which the researchers could then develop insights on how participants interpret a particular phenomenon, which, in the case of the current study, the educational aspirations of the poor. An in-depth interview involving seven (7) participants was conducted on different occasions. The individual in-depth interview lasted at least one hour, depending

on the participant’s responses, readiness, and willingness. To prevent the alteration of information divulged by the participants, no research assistant was employed.

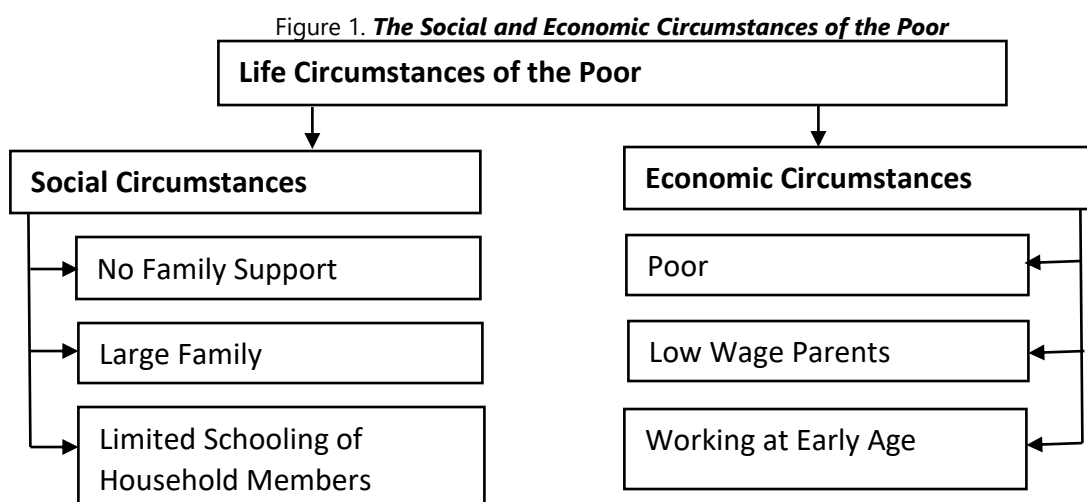
4.4 Data Analysis

In this qualitative research, the core of data analysis was the inductive analytic procedure of thematic analysis. A theme captures something important about the data answering the research question and representing some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Using the six phases of conducting thematic analysis, such as becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report, the researchers continually examined the data for patterns that led to building a theory or a model. The researchers continued collecting and examining the data until the patterns continued to repeat until relatively few or no new patterns emerged as a form of data saturation.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 The Poor’s Social and Economic Circumstances

Several themes emerged from the data analysis on the social and economic circumstances that affect the educational aspirations of the poor. These themes, as shown in Figure 1, were subsequently discussed. Figure 1 also presents a model of the poor’s life circumstances showing a model consisting of two parts—social circumstances and economic circumstances. Direct quotations from the transcriptions illustrated these subthemes extracted and used for the analysis and discussion of results.



As shown in Figure 1, life circumstances refer to the overall condition of the poor. It includes everything that happens to them, the fortune that they may have, and their financial situation. The poor’s life was characterized by their social and economic circumstances. Social circumstances refer to the overall condition in the life of the poor that resulted from or is influenced by criteria or activities associated with their social environment, while economic circumstances refer to the overall condition in the life of the poor that is influenced by their income and living expenses.

5.2 Social Dimension in the Life of the Poor

The overall condition in life that resulted from or was influenced by criteria or activities associated with the poor’s social environment with interactions to their educational aspirations was having no family support, large family orientation, and limited schooling of the immediate family members.

No Family Support. Family support refers to the resources and services provided by the family to its members to enhance their capacity to promote their physical, social, and intellectual development. It may also refer to the financial and moral aid supplied by the family for an individual to attain proper education. The data analysis of the interview with the participants revealed this kind of family support that the poor experienced and received from their families. *Mik* said,

“Waay man it mabulig kanamon ka pag-eskwela namon. Asta nga naisip ko nga mamana dulang ako.” (Nobody would help us in our studies. Until then, I had decided to get married.)

Furthermore, *Mik* lost her hopes of finishing her studies because she received no support or assistance from her family. This is a typical situation in rural communities where support from the household head is very significant in the attainment and in the future

life of a child. Thus, to escape this reality, she decided to get married. When asked why she said that nobody would help her, she answered,

"Pigado man kami kag dason ginakontra kami ka mga tawo. Bisan tiya ko gani indi man magbulig ka namon." (We are poor. Besides, other people are against us. Even my aunt never helped us.)

It showed that no one cared about her school experience. These familial problems further diminish her chance of achieving an education.

"Gusto man daad namon nga makatapos kami sang pag-eskwela namon tanan te mabudlay man kay waay man kami tatay, waay man gabulig sa amon." (We also want to finish our studies but it is difficult because we do not have a father. Nobody is helping us.)

It showed how eager she was to finish her studies, but unavoidable circumstances like the death of her father, who was the only one supporting their family, ruined her dream. She had fallen too far behind her dreams that she eventually gave up her hope of finishing schooling. It is because, apart from her father, her mother, who had no work, never instilled in their young minds the importance of education.

"Te kung si nanay lain tana. Daw indi parehas sa iban nga ginikanan nga daw may laygay. Ana tana daw waay a." (My mother is not like other mothers who gave advice. She seems not to care.)

It was not enough for children of poor families to just aspire. They also needed guidance to be able to navigate the paths to their goals. In Mik's interview, it appears that what it takes to progress in education and attain desirable employment was not well understood by many parents, particularly Mik's mother. Parents should understand what it takes to fulfill their children's ambitions. But that may be hindered by the fact that her mother was not able to finish her schooling and ended up having no work. *Nini* had the same experience in his family.

"Ginasuportahan man kun may day-an e. Pay garing te amo da e bakas man sanda makaeskwela man e. Sanda man gagasto kaugalingon da e." (They also support if there is. But of course, they should strive hard for them to be able to go to school. They are the ones spending for themselves.)

Nini explained the kind of support he and his siblings had in their family. His family would also support them but not to its full extent because it was still them who would strive hard and who had to spend for their studies. This presented the idea that parents from poor families who experience very difficult financial situations tend to have very low regard for their children's schooling and fail to encourage their achievement. It does not mean, however, that they do not put a high value on education or are not interested in their children's education. But given the situation, a parent has to make every effort to ensure that he/she can feed his/her family, giving no room for them to think of their children's future. When asked if his parents did tell them before about finishing their studies, he answered,

"Ambot lang kun naghambal man hay te depinde man tana sa bata kun matutum kun indi e." (I do not know if they have told us because it would still depend on the child if he/she is very eager to study or not.)

His answer means that it was up to the child to decide on his/her fate. It goes against the idea of the vital role played by parents in shaping their child's future. For children to have high educational aspirations or to succeed, they must have the full support of their parents. What the parents want for their children has something to do with what their children aspire for themselves. Children, particularly from poor families, do better when their parents care when parents make sure their children go to school and communicate their expectations for success. When asked again if his parents did tell him to really finish his schooling, *Nini* answered,

"Te waay man, hay waay man it inug kwan[...], waay man it inug gasto sa eskwelahan. Mahal man daan ya baraydan." (They did not because they had no money to spend on my education. Schooling is expensive.)

