



## Sociological analysis of parental attitudes towards youth educational choice

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**Abstract:** The study of parental influence is contextualized within their significance in understanding youth aspirations in education. The experiences and attitudes of parents regarding higher education affect the youth choice. In the process of educational selection, young people are guided by their parents' advice and take into account the socio-economic opportunities of the family. The article explores the influence of parents on educational choice of youth. Data from interview conducted with the parents of high school graduates are presented. The sample size is 100 respondents. The results indicate a correlation between the parents' level of education, place of residence, family socio-economic status, and the educational choices of youth. Youth whose parents have higher level of education are oriented towards not only higher education but also postgraduate education. Youth from families with lower levels of education consider vocational training as well. Place of residence is also significant. In smaller towns, the choice of profession is highly influenced not only by parents but also by kinship. In larger cities, the circle of people involved in the professional choice narrows to the family level. The findings contribute to deeper understanding of role of parental influence in the educational choice process. The practical significance of this research is determined by the provision of data that can be used to improve counseling programs for better interaction between schools and parents, and to raise awareness of the importance of parental involvement in the youth's choice of higher education.

**Keywords:** educational choice, parental influence, education, socio-economic status, higher education institutions.

## Introduction

The study of the interplay between the social institutions of family and education is a relevant issue in sociology. In the process of making educational and career choices, youth and their parents strive to use family resources as effectively as possible when deciding on future specialties and higher education institutions. During the educational choice process, youth are guided by the advice of parents and relatives and consider the family's material well-being. The extent of investments in education depends on the family's material and social resources, time, and the parents' human capital. Investments in education are determined by the family's socio-economic status and the parents' cultural capital. The higher the socio-economic status of the family and the cultural capital of the parents, the greater the opportunities for parents to invest in their children's education (Conley, 2001). Investment in children's education begins long before entering higher education institutions. It starts with choosing a school, participating in additional courses, and organizing leisure activities for children where cultural capital is formed. Cultural capital can be grouped into embodied and objectified types. Embodied cultural capital includes cultural skills, knowledge, and abilities, while objectified cultural capital involves the possession of cultural goods. Additionally, institutionalized cultural capital is identified, characterized by holding a higher education diploma (Bourdieu, 2002).

Scholars have highlighted the important role of parents in the process of higher education choice by young people and have identified various forms of parental influence. The forms of parental influence are grouped as follows: 1) parents' life values, 2) parents' education level, 3) the family's material well-being, and 4) the influence of social connections (Eldegwy et.al, 2022).

Early studies examining the influence of parents on educational choices demonstrate that parents transmit their social status to their children through education. The educational choice and the possibility of a future career directly correlate with the socioeconomic assets of the family. The connection between the education received and future professional success is strengthened in society. This relationship limits the possibility of social mobility. The importance of education as a key component of the transition into the professional hierarchy remains, contributing to the continuation of social inequality (Blau and Duncan, 1967). According to P. Bourdieu's concept, cultural capital, being a meaningful and socially significant characteristic, is mainly inherited and transmitted by the family. Parents from the upper classes, based on socio-economic assets and cultural capital, can provide their children with a quality education, which in turn allows them to occupy higher social positions. P. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a system of all investments in aesthetic practices, including educational ones, transmitted to children in the process of family socialization, or in Bourdieu's term through "habitus". Habitus is an important form of cultural heritage, reflecting the class position or social location of actors and is aimed at perpetuating the structures of domination. Since the habitus of a family varies depending on the class, only the cultural resources of the middle or elite classes can become cultural capital, which is valued in society (Tzanakis, 2011).

Youth from families with low socio-economic status build their cultural capital through academic achievements and knowledge of foreign languages. These achievements provide them

with opportunities to find sponsors willing to cover their educational expenses. This process may also involve school administrators, who may be motivated to support academically successful students. Cabrera and other authors (2018) proposed a model of career self-determination and higher education choice that emphasizes the interaction between abilities, socio-economic status, and parental involvement. These researchers determined that parental involvement in "academic socialization" fosters identity development for entering higher education institutions. Parental involvement includes monitoring academic performance, assisting with entrance exam preparation, and completing college application forms (Cabrera et al., 2018). Approaches to studying institutional choice emphasize the role of student variables, institutional level, and the interactions between these factors (Han, 2014). Research on the institutional choice process tends to focus either on broad cultural trends (Stolzenberg et. al, 2019) or on the highly individualized preferences of higher education students (Litten L. H., 1982).

