

## **A STUDY OF THE FEMALES' CHOICE FOR ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE (FAISALABAD) AS INFLUENCED BY THE REFERENCE GROUP**

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A reference group is an identifiable group whose supposed perspective is used by the actor as a frame of reference in the organization of perceptual field. Thus one's reference group both sets and enforces standard of behaviour for the person. The choice of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad by young women for higher education has been viewed as a psychological phenomenon. The reasons given by the female students studying at the University of Agriculture were found to be significantly associated with the socio-economic characteristics (education, occupation and economic status) of the members of their reference group.

### **INTRODUCTION**

A person is educated both through formal and informal means. Education is synonymous with socialization, but it stands for institutional and professional training and learning. Formal education (schools, colleges, universities and other specialized agencies) and informal (family, play group, reference group and neighbourhood) impart mostly the skills, value orientation and cultural heritage that are needed by a person for getting at his aim for life. One's habits, values, aspirations, attitudes are affected by his environment in which one lives. Therefore, the formation of attitudes, setting up of adequate goals of study and emphasizing specific standard of achievements are learnt and modified in a group situation.

The reference group supports the values in terms of which a person evaluates his own conduct. Mangalam (1960), Hartley and Hartley (1952) defined the reference group as "a group with which an individual feels

identified, the norms of which he/she accepts".

The reference group provides an individual the basis of comparison and evaluation of a person's own conduct. Reference group real or imaginary may mould one's values, attitudes and aspirations which are necessary conditions for one's actions. Thus a reference group sets and enforces standards for an individual. It has been remarked in this context that "wants and goals are shared by one's reference group". They become a basis of comparison for him for the process of evaluation and self-appraisal. As a result of his attempt to seek acceptance of these groups an individual is heavily influenced by them.

Education in Agriculture has its own importance in Pakistan, as it is well known that it is predominantly an agricultural country. Over 70% of its population lives in rural areas and is directly or indirectly engaged in agriculture. Changes in agriculture have been rapid, and the technological de-

velopments in agriculture are continuous. In such a situation, need for organized and established agricultural institutions, like the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, is highly imperative not only for males, but also for females. Role of a female as an Agricultural Specialist may be very significant, and also because of the fact that the requirements of a female's responsible role as a mother, sister, wife, etc. are no less important. The need as such for agricultural education for farming and non-farming occupations requiring knowledge and skill in agriculture for young females is increasing and becoming more apparent. The present study is based on one of the important aspects of such factors. In this study reference group is taken as a factor involved to determine choice of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad as an educational institution by young females.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in two faculties i.e. Veterinary Science and Agriculture of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. The respondents were the female students of both the faculties (excluding foreign students). Hundred per cent female students were taken for this study. The total number of female students of both the faculties was 86. Of these, 70 were the students of the Faculty of Agriculture, and 16 belonged to the Faculty of Veterinary Science. Data were collected through an interview schedule. Chi-square and Lambda tests were applied to the data for analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reasons given by the respondents were nine in number, which for the purpose of analysis were recategorized as social, economic and personal.

### Social reasons

- i. Friends already studying in the University of Agriculture
- ii. Higher education helpful in getting a life partner
- iii. Pressure by parents and guardians for higher education

### Economic reasons

- i. Better job opportunities
- ii. Interest in agriculture as a private side business
- iii. Agriculture being a field of specialization for better economic prospects

### Personal reasons

- i. No other choice of admission to an educational institution of higher learning was available
- ii. Could not go outside Faisalabad for higher education
- iii. Upset by the free time after completion of higher secondary education

In the reference group were included those persons whom respondents had liked most and their values were consistent with their own values. These happened to be respondents' fathers and mothers as a first or second choice. The values under question were limited to just the purpose of getting higher education, viz.,

- i. Education is meant for attaining knowledge.
- ii. Education enables young women to become good housewives.
- iii. Education is necessary for getting good jobs.
- iv. Education is helpful in achieving high status in life.

Relationships were sought between the socio-economic status (education, occupation, income) of respondents' reference group members and their reasons for the choice of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad as a seat of higher learning. The values of Chi-square and their level of significance etc. are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Showing relationship between socio-economic status of respondents' reference group and reasons for the choice of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad for higher learning

Dependent variable	Independent variables	Value of Chi-square	df	Level of significance	Values of Lambda
Reasons for the choice of University of Agriculture: Social, Economic and Personal	i. Educational status of the reference group				
	a. Fathers	37.42	2	0.001	0.85
	b. Mothers	19.19	2	0.001	0.74
	ii. Occupational status of the reference group				
	a. Fathers	11.40	4	0.05	0.09
	b. Mothers	2.62	2	NS	0.29
	iii. Economic status of reference group (family income)	11.78	4	0.05	0.11

Reasons regarding the females' choice for admission to the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad depended on the parents' education, occupation and income. A part of hypothesis concerning education is upheld, thus, the result is similar to earlier findings where it was pointed out that the family is a vital factor that exerts more or less subtle pressure on the child and the youth to make certain type of choices.

It is inferred that 85% of the reasons to choose the University of Agriculture are explained on the basis of father's education of the respondents and 74% of the reasons to choose this institution depended upon mother's education of the respondents. Regarding occupation of the parents, there was a weak relationship, that is the respondents whose fathers had low level of occupation chose the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, for economic reasons. In other words, 9% of the reasons for the choice were being explained by the father's occupation of the respondents. The hypothesis that the reasons for the choice, depended upon the occupation of the respondent's father was accepted. On the other hand, there was a non-significant association between mothers' occupation and the reason to choose the University of Agriculture, for higher studies. The hypothesis concerning mothers' occupation as a reason for their choice could not be accepted.

The dependence of choice for admission regarding family income as stated in the hypothesis was upheld. There was a significant association between annual family income of the respondents and the reasons to prefer the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, for higher studies.

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