This directly explained that he did not have the support of his family, which views education as expensive. Educational aspirations are something that can be manipulated with a little guidance and encouragement from parents. Unfortunately, *Nini* and his siblings did not have this guidance and encouragement, which were critical factors in his and his sibling's success. The conversation below gives an overview of *Nini*'s life experience and further support the preceding idea:

Interviewer: *Sang gaeskwela ka, sin-o gagasto kanimo?*

- (Who spent on your studies before?)
 Nini: *Ako nagagasto.* (I provided for my own needs in school.)
 Interviewer: *Nagkabalaka man bala si tatay mo sa pag-eskwela mo?*
 (Was your father concerned about your studies?)
 Nini: *Waay.* (No.)

This interview with *Nini* significantly sustained the general sentiment of the participants on having no support from their families in terms of achieving their educational aspirations.

Large Family. A family is composed of individuals united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption. Specifically, a large family is considered to be five or more immediate family members that exclude cousins, aunts, uncles, or grandparents. Recurrent themes in all interviews revealed that the participants belonged to big families. When asked how many siblings she had, *Mik* shared,

"Onse. Dose daad pay dang magurang ka agot patay bala paggwa na haw, te onse kami buhi." (Eleven. Twelve supposed to be. But my second to the last brother died at birth, that is why we are eleven living in the family.)

In the case of *Nene*, she said, *"Bali anum kami nga magbulugto gid tanan."* (We are all six siblings in the family.) When asked, *Nini* replied, *"Dose kami di."* (We are twelve here.) *Inday* belongs to a family with seven siblings, while *Toto* and *Nonoy* each have six siblings. *Gaga* belonged to a family with eighteen siblings. No interviewed participant belonged to a family with less than five siblings.

Limited Schooling of Household Members. Schooling constitutes the instruction or training received by an individual in school. The highest level of schooling each student attended and successfully completed would refer to their educational attainment. If a student dropped out of high school during grade 9 but successfully completed grade 8, the educational attainment of that student is grade 8, which is also the level of schooling that the individual received. Thus, limited schooling means insufficient instruction or training received in school or low educational attainment. Data generated from the thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that the participants and their household members, particularly household heads, had limited schooling or low educational attainment. *Mik* disclosed the reason why she was not able to finish elementary school.

"Grade 3 ako [sang] napatay si tatay. Amo da waay ako katapos ka eskwela." (My father died when I was in the third grade, so I was not able to finish my studies.) She added, *"Kundi nag-untat ako mga Grade 4. Maeskwela dun ko te nahuya ko hay nasunlog nanda ako. Te hay gurang ako dun. Ginasunlog nanda ako nga mal-am dun. Amo da waay dulang ako nag-eskwela hay nahuya ako."* (Supposedly, I should have gone back to Grade 4 but my classmates were teasing me because I was older than they. I felt ashamed. Which is why I decided to stop going to school.)

Mik's attitude towards schooling was deeply affected by her experience in school and her classmates' attitudes. It means that aspirations can easily change over time and are contingent on feedback from others, like her classmates. Speaking about the other members of her household, she divulged,

"Ikawalo ako. Waay man it nakatapos kanamon tanan." (I am the eighth among my siblings. Nobody among us was able to finish schooling.) She further stated, *"may magurang gani ako nga grade two lang gani."* (I even have an older brother who only reached grade two.) She finally said, *"Naka high school man tay nanay. High school lang."* (My mother reached high school.)

Nini validated *Mik's* answers in the interview. When asked if his parents tried to send him to school, he said, *"Napaskwela man. Te waay man sanda agi eskwela. Pigado man sang una mo."* (They did send me to school. On the other hand, they (my parents) were not able to be at school because they were living in poverty.) *Nini's* statement proved that his parents were not educated and attained only limited schooling. *Nini* enumerated the educational attainment of his siblings,

"Subang grade nine lang. Ikaduha, waay grade two lang. Ako nakatapos (high school), tapos libayun ko nga bayi graduate lang, graduate man ka high school." (The eldest reached grade nine and the second eldest reached only grade two. I was able to finish high school. My younger sister is also a high school graduate.)

About his younger brothers, he said, *"Daw durungan man sanda hay nag-uruntat man sa pag-eskwela. Nagdurungan grade seven e, apat sanda."* (Having stopped schooling for years, there was a moment that my brothers went back to school, and all four of them got admitted in grade seven.) Much as children of poor families want to finish their schooling, this aspiration is incompatible with leaving school at an early age in order to work and help their families. He added,

"Te dukaron ang manug eskwela na laki duha ka bilog. Nakadumdum te maeskwela e." (Now, my two younger brothers want to go to school. They realized the importance of school and they decided to go back.) He further explained, "Beinte-uno. Siguro grade seven pa lang. Nakadumdum naman guru mag-eskwela, siyempre naiwatan man sa mainit na kampo." (My brother is twenty-one but probably will be admitted still in grade seven. He was able to realize the importance of education because he felt working is very difficult in a hot sugarcane plantation). The conversation between the interviewer and Nonoy revealed how difficult it is for poor people to attain an education.

Interviewer: *Pira edad mo gani a?* (How old are you?)
Nonoy: Sixteen (16).
Interviewer: *Ano grade mo?* (What grade are you in?)
Nonoy: Five.
Interviewer: *Kapila ka mag-untat?* (How many times did you stop schooling?)
Nonoy: *Waay. Waay ko kauntat. Naano ko kay una kaeskwela magurang ko.*
(No. I never stopped schooling. My older brother went to school first.)
Interviewer: *Pila na edad mo pag-eskwela mo sa Grade 1?*
(How old were you when you were admitted to Grade 1?)
Nonoy: *Onse dun.* (I was eleven.)

Nonoy, who is the second child, was not given the opportunity to go to school at the right age because the eldest had to be prioritized. It means that a large poor family cannot provide equal opportunity for the children to attend school simultaneously. In further conversation:

Interviewer: *Ang ikatlo gaano sa?* (What is the third son doing in life now?)
Nonoy: *Gabantay karbaw.* (He takes care of the carabao.)
Interviewer: *Waay siya gaeskwela?* (Does he attend school?)
Nonoy: *Nag-untat karang daya ho.* (He stopped recently.)
Interviewer: *Ano grade na daad dun haw?* (Supposedly, in what grade is he?)
Nonoy: *Grade 1 pay waay man sa kapasar. Nag-untat sa.*
(Grade 1, but he failed. Then, he decided to stop.)
Interviewer: *Pira edad na?* (How old is he?)
Nonoy: *Mga pulo guro.* (Maybe, ten.)
Interviewer: *Te, ang sunod kana?* (How about the one next to him?)
Nonoy: *Waay man gaeskwela. Grade 1.* (Not attending either... Grade 1.)
Interviewer: *Ang sunod?* (And the next?)
Nonoy: *Gaeskwela man dang classmate nanda. Grade 1.*
(He is studying. They are all classmates in Grade 1.)

These quotations from the interview exposed how every member of the participant's family has attained low educational levels. As revealed in this study, the heads of the families of the participants had limited schooling, with most of them having no high school diploma. This limited schooling of the household heads made their families poor, which can be perpetuated as their children, who will soon become heads of the family, also end up with limited schooling.