Social inequality is reproduced through the system of higher education, despite the democratization of society. This confirms the thesis of representatives of the structuralist paradigm that inequality in access to the education system is an inevitable attribute of modern society. In the structuralist paradigm of the sociology of education, the problem of accessibility of higher education is considered from the point of view of economic and socio-cultural barriers. The opportunity to enter a university and successfully complete it mainly depends on belonging to a certain social class, which is reinforced and reproduced by the education system itself. In the functionalist paradigm, accessibility of higher education is considered through the position of social inequality existing in society, which is considered functional and maintaining the balance of society as a system. Among the barriers to obtaining higher education, the same ones are distinguished as in the structuralism.

Youth mostly consider higher education institutions and educational programs that are familiar to them. This issue of awareness is often referred to as the "choice problem" (Huntington-Klein, 2018). When building a set of options for educational institutions and programs, youth rely on information from various sources. Options are not developed in isolation, and youth do not have complete control over the decision-making process. Priorities of youth and parents may differ, so family relationships, economic capital, and academic achievements of the youth significantly influence the formation of specific choices (Lansing, 2017). Parents and teachers who support high school students should understand students' career preferences in the process of choosing higher education for further development of academic abilities (Huntington-Klein, 2018).

Considering Bourdieu's statement that 'actors act based on the habitus they have adopted and mastered,' it can be concluded that the choice of young people is, to some extent, predictable (Fischer et.al.). Statement, that the decision to choose higher education is made independently by the school graduates is doubtful. This is because the process of higher education choice is developing within the context of the family habitus (expectations, plans, etc.) and the family's socio-economic situation.

According to the results of Kazakhstani studies, the influence of the family's material and financial resources predominates in process of higher education choice by youth. Their professional preferences are formed with regard to market relations and have a more rational content, based on the demand, prestige, and profitability of the profession (Montayev et. al. 2022).

Apart from the rationality factor, the factors influencing youth higher education choice can be classified into four categories: professionalism, convenience, dependency, and neutrality. The professionalism factor is based on the cognitive structure of the educational process: the pursuit of self-development and the expansion of cultural capital. The convenience and dependency factors are related to the external environment, conformity, and parental influence. The neutrality factors encompass cognitive and behavioral aspects (Duisenova et. al., 2019).

Other Kazakhstani studies focused on the influence of parental impact as a dependency factor have identified educational level and gender differences. The education level of both parents has a significant impact on the educational achievements of youth. However, differences emerge when analyzing the gender of the child. The influence of parental education on their son's educational level shows that the regression coefficient for "the father-son" relationship is higher than for "the mother-son" relationship, indicating greater significance. Conversely, when examining the influence of parents' education on their daughter's educational level, a higher regression coefficient and significance level are noted in "the mother-daughter" relationship compared to "the mother-son" relationship. This indicates that children's educational paths depend on the education level of parents of the same gender (Januzakova and Salingereyev, 2024).

The connect between parents and teachers, as educational process participants, is crucial for youth. The lack of contact between and uncoordinated actions of the school and parents, can harm the child's learning and upbringing, and in the long run, affect their professional self-determination and choices (Bekenova and Abdullayeva, 2020).

## Research Methodology

The research methodology meets the requirements for studying the process of higher education choice and is defined by the context of the problem being examined. This article presents data from a structured interview conducted with the parents of high school graduates. The use of structured interviews allows for standardized data collection, facilitating the comparison of responses and ensuring that specific topics of interest are covered comprehensively. This method is particularly effective in exploring the nuanced perspectives of parents regarding their children's educational choices.

The sample size consists of 100 respondents, selected to represent a diverse range of socio-economic statuses, professional backgrounds, levels of education, and places of residence. This diversity enhances the validity of the findings, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how different factors influence parental attitudes. The family status of the respondents is also varied, capturing a wide spectrum of experiences and insights. The article presents responses from parents living in Almaty, the capital, as well as those from smaller cities, providing a comparative perspective on urban and rural influences on educational choices.

The data collection process involved several stages. Initially, a pilot study was conducted to refine the interview questions and ensure clarity. Following this, respondents were recruited through a combination of purposive and random sampling methods, allowing for the inclusion of various demographics. Structured interviews were then conducted, either in person or via

video conferencing, to accommodate participants' preferences and availability. Each interview was recorded with the consent of the respondents and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The final stage involved coding and analyzing the qualitative data to identify key themes and trends regarding parental influence on higher education choices.

## **Research results**

**Parents Education.** The status of an individual is the result of many factors, but initially and often fundamentally, it is shaped by their education. The higher the socio-economic status of the family, the clearer and more ambitious the educational plans of the children are. Parental educational attainment has been identified as one of the most common indicators of a person's socioeconomic status. Parental educational attainment influences the educational achievements of their children. Students whose parents have completed college or university education are more likely to achieve higher levels of education than students whose parents have a lower level of education. Children of parents with less than a high school education are much less likely to continue their education after high school than children of parents with a higher level of education. This is since parents with a higher level of education provide their children with more educational resources.