5.3 Economic Dimension in the Life of the Poor

The poor's economic standing, such as income, living expenses, and money-making status in society, affects their overall condition in life. Recurrent themes in the interviews revealed the primary economic circumstances of the poor that influenced their educational aspirations. These themes were divided into being poor, having parents with low-wage, and working at an early age. These presented the economic circumstances that hindered the educational aspirations of the poor.

Being Poor. Those who have little money and few possessions are poor. They are those families consisting of five members whose combined monthly income is less than Php 7,017 or a sole breadwinner in a five-member family residing in the National Capital Region (NCR) who earns less than Php 317 per day. Data generated from the thematic analysis showed the real economic condition of the participants. The participants, like Mik, have learned and accepted the fact that they are poor, "*ginhalinan ko imol man.*" (I also came from a poor family.) Mik knows that she and her present family is poor,

"Namana ako hay indi dun ka agwanta ka pigado. Namana dulang ako hay nakon basi makatibawas man ako sa kapigaduhon kag ka bulig man ako kanday nanay bisan paano. Pero amo man gihapon, pigado man sa gihapon." (I got married because I

could no longer endure poverty. I did it because I thought I could free myself from poverty and can somehow help my mother. But it is still the same. I am still poor.)

She added, "*Waay gid tana it nakatapos sa amon kay pigado man.*" (No one among us was able to finish schooling because we are poor.) When asked if it also came to her mind to finish her studies, she answered, "*nagsulod man sa pinsar ko nga kinahanglan ko matapos ang akon pag-eskwela pay maano kay indi man malab-ot kay pigado man.*" (It also came into my mind to finish my studies but how could I do that because we have meager resources.) Being poor is one of the main barriers in having quality education.

In addition, *Mik* continued by explaining how poor they are, "*kato naagyan namon nga bisan isa ka bis indi kami ka kaon sa isa ka adlaw*" (We experienced before not eating even once in a day). She even went further by saying, "*kun kis-a gani indi kami ka kaon*" (Sometimes, we were not even able to eat.)

Meanwhile, *Nini* reiterated the experience of *Mik*, "*pangabuhì namon sang una pigado man mo*" (We are living in poverty.) He said, "*waay man te inug gasto mo [...] te kun indi magbakas te waay ka it kan-on, waay man te hulagon, bakas lang e*" (We have nothing to spend. If you do not work harder, you end up eating nothing.)

There are no indications of ideas contrary to the general sentiments of the participants. The interview with *Toto* revealed how poverty affected the economic condition of the poor.

- Interviewer: *Insa importante gid ya pag-eskwela aw?*
(Why is attending school very important?)
- Toto: *Hay pigado mo.* (It is because we are poor.)
- Interviewer: *Insa nahambal mo nga pigado?* (Why did you say poor?)
- Toto: *Ga ka wad-an bugas.* (We sometimes do not have rice to eat.)
- Interviewer: *Sa isa ka adlaw ka pira kamo magkaon?*
(In a day, how many times do you usually eat?)
- Toto: *Ka duha.* (Twice.)
- Interviewer: *Insa aw?* (Why)
- Toto: *Waay it bugas.* (We do not have enough rice.)

This state of being poor is measured in terms of rice and the number of times they eat in a day which is commonly done thrice. Even the interview with *Nonoy* revealed the general sentiments of the participants.

- Interviewer: *Ano ang nagaduso kanimo nga mag-eskwela?*
(What pushes you to go to school?)
- Nonoy: *Ya kapigaduhon.* (It is poverty.)
- Interviewer: *I-describe bi kanakun kun ano ang kapigaduhon.*
(Please describe to me the term "poverty".)
- Nonoy: *Kung kis-a waay it balon mag-adto sa eskwelahan.*
(Sometimes, we do not have something to eat when we go to school.)

Scarcity or having nothing is a sign of being poor. In another part of *Nonoy's* interview, the state of being poor became prevalent.

- Interviewer: *Ano ya posible nga rason nga indi ka makatapos?*
(What is the possible reason for you not to be able to graduate?)
- Nonoy: *Waay inuggasto ya ginikanan ko.*
(My parents have no money to spend on my education.)

The lack of food on the family table and the incapacity of the family to invest in the children's education, like that of *Nonoy*, are common among poor people, as revealed in the experiences of the participants.

Having Parents with Low-Wage. Parents with low-wage earn less per hour. They are parents whose hourly wage rate is such that even if they worked full-time, full-year, their annual earnings would still fall below the poverty line for a family of four. The recurrent theme in all the interviews with the participants was the lack of fixed-job/work of the parents. When asked about the work of her mother, *Mik* replied, "*waay it ubra*" (no work). *Nene* also said, "*Si nanay abi ano man lang ubra nanda, kampo. Si tatay amo man panguma man ya ubra na.*" (My mother just works on the sugarcane plantation, and my father is also a farmer.)

As much as the child of a poor family wants to be a doctor, an accountant, or a teacher, this aspiration is compatible with leaving school at an early age to help parents look for a job and earn something for a living. When asked, *Nini* replied, "*di sa kwan sa taramnan a panguma man, pangampo*" (I also work here with other farmers and sugar-planters). In the case of *Inday*, her mother works as a fish vendor (*manugbaligya isda*), and her father is a gardener (*gapang-garden lang*).

Toto reasoned out that they are poor because "*waay man it ubra si nanay kag tatay*" (my mother and father have no job). Families with low-wage parents or parents with no stable job or no job at all are poor. *Toto's* reason is also the same as that of *Nonoy*. None of the participants mentioned a job that could provide some fixed income for their parents and compensation security among them. Although the children of poor families have high educational aspirations, these are affected by the parent's inability to provide the financial support necessary for them to attain a high level of education.

Working at an Early Age. All of the participants did not enjoy their early age because they had to drop out of school or stop schooling to help their families with their financial struggles. Therefore, working at an early age leads to dropping out of school. Recurring themes present the poor's unhappy experiences. *Mik* shared her experiences, "*Naga-ubra ako kato. Nagabantay bala ako ka bata haw. Amo tong waay ako katapos ka eskwela tong ubra ko.*" (I worked before as a babysitter. That is the reason I was not able to finish my studies.) Describing her brother, *Mik* shared, "*Grade 2 siya. Waay dun sa bala nag-eskwela haw dason nag-ubra diya sa kampo.*" (He was in Grade 2 when he stopped schooling and worked on the sugarcane plantation.)

Having very limited schooling, *Mik's* brother had a greater risk of living in poverty. In the case of *Nini*, in order to sustain his education, he had to work every Saturday and Sunday to pay his debts. He shared,

"... pangutang sa tyangge, simanal bayad. Ubrahan Sabado kag Domingo, bali kun magbayad kaw." (I buy on credit from the mini store and pay weekly. Then I have to work on Saturdays and Sundays, then borrow again after paying my previous debts.)

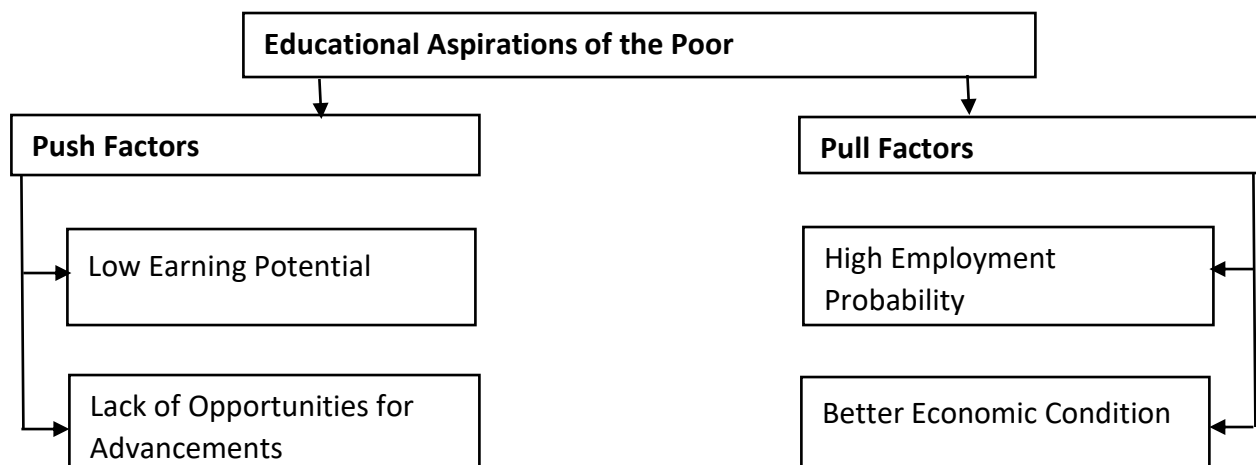
When asked if he was also helping his family in finding ways to eat, *Nonoy* answered in the affirmative that he would do it by "*pag-ubra ka mga uma*" (working on the farm). His elder brother, who was first sent to school and was prioritized over him, ended up working "*kay Ben sa kampo*" (...for Ben in the sugarcane plantation). His brother had to quit schooling so that he could help his family earn a living. But he and his family did not think that by dropping out of school, they would face higher levels of unemployment and receive very low earnings. *Nonoy's* experiences which the researchers observed, were the same that *Toto* had. All of the participants helped their families by working on a farm (that is not theirs) to earn a small amount that could not sustain their daily needs, especially for food.

5.4 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors in the Poor's Educational Aspirations

Through the qualitative data analysis employed in this study, the result presented several themes on the factors that shaped the educational aspirations of the poor. Figure 2 shows a model of the poor's educational aspirations consisting of two parts: the "push" factors and the "pull" factors. The "push" factors refer to certain compelling circumstances driving an individual to pursue post-secondary or higher education. Meanwhile, "pull" factors are certain aspects that attract an individual to attain education (post-secondary or higher education).

The "push" and "pull" factors are divided into subthemes. Each of which is subsequently discussed and extracted to elucidate and document the educational aspirations of the poor.

Figure 2. *The 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors Affecting the Poor's Educational Aspirations*



5.5 Push Factors for the Educational Aspirations of the Poor

Based on the data analysis of the interviews, several themes that support Leslie and Drinkwater’s “push” factors were generated. The most recurring themes were low earning potential and lack of opportunities for advancement. These directed the understanding of the factors that compel the poor to attain higher educational aspirations. Consequently, a high educational aspiration means a high desire to go to college or university and finish a certain degree.

Low Earning Potential. Earning potential refers to the amount of money a person should earn in his/her employment capacity. Low earning potential means that a person does not have the ability to earn more, considering his/her insufficient educational qualification. It means that people who do not finish college or university do poorly in life. They will have a hard time finding a job, and they will earn much less when they do find one. This theme was given meaning in the interviews of the participants. *Mik* mentioned her present occupational status. She said, “*waay ka man it masudlan nga ubra*” (One cannot even find a decent job). *Mik* is jobless, and that makes her incapable of earning. Having a high level of education is important for a good career.

This idea was supported by *Nini*, “*indi ka maka-apply sa mag nami nga ubra kay waay ka man it natapusan* (You cannot apply to decent jobs because you have not graduated from school). *Nini* mentioned the very fact that his low educational attainment makes it difficult for him to find a good job that can give him better earnings. He continued, “*asta ka gid lang sa pagpanguma, pagpangampo nga dya*” (You will end up farming or working in a sugarcane plantation).

This theme verifies the reality that the participants lacked enough schooling to assure them of a good job and better earning potential. This is supported by the fact that their parents also have low earnings. “*Si Nanay abi ano man lang ya ubra nanda, kampo. Tapos si Tatay amo man panguma man ya ubra da.*” (My mother just works on the sugarcane plantation, and my father is also farming.) The low wage received by their parents makes them poor. This is the reason why the participants had to work at an early age to help their families ease the pain of financial difficulties.

When these poor children leave school before they obtain any qualifications or have barely achieved minimum education, they find it hard to stand the competition when looking for a decent job. It would also mean that they have to stay in this low-wage set up for the rest of their lives and never uplift their earning potential. It implies that having low earnings means a difficult life for a large family. It is one of the factors that pushed young people from poor families to have high educational aspirations.

Lack of Opportunities for Advancements. Having attained limited education means that one lacks the favorable or advantageous circumstances to advance or progress socially and economically. That is why in order for the poor to have social and economic mobility, they should have high educational aspirations, and such must be converted into reality. *Mik* and *Nini* described the social and economic difficulties that they experienced. *Mik* shared, “*te mabudlay man kung waay ka it aram.*” (It is also difficult when you are illiterate.) *Mik*’s statement conveyed the difficulty or lack of opportunity for improving oneself that the poor will always encounter if they are not educated. Since opportunities for advancements are tied to educational attainment, the lack of a college degree sets the children of poor families into a lifetime of struggle. According to *Nini*,

"...kun waay ka it iniskwelahan dukaron waay ka gid. Asta ka gid lang sa pagpanguma, pagpangampo nga dya. Indi ka maka-apply sa mga nami nga ubra kay waay ka man it natapusan." (If you have not attended school, you are hopeless. You end up farming or working on the sugarcane plantation. You cannot apply for decent jobs because you did not go to school.)

Not being able to graduate becomes an obstacle to future success. The idea that "*asta ka gid lang sa pagpanguma, pagpangampo nga dya*" (You would end up farming or working on the sugarcane plantation) indicates the lack of opportunities that the poor commonly encounter.

The statement "*indi ka maka-apply sa mga nami nga ubra*" (You cannot apply for decent jobs) shows the inability or incapacity of an individual to improve his social and economic status. The lack of opportunities for advancements, as observed by the participants in the communities and in their families, particularly among their parents, pushed them to set a much higher goal for their future.

5.6 Pull Factors for the Educational Aspirations of the Poor

From Leslie and Drinkwater's idea of "pull" factors, the following became apparent in the findings of the study: high employment probability and better economic conditions. These explored the different factors that attract the poor to have higher educational aspirations.

High Employment Probability. Employment probability means the chances of getting a job. One of the important themes in all the interviews with the participants was the idea of being employed. The participants shared the fact that having been educated makes it easy for them to look for better jobs because they have enough knowledge and competence. Mik said, "*Para indi ka mabudlayan kung diin ka lang mag-apply nga urubrahan.*" (For you not to find it difficult to apply for a job anywhere.) Education is a basic requirement for employment.