*Our daughter's higher education is important to us. Both my husband and I have higher education. Our daughter studies at a private school, has a certain level of knowledge, and considering her proficiency in English, we are looking at foreign universities. We are gathering information about the Seoul National University for the medical specialty. We are also prepared to provide support during her studies, including financial assistance" (Parents with higher education).*

*We are planning for our son to enter college. We haven't chosen an institution yet, but we will enroll in one of the educational establishments in Almaty. Our son wants to study 'law' (Parents without higher education).*

Educational attainment influences parents' knowledge, beliefs, values, and goals regarding raising children. Thus, various parental behavioral patterns are indirectly related to children's academic achievement. Higher educational attainment may enhance parents' ability to engage in their children's education, as well as enable parents to acquire and demonstrate social skills and problem-solving strategies that contribute to their children's success in school. Students whose parents have a higher level of education are more likely to pursue higher education, have positive self-perceptions, are work-oriented, and have more effective learning strategies than children of parents with a lower level of education.

**Place of residence.** Next important factor is place of residence. Urban dwellers tend to consider top national universities and foreign ones while rural residents are oriented universities in big cities. The aspiration towards applying to universities in big cities can be explained by several factors. On the one hand, parents believe that obtaining higher education at a big city university will enhance their children's competitiveness in the labor market. On the other hand, their place of residence is characterized by a scarcity or absence of universities. Thirdly, parents are often influenced by their children's desire to study in a large city. However, studying in large cities leads to additional expenses, so graduates from rural and small-town

schools and their parents opt for accessible and cost-effective higher education institutions and programs. Differences in the choice of future profession are more determined by the features and specifics of the socio-economic development of the regions. Thus, special attention is paid to the issue of choosing a region for a future place of work, which reveals the desire to stay to work in their region or to move to another region and organize labor activity there.

*We want our daughter to be accepted at the Kazakh National Medical University (Almaty). We advised her to choose the medical profession. We believe this is one of the most promising and in-demand professions. We haven't discussed continuing her education after obtaining a higher degree; for now, we think that just having a higher education is sufficient (Residents of the village).*

*We have not chosen a higher education institution yet, but we have already decided about the city where we will study. We are planning to enroll in a university in Almaty (Residents of the village).*

During choosing a university or a specialty, high school students and their parents are usually guided by public opinion in both the prestige and popularity of the chosen specialties. The Internet is the main source of information for applicants and their parents. The motives for obtaining higher education are primarily external - this is the prestige of obtaining higher education and a qualified specialty that is in demand on the labor market. The prospect of improving one's personal life is also important.

**Education fee.** Parents understand the need to allocate funds for education from the family budget and accordingly forms its own strategies. Family income high parents choose prestigious educational institutions, and their children focus on their interests, and low-income parents on themselves considers the available options, and in most cases of their children they do not have the opportunity to consider their interests. Even it is said that the school graduate independently made the decision to choose higher education. But we cannot fully agree with the statement. The reason is the process of choosing higher education influence of family habitus (expectations, plans, etc.) and family implemented in the context of social and economic conditions. However, even for families with high socio-economic status, the process of choosing higher education is not always easy. Some young people, especially boys, do not want their parents to be actively involved in the decision to choose higher education, especially among young people who do not perform well in school.

*Our family has no financial difficulties. Most importantly, we want our son to receive a quality education at a prestigious university. We are also planning for him to continue his studies in a master's program afterwards (Parents with high social-economic status).*

We have not yet decided whether to enroll in a university or a college. Of course, we want our child to receive a higher education. However, primarily, we will try to enroll in a college with a state grant. Education fee is too high for us (Parents with low social-economic status).

Some parents who participated in the interview defines the importance of getting higher education only as a "continuation of the family tradition". They noted that they seek to choose a higher education institution where they feel comfortable from a social point of view due to their social status and social opportunities. Some respondents can be an example of a classic pattern

like "fish in water". For them, obtaining higher education is considered as another normal stage after graduation. Such situations are often observed in the attitudes of parents with higher education and higher family income. And some parents of graduates do not have specific plans for their children to receive/not receive higher education, they do not know which university, which specialty they will study in. Their decisions are "random" in nature, made at the last moment.

Most parents with high socio-economic status who participated in our interview strive to create conditions for their children's choice of higher education in conditions of certainty and clarity. Parents with low socio-economic status associate the need for higher education with changes in the labor market in modern times. Parents without higher education define their children's higher education as a necessary condition for achieving success in life in the future. Many parents consider higher education as a necessary and obligatory benefit, regardless of their educational background and experience

## **Conclusion**

Most parents regardless a level of education, social and economic situation, consider higher education as necessary and even mandatory benefit for their children. However, for youth from highly educated families, important values of education include the opportunity to work abroad and to establish necessary connections and acquaintances, which is a response to the current situation in the country and global migration trends. For them, the prestige of the chosen educational institution and the quality of education are crucial. Thus, parental education and the socio-economic status of the family are socially differentiating factors in educational and professional choices.