Nene reiterated this fact saying, "*Te para sa urihi nga bisan ano lang ya ubra mo bala dang may masudlan ka gid bala.*" (So that whatever job you would have in the future, you can have it.) Having a formal education is a key to achieving advancements and to attaining employment opportunities.

The importance of education in occupational attainment was a reality affirmed by Inday when she said, "*para sa urihi makakita ka ubra e*" (...so that in the future, you can find a decent job). It means that having a high level of educational attainment provides far greater access to a much better occupational goal. She added, "*ang pagtuon amo day-a ang makabulig sa imo sa pira ka adlaw nga ikaw makatrabaho*" (Studying will help you to have a decent job someday). If one wants a good job, then one should be educated because education is the only way to succeed. Inday further stated,

"*Te kung bisan diin ka lang maadto nga lugar kag kung mangita kaw ka ubra mabaton ka gid tungod may kinaalam ka.*" (If you want to look for a job wherever you want, you can easily be hired because you are educated.)

Better Economic Conditions. All of the participants had nothing in their minds except how they could somehow free themselves from the clutches of poverty. What they wished for was to become financially stable. Mik shared, "*Waay man ko sing gusto maangkon. Te ya gina ano ko lang dang makatibawas man kami sa kapigaduhon namon.*" (I don't really wish for anything. My only concern is how we can be relieved from poverty.)

This problem of poverty and of attaining financial stability pushed the poor to study. They know that education can help them achieve the employment goal that can generate for them a higher income with which to live a decent life. Mik confidently replied,

"*Maeskwela ako hay para makatibawas man kami sa kapigaduhon bisan paano.*" (I will be at school so that we can somehow relieve ourselves from poverty.) This simply implies that education is paramount to future success and shapes the overall quality of life.

Nini supported this idea, "*Sa pagkapigaduhon guro te maeskwela ka gid guro e, matutum gid, matutum ka gid.*" (Because of poverty, then, you will really study well.) To move out of poverty and survive, one has to be educated. The conversation with Toto summarized the poor's desire for a better economic condition which can be attained only through the aid of education.

Interviewer: *Te gusto mo gid makatapos?*
(Do you really want to finish your studies?)
Toto: *Huo.* (Yes.)
Interviewer: *Insa?* (Why?)
Toto: *Para makabulig.* (To be able to help.)

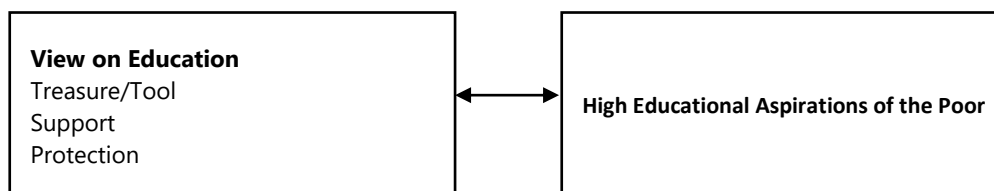
Interviewer: *Ano nga bulig? (What sort of help?)*
 Toto: *Para makatibawas ang pigado. (To relieve poverty.)*

The desire of the participants for a better life mirrors the poor’s high educational aspirations.

5.7 The Poor’s Educational Aspirations

Education is important not only to people of higher socioeconomic backgrounds but also to the most deprived, like the poor. They viewed education as a treasure, support, and protection. Figure 3 presents these having their relationship to the high educational aspirations of the poor.

Figure 3. *The Poor’s View of Education vis-à-vis Their Educational Aspirations*



Treasure/Tool. Education is being viewed as a treasure that no one can take away. *“Amo lang gid daa ang manggad nga indi maagaw kanimo.”* (That is the only treasure that cannot be stolen from you.) This is very popular among parents in convincing their children to stay in school. It is just like how Mik described it, *“Te kung magtuon daw bali amo daa ya bahandi sa imo.”* (Studying is like a treasure to you.) She added, *“Amo da ya taytay para mabuol mo bala ang gusto mo nga kurso kag malab-ot kon ano bala ya handum mo sa kabuhi.”* (That is a way for you to achieve the educational degree that you want and whatever dreams you want to have in life.)

In these terms, Mik viewed education as a tool to break the barriers and succeed in life. This was the primary reason why, as a young mother, she dreamed of having all her children finish their education, *“magbakas lang kami ka ubra namon sa kung ano nga ubra kag mapatapos tanan sanda ka pag-eskwela nanda.”* (We will work harder in any way we can so that all of them will be able to finish their studies.)

Mik’s high educational aspiration was transferred to her children. She continued, *“ginahandum ko lang nga makatapos sanda ka pagtuon da bisan paano kag indi sanda mabudlayan parehas ka naagyan ko karang una halin pa pagkabata ko.”* (I only wished that my children would be able to finish their education and will not suffer the same life I had in my childhood.) With this, education can be viewed as a treasure and a tool that brings new attitude, new opportunities, and new life.

Support. The family is one of the important things, if not the only important thing to an individual. The recurring theme of supporting the family was a strong force that prompted the participants to study more and finish their education. The purpose of education, according to Mik is, *“para makabulig ka man sa ginikanan mo kay pigado man.”* (To help your parents who are also poor.) Nini added, *“para makabulig sanda ka ubra, makabulig man sanda sa ginikanan da nga pigado man e.”* (So that they can also help in working. They can help their parents who are also poor.) He further stated, *“importante gid tana sa mga bata para sa urihi kung magluya mga mal-am da kundi makabulig man sanda.”* (It is really important for the children so that when their parents become weak, they can also help.) Mik and Nini emphasized the importance of supporting the family, particularly the parents. Toto showed the same concern for supporting the family through education.

Interviewer: *Ano ang pagtuon? (What is education?)*
 Toto: *Importante. (Important.)*
 Interviewer: *Insa importante aw? (Why is it important?)*
 Toto: *Para makabulig sa ginikanan. (So that I could help my parents.)*

The same outlook was shown by Inday towards her family. She shared, *“para makabulig sa mga bugto ko”* (for me to help my siblings) and *“para makabulig sa akon nga pamilya”* (for me to help my family). Like the other participants, Nonoy also revealed the value of education and the need to support the family.

Interviewer: *Insa importante gid ang pag-eskwela aw? (Why is education very important?)*
 Nonoy: *Para makatapos man, para makabulig man sa ginikanan.*

(So that I can finish my studies and I can help my parents.)

Protection. The data generated from the thematic analysis of the interviews of the participants revealed that they should be educated so that they would not be taken advantage of by other people. It viewed education as protection. This theme was truthfully mentioned by Nene and Toto amidst their social status in society.

Nene candidly said, "*mangin maaram man ako, dang ma man-an ko man bala ya tanan, indi man ako pag-intuon ka pareho ko.*" (That I will become intelligent. That I will know everything, and I will not be taken advantage of by my fellows.) Nene's statement means that not being able to understand what is being told to her would give other people the chance to take advantage of her lack of knowledge. The conversation with *Toto* reflected the same sentiment.

Interviewer: *Ano gusto mo matun-an sa eskwelahan?*
(What do you want to learn in school?)
Toto: *Mag-aram.* (I want to become intelligent.)
Interviewer: *Kinahanglan gid ya kaaram aw?*
(Is intelligence really important?)
Toto: *Huo.* (Yes).
Interviewer: *Insa aw?* (Why?)
Toto: *Para indi ka matunto ka iba.*
(So that you will not be fooled by others.)

Toto had the apprehension of being misled or tricked by others if he had no knowledge to defend himself. *Gaga* also had the same view.

Interviewer: *Ano ayhan kun may tinapusan ka?*
(What if you had finished your schooling?)
Gaga: *Indi kami pag-anhun ka mga tawo, indi ka dun matuntuhan.*
(We will never be taken advantage of by other people.)
Interviewer: *Insa may gapanunto aw?*
(Is there anybody taking advantage of others?)
Gaga: *Sa iban eh nga wala it tinapusan.*
(To others who were not able to finish schooling.)

It means that a lack of education is a sure way for one to be taken advantage of. In this social process where an individual's social status would depend on the level of education achieved, *Mik* said, "*kag dason ginakontra bala kami ka mga tawo*" (besides, people are against us). *Inday* also shared about a hindrance from the achievement of her dreams, "*mga tawo nga mahisa*" (people who are envious) veritably supplemented this statement of *Mik*.

High Educational Aspirations. Educational aspirations correspond to the level of education that the participants would ideally aspire for. It is the goals that they set for the future and their motivation to work towards these goals. This is evident in the interview with *Gaga*.

Interviewer: *Ano gusto mo matapos?* (What do you want to be in the future?)
Gaga: Doctor.
Interviewer: *Insa gusto mo mag-doctor?* (Why do you want to become a doctor?)
Gaga: *Para makabulig sa mga may sakit.* (For me to be able to help the sick.)
Interviewer: *Magluwas sa doctor, may iban ka pa gid nga gusto?*
(Apart from being a doctor, what do you still want to be?)
Gaga: *Gusto ko mag-maestra.* (I want to become a teacher.)
Interviewer: *Insa maestra?* (Why do you want to be a teacher?)
Gaga: *Para makatudlo sa mga bata.* (For me to teach kids.)
Interviewer: *Sa pagka-doctor kag maestra, ano piliun mo?*
(Between a doctor and a teacher, which would you prefer?)
Gaga: Doctor.

Gaga's educational aspiration was the same as that of *Nonoy* and *Toto*, who also hoped to become a doctor. Like the others, *Inday* also set her own goal for the future. The interview below reflected her high educational aspirations.

- Interviewer: *Ano nga mga butang ang ginahandum mo gid sa kabuhi?*
(What things do you aspire to more in life?)
- Inday: *Makatapos sa akon pag-eskwela kag maka-ubra.*
(To finish my studies and to be able to work.)
- Interviewer: *Ano nga kurso ang gusto mo tapuson?*
(What course/ degree do you want to finish?)
- Inday: Accountant.
- Interviewer: *Ano pa gid gusto mo malab-ot?*
(What more do you want to achieve?)
- Inday: *Amo lang da.* (That is all.)

The interview with *Mik* would further supplement a concrete view of the educational aspirations of the participants.

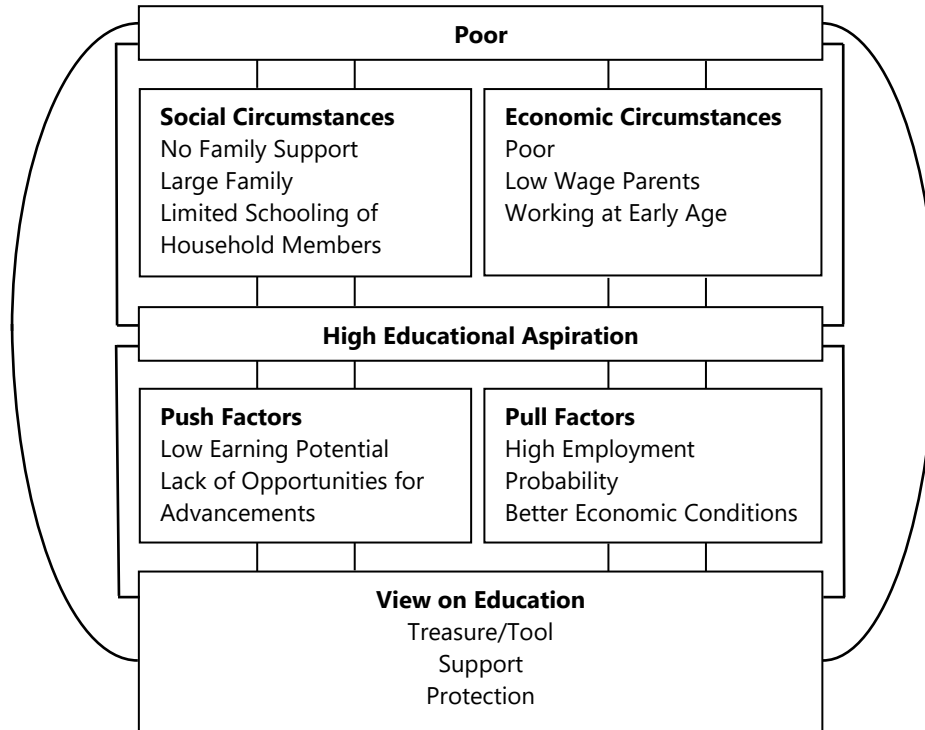
- Interviewer: *Kung paeskwelahon kaw, anon a kurso ang gusto mo matapos?*
(If given a chance to study, what course would you finish?)
- Mik: *Gusto ko magbuol sang kurso sang pagka-maestra.*
(I would take a teaching course.)
- Interviewer: *Insa pagkamaestra gid bul-on mo?*
(Why would you choose a teaching course?)
- Mik: *Te para makabulig man ko sa mga bata nga dang gusto man bala makaeskwela aw.* (For me to be of help to children who also wants to go to school.)

The participants dreamed of attaining a higher level of education. Such educational aspirations were built on the poor's ideas about the importance of education and how they wished to address their difficulties in life. To be more specific, the goals and the high educational aspirations that the participants set for their future were inspired and motivated by their families:

- "para makabulig sa mga bugto ko"* (for me to be of help to my siblings);
"para makabulig sa akon pamilya" (for me to be of help to my family); and
"makabulig sa mga libayon ko" (for me to be of help to my younger siblings).

This study addressed a research problem intended to promote the development of socially constructed knowledge by examining and acquiring an understanding of the social and economic circumstances that affect the educational aspirations of the poor and the different "push" and "pull" factors that shaped these aspirations. Based on the findings, a model to link the relationship between the poor and their educational aspirations is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. **The Educational Aspirations' Socioeconomic Push and Pull Model of the Poor**



Educational Aspirations' Socioeconomic Push and Pull Model of the Poor. The model showed (as indicated by the outside lines) the poor's view of education and what education looks like to the poor. The view on education and its attainment is influenced by several push factors that compel and pull factors that attract the poor (as shown by the lines), leading to a high educational aspiration. These high educational aspirations are influenced by several social and economic circumstances that the poor experience. The line that connects the view of education to the high educational aspirations and of the high educational aspirations to the poor connotes each other's direct relationship.