Analysis of place of residence and socio-economic status demonstrates some differences. Parents of graduates from rural areas plan that their children will study in university, but do not even consider the prospect of studying abroad. Parents of city private school graduates, in turn, mainly consider only higher educational institutions, including foreign educational institutions.

Parents with high socio-economic status "invests" in education of their children from an early age by sending them in a good private school. Parents involvement in higher education choice is differentiated across level of education, place of residence and socioeconomic status.

## **Author Contributions**

**M.K. Shnarbekova** played the leading role in data collection, defining the research design, and writing the article. **U. Mutalip** contributed to writing the literature review on the research topic.

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### **Жастардың жоғары білімді таңдауға қатысты ата-ана ұстанымдарын әлеуметтанулық талдау**

**Аңдатпа.** Жастардың жоғары білімді таңдауын зерттеуде ата-ана ықпалын ескеру маңызды. Ата-ананың жоғары білім беру саласындағы тәжірибелері мен ұстанымдары жастардың таңдауына әсер етеді. Жоғары білімді таңдауда жастар ата-анасының кеңестері мен отбасының әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайын ескереді. Мақалада ата-ананың жастардың жоғары білімді таңдауына ықпалы сараланады. Мектеп түлектерінің ата-анасымен жүргізілген сұхбат нәтижелері берілген. Іріктеу жиынтығы 100 респондентті құрайды. Алынған мәліметтер ата-ананың білім деңгейі, тұрғылықты жері, отбасының әлеуметтік-экономикалық мәртебесі мен жастардың білімі таңдауы арасында байланыстың бар екенін көрсетеді. Ата-анасының білім деңгейі жоғары болғанда жастар жоғары біліммен қатар, жоғары оқу орнынан кейінгі білімді алуға да талпыныс көрсетеді. Ата-анасының білім деңгейі төмен болған жастар орта арнайы білім аруды да қарастырады. Тұрғылықты жердің де ықпалы бар. Кіші қалаларда мамандықты таңдауда ата-ана ықпалымен қатар туысқандардың әсері де болады. Ірі қалаларда кәсіби таңдау жасауда тек отбасы ішінде талқылау жүргізіледі. Алынған мәліметтер жоғары білімді таңдауда ата-ананың ықпалын тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Ата-ананың білім деңгейі мен отбасының әлеуметтік жағдайы әлеуметтік жіктеу факторы ретінде анықталады. Зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы кеңес беру бағдарламаларын жетілдіруге мүмкіндік беретін деректерді ұсынумен байланысты. Бұл мектеп пен ата-ана арасындағы қарым-қатынасты жақсартуға және жастардың жоғары білімді таңдауда ата-ана ықпалының маңыздылығы туралы хабардарлықты арттырады.

**Түйін сөздер:** білімі таңдау, ата-ана ықпалы, білім беру, әлеуметтік-экономикалық мәртебе, жоғары оқу орны.

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### **Социологический анализ установок родителей в отношении образовательного выбора молодежи**

**Аннотация.** Исследование влияния родителей актуализируется в контексте их значимости в понимании образовательных устремлений молодежи. Опыт и установки родителей в сфере высшего образования оказывают влияние на выбор. В процессе образовательного выбора молодежь руководствуется советами родителей и учитывают социально-экономические возможности семьи. В статье изучается влияние родителей на образовательный выбор молодежи. Представлены данные интервью, проведенного с родителями выпускников школ. Объем выборки составляет 100 респондентов. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о наличии связи между уровнем образования родителей, местом проживания, социально-экономического

статуса семьи и образовательным выбором молодежи. Молодежь, чьи родители имеют более высокий уровень образования, ориентируются на получение не только высшего образования, но и послевузовского. Молодежь из семей с невысоким уровнем образования рассматривают также среднее специальное образование. Место проживания также имеет важное значение. В малых городах при выборе профессии наблюдается высокая значимость советов не только родителей, но и родственников и близких людей. В крупных городах круг людей, принимающих участие в профессиональном выборе сужается до уровня семьи. Полученные результаты способствуют глубокому пониманию влияния родителей в процессе образовательного выбора, где образование родителей и социально-экономический статус семьи являются социально-дифференцирующими факторами. Практическая значимость данного исследования определяется с предоставлением данных, которые могут быть использованы для улучшения консультационных программ для лучшего взаимодействия между школами и родителями и повышению осведомленности о важности участия родителей в выборе высшего образования молодежью.

**Ключевые слова:** образовательный выбор, влияние родителей, образование, социально-экономический статус, вузы.

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