Accordingly, the findings of the study were discussed in relation to the existing literature on educational aspirations and considered the impact that the results might generate. In Ibrahim's (2011) study, it showed that the poor's limited income discouraged them from educating their children.

"...Te waay man, hay waay man it kwan, waay man it inug amot sa eskwelahan, mahal man daan ya aramutan." (They did not because we had no money to spend. Contributions were expensive). *"Waay ako katapos hay dang waay kami it kwarta, waay hulagon, bisan inugbayad waay kami it inugbayad."* (I did not finish schooling because we had no money, we could not even afford paying some miscellaneous fees).

It means that as young people become more aware of the obstacles they are facing, they may lower their aspirations to meet their expectations, particularly when facing multiple barriers to success. The study also revealed that due to their limited income, the poor reluctantly had to send their children to work at an early age.

"...Grade Two sa waay dun bala nag-eskwela haw, dason nag-ubra dya sa kampo." (He was in Grade Two when he stopped schooling and worked in the sugarcane plantation.)

Genicot and Ray (2017) revealed that the aspirations that are exceedingly difficult to realize could even discourage educational investments and later lead to worse life outcomes. Eble and Escueta's (2021) study showed that higher family aspirations for their children predicted better educational outcomes in multiple developing countries. However, their study also revealed that aspirations sometimes outstrip people's ability to pursue them. It means that the general notion that schooling was a vehicle for success was true, although such may not be fully meaningful for the participants due to the actual experiences they had. As revealed in the interviews, the participants had high educational aspirations,

"...gusto ko magbuol sang kurso nga pagkamaestra" (I want to get a course on teaching), while others aspire of becoming an accountant or a doctor, but these aspirations were toned-down based on concrete personal experiences, "*ginhalinan ko imol man*" (I also came from a poor family), "*maano kay indi man malab-ot kay pigado man*" (I cannot attain it because we are poor), "*pangabuhi namon sang una pigado man mo*" (we also lived in poverty).

Unfortunately, higher educational aspirations do not lead to higher educational achievement, as manifested in the result of this study. The poor's educational aspirations tend to decline as they mature in response to their ongoing understanding of the world and what was possible, as well as to constraints imposed by previous choices and achievements.

According to Ross (2019), in cases of extreme poverty, the realization of aspirations for the future via greater educational investment may be constrained by income, political instability, or inadequate educational supply. The high educational aspirations of the poor were compromised as they saw the constraints of their financial situation,

"...ilam kung makatapos a" (I don't know if I will be able to graduate), "*waay inug-gasto ya ginikanan ko*" (my parents do not have money to finance my studies), "*te hay pigado man kami, waay ubra sanda*" (because we are poor, they don't have decent jobs).

This proved Ross' (2019) findings that the relationship between aspirations, investment, and later outcomes was more complicated in contexts where aspirations potentially outstrip an individual's or family's ability to reach them. Ibrahim's (2011) study proved that poor people who suffered from the death of their breadwinner had to forgo their educational aspirations,

"...gusto man daad namon nga makatapos kami sang pag-eskwela namon tanan te mabudlay man hay waay man kami tatay" (we also wanted to finish our studies but it is difficult because we have no more father), to provide for themselves and their families, "*nag-ubra bala ako kato, nagbantay bala ako ka bata haw, amo tong waay ako katapos ka eskwela ko.*" (I worked as a babysitter at that time, that's the reason why I was not able to finish.)

The findings of Serneels and Dercon (2020) provided direct evidence on the contribution of mother aspirations to children's education outcomes and pointed to aspirations as a channel of intergenerational mobility. It was revealed that the mother's high educational aspirations contribute to the formation of a child's own aspirations.

Thus, this study proved that a low level of mother's aspirations contributes to lower aspirations for her children, "*te kung si nanay lain tana, indi parehas sa iban nga ginikanan nga daw may laygay, ana tana waay gid a*" (my mother is different, she is not like other mothers who give advice, in her case none). More involved parents convey to their children that they are interested in their development, and this, in turn, signals to the children that their future is valued. The result of this study showed toned-down aspirations of the parents to their children,

"...ginasuportahan man kun may day-an e, pay garing te mo da e bakas man sanda makaeskwela e, sanda man gagasto kaugalingon da e" (There is support if needed, but of course, they should strive hard for them to be able to go to school, they are also the ones spending for their own education). "*...ambot lang kun naghambal man hay te depende tana sa bata kun matutum kun indi.*" (I don't know if they did because it still depends on the child if he/she is very eager to study or not.)

This confirmed that not all parents hold higher educational aspirations for their children, particularly in the case of the participants. This may be due to the fewer financial resources these families have. Socioeconomic deprivation may influence parental aspirations because those living in economic hardships have less financial security and fewer financial resources of their own for investing in their children. Janzen et al.'s (2017) findings proved that investment in the future increases with aspirations up to a certain point, but if the gap between one's current status and aspirations becomes too large, investment subsequently declines.

Gutman and Akerman's (2008) findings established that attitude is very important in the maintenance of high educational aspirations, "*mabakas gid ako sa pagtuon para makatapos.*" (I will do my best to finish my studies). This proved that poor people who believe they have the ability to achieve and who attribute their success to hard work, "*mangita anay ubra para makaeskwela*" (I will find a job so that I can study), tend to have higher educational aspirations than others.

However, attitude may also lead to low educational aspirations, "*kung gustuhon sang mga ginikanan ko kaya man nanda nga patapuson, te hay ako man ga tinuon man ako ka tinunto.*" (If my parents want to, maybe they can let me finish my studies, the problem is that I am not serious about it.)

This supported Ibrahim's (2011) study that some poor people have their own personal responsibility for failing to achieve their educational aspirations due to their reluctance to go to school, "*te amo da kuon nga gaeskweta, pagkahapon lagaw kaw sa banwa te waay gid it pulos pag-eskwela mo a*" (that is what they said that you are just going to school just to have the chance to roam around the town, schooling became useless.)," and their limited ambition as children,

"daw waay man gid ako sang una nga handum nga tapuson" (it seems that it never came to my mind to finish something),
"daw waay man nagsulod sa isip ko nga makatapos gid" (it seems that it never came to my mind to really finish my studies),
or at the bad influence of their peer groups when they were teenagers, "*galing nabuyo man sa kumpo-kumpyuter amo da*" (but I was addicted to computer games).

High educational aspirations connote more motivated individuals, and lower educational aspirations imply less commitment to learning and valuing education, "*maeskwela lang ko kun luyagan e*" (just went to school if wanted to), "*kung nagtutum lang daad ako sang una*" (if I were only serious before in my studies).

From the very beginning, the participants never realized the value of education. This lack of educational aspiration among the poor was due to the fact that they lacked something to aspire for, given their economic condition and the parental support, encouragement, and guidance they received.

Education has taken a more important role in occupational attainment. More young people were now involved in higher education because of increased of educational requirements in the workplace, "*kung indi ka mag-eskwela, waay ka man it masudlan nga ubra hay waay ka man tinapusan*" (if you will not go to school, you cannot find a job because you do not have a degree), "*te para sa urihi nga bisan ano lang ya ubra mo bala dang may masudlan ka gid*" (so that whatever job you want in the future, you will be hired). This confirmed the idea that poor educational achievement makes it harder for one to find work, and educational achievement was seen as a means to better job opportunities and greater social status.

Although having high educational aspirations was an important mechanism in achieving good educational outcomes, there was a need to consider the nuances that exist from the crossover of different aspects of identity, including socioeconomic status that created individual unique experiences.

Janzen et al. 's (2017) study revealed that if educational aspirations were too large compared to current status, they might result in failure and frustration. For most poor, educational aspirations may be totally high, however, their economic or financial status may reduce such aspirations with their ambitions being focused instead on their future children, "*ginahandum ko lang nga makatapos sanda sa pagtuon da bisan paano kag indi sanda mabudlayan parehas ka naagyan ko karang una halin sang pagkabata ko.*" (I wish they would be able to finish their studies and would not suffer the same experience that I had in my childhood.)

This supported Ibrahim's (2011) findings that some of them were keen to educate their children to compensate for their own aspirations' failure. They showed contentment in life, "*ay kun ako lang waay dun a*" (in my case, no more), and all their desire was for their children, "*te syempre bata ko dulang ya anhun ko e, ubligarun ko dulang nga asta makatapos, kutob nga masarangan ko*" (all I will care for is for my children to finish their education as long as I can support them). This provided the idea that due to the financial constraints faced by the participants before, they were not able to finish their schooling, and therefore, such desire to finish their studies was transferred to their children. They saw their children as their only means of fulfilling their educational aspirations.

Fruttero et al. (2021) found out that the availability of opportunities and the social and circumstantial factors shaping aspirations can temporarily hinder the aspirations of disadvantaged groups. The inability of the poor to sustain their high educational aspirations was attributed to the fact that the poor have bigger families. Mik had eleven (11) siblings, Nini had twelve (12), Inday had seven (7), Toto and Nonoy had six (6), respectively, and Gaga had seventeen (17). The Official Poverty Statistics of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reported that as family size increases, poverty worsens. This means that members of large families were less likely to reach college. Less access to education among larger and poor families gives them very few options and makes it viciously difficult for them to escape poverty.

As presented in this study, the poor who have high educational aspirations may be able to overcome the economic and social obstacles to achievement. They may show strong indications to attain education due to the different 'push' factors (low earning potential and lack of opportunities for advancement) and 'pull' factors (high employment probability and better economic conditions) but such only until they realize the multiple social circumstances (no family support, large family, and limited schooling of household members) and economic circumstances (poor, low-wage parents, and working at an early age) that hinder them from

achieving. It means that the economic status of the parents with the opportunities, encouragement, and support they provide remains the most direct influence on young people's outcomes that shape their aspirations and values. As Fruttero et al. (2021) concluded that high educational aspirations should not be considered as an end in themselves as they can backfire, with deleterious effects, if unmatched with opportunities.

6. Implications

In view of the findings in the aforementioned discussions, the need to support the poor in developing high educational aspirations for themselves and their children was crucial. Thus, the following implications were advanced:

1. The economic conditions of the poor, as well as ways of solving the problem of poverty, should be the main concern of all government policies. This case, however, was quite frustrating since the poor were still the most deprived sector of the country, and the problem of poverty seems to be the most difficult crisis to be solved;
2. The perpetual fact that an individual's educational aspiration was shaped by the presence of the problem of poverty was confirmed and affirmed in this study. Thus, the challenge for policymakers becomes more demanding as government policies should focus more sharply on raising educational standards and performance by providing educational policies that would truly become inclusive of the economic problems of the poor;
3. In the Philippines, where education was accorded with the highest budgetary allotment connotes greater significance and honor to the family, the findings of this study may open the door for policies that support the development of relevant policies to better empower the educational achievement and attainment of children from the lowest echelon of the society in the country's ever-changing educational system;
4. The role of the parents has become more critical in every stage of their children's education. Thus, policymakers must initiate a new culture of learning and aspiration among parents and must put aspiration at the heart of the approach to moving forward on education in the country.
5. The result of this study was in itself a benchmark on how educational aspirations influence the education and career path of poor people.

7. Conclusions

This study suggests that the poor were very eager to study and finish their schooling once supplied with the information about their return to education, but their ambitions declined as they came to realize the different structural constraints they faced in life. Thus, on the basis of the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The participants distinguished several social and economic circumstances that barred and hindered them from educational achievement and different push and pull factors that compel and attract the participants to pursue high educational aspirations;
2. The participants were under the impression that whatever educational goal they wanted to aspire for or how high their aspirations were, they still could not attain it as far as their condition was concerned; and
3. As children from poor families understand the economic constraints they faced, their high educational aspirations were compromised. The way they perceive their educational goal may become different from what they will attain.

8. Recommendations

This study tried to raise new perspectives on educational aspirations in the context of the poor and supported other research pointed out in the discussion. This research also raised important implications for policy. In view of this, the following recommendations were purported:

1. For the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups like the poor, ongoing support was especially important to help and protect them against the development of further barriers such as leaving school with low qualifications or becoming a parent at a young age. Interventions to help young, poor people realize their educational aspirations may be particularly effective. They should be oriented properly to the presence of a free basic and tertiary education that aims for the inclusion of all students in the educational system, even the out-of-school youth. The Alternative Learning System should be strengthened for the Education for All (EFA) principle to be fully realized. Thus, schools and community stakeholders should work hand and hand in helping and assisting the poor in realizing their educational aspirations;

2. Those working with parents of poor families, like the Social Workers of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), need to be aware that they play an important role in helping the poor parents develop their educational aspirations and attitudes not only for their children but for themselves. This will give the parents of poor families a sense of confidence and empowerment so that they can help their children to persevere and overcome obstacles when things are not going well. The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) should be revisited and its programs, projects, and activities properly evaluated so that the focus would be truly reflective of its aims of helping the poor realize their educational aspirations. It should not be used as a tool for poor families to become dependent on the government for their daily basic needs. They should be reoriented that the purpose of being a beneficiary of the 4Ps was for their children to be sent to school;

3. The schools may have a key role to play in the development and achievement of the educational aspirations of poor young people by expanding their horizons in supporting their parents. The schools need to be aware of the role they play in cultivating children's educational aspirations through assessment and messages about academic performance. These may be more significant for children whose family background does not support their abilities and aspirations;

4. Teachers, youth workers and volunteers, and professionals who work closely with pupils, students, and young people should help them develop and realize their aspirations by ensuring that high-quality information, advice, and guidance services are accessible to them;

5. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and educational policymakers should work alongside young, poor people. They should take part in positive activities such as extended school programs and initiatives that can make a difference in the young poor people's educational aspirations; and

6. A follow-up study could also be conducted on the vague parts of this study, like parents' educational aspirations for their children to glean a holistic view of this phenomenon.

Giving meaning to the life stories and feelings of the poor gives a more concrete understanding of the different problems they encounter in life. It is, therefore, necessary for the government to take an active part in solving these problems by intensifying its effort to give equal opportunity and educational support to every poor in consonance with a sound and inclusive policy for effective delivery of educational services. Bro. Rolando Dizon, former Chair of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), once said, "it is the fulfillment of a dream to provide quality education to students who strive to free themselves from the dehumanizing clutches of poverty and give them dignity and self-respect."

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