

VALUE ORIENTATION AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria. It assessed the level of value orientation of secondary school students, examined the influence of value orientation on students educational aspirations, and established the relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of 926,755 secondary students in 2,131 schools of Southwestern Nigeria. The study selected 342 respondents as sample. Data were collected from secondary school students using structured self-design questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study concludes that students who possess positive value orientations toward education tend to demonstrate higher educational aspirations with an average mean of 3.13 (Sd = .729). The chi-square test ($\chi^2=3862.304$) ($p < 0.05$)

establishes a statistically significant influence of value orientation on educational aspirations and the ($r=0.759$) ($p<0.05$) finally reflects a powerful positive correlation between value orientation and educational aspirations. The study finally concluded that value orientation significantly influenced the student's educational aspirations. It was recommended that schools, families, and policymakers promote positive values to enhance student academic ambitions and educational attainment.

Keywords: Value orientation, Educational aspiration, Academic motivation, Educational attainment

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in national development and individual advancement. In modern societies, students' educational aspirations are considered a key predictor of academic achievement and long-term career success. Educational aspiration reflects students' expectations and ambitions regarding the level of education they intend to attain in the future (Khattab, 2015). Students with higher educational aspirations tend to demonstrate stronger academic motivation, persistence, and commitment to educational activities. Educational aspiration is influenced by several factors including family background, socioeconomic status, school environment, and personal beliefs (Trebbels, 2015). Value orientation refers to the set of beliefs and principles that guide individuals' behaviours and decision-making processes (Rokeach, 1973). Values influence how individuals perceive education, set goals, and make decisions regarding their academic future. During adolescence, students begin to develop personal value systems that shape their attitudes toward education and career development. These values may include discipline, hard work, perseverance, responsibility, and respect for education. Students who internalize positive educational values are more likely to pursue higher levels of

education and maintain strong academic aspirations (Tani et al., 2022).

In Nigeria, education seems to be a pathway to socioeconomic mobility and improved quality of life. Consequently, students' aspirations toward higher education have become an important area of research in educational management and administration. However, despite the importance of educational aspiration, it seems that many secondary school students still demonstrate low academic motivation and limited educational goals. Value orientation signifies the extent to which an individual's values are consistent with pursuing educational goals. It can play a significant role in whether or not individual achieves their educational aspirations.

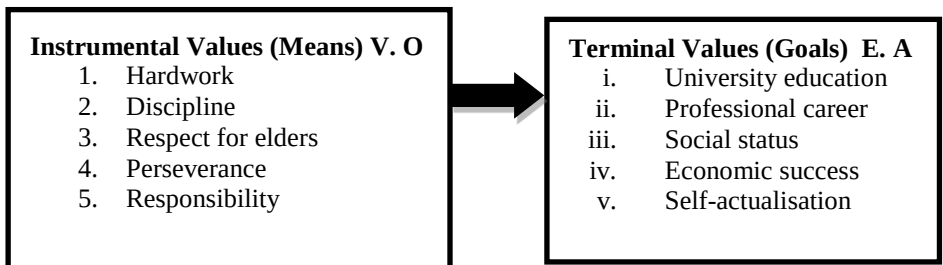
According to Akhter & Peerzada (2023), value orientation refers to the set of principles, beliefs and ideas that guide individual's thoughts, actions and decision making processes. It is an essential aspect of human existence as it helps to shape the personal identity, societal cohesion and moral reasoning. Crises in the society involving the youths seem to be a matter of serious concern. It appears that the kind of parenting and value orientation cherished in decades (hardworking, honesty, loyalty, sacrifice, integrity, dedication, commitment, contentment, diligent, tolerance, selfishness, co-operation, obedience, discipline, etc.) are now depleted. Some parents who show little or no concern for their children academic progress may bear most of their children blame or fault. Poor parenting and negative value orientation seem to inform poor desire for higher education on the part of the students. However, the fact that some parents still have strong higher educational aspirations may tend to conceal this notion. Therefore, understanding the value orientation of students and its influence on educational aspirations is essential for

educators, counsellors and policymakers seeking to promote academic success among secondary school students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Value Theory proposed by Rokeach (1973). According to Rokeach, values are enduring beliefs that influence individuals' attitudes and behaviours across various life situations. Values function as guiding principles that shape individuals' goals, decisions, and aspirations. Rokeach (1973) classified values into two major categories: terminal values, which represent desired end states of existence such as success or happiness, and instrumental values, which represent preferred modes of behaviour such as honesty, responsibility, and diligence. These values guide individuals' behaviour and influence the goals they pursue. Within the educational context, students' value orientation may influence their commitment to learning and their academic aspirations. Students who value education as an important life goal are more likely to aspire to higher levels of educational attainment

V.O and E.A means values orientations and educational aspirations.



Source; Adapted Rokeach (1973)

The model assumes that students' internalised values determine the level of their educational aspirations. Students internalize values from family, culture, and school and these

values shape their value orientation toward education. Value orientation also influences the level of educational aspirations. Thus, students who prioritize achievement, responsibility, and perseverance are more likely to aspire to higher levels of education

Literature Review

Value orientation refers to the system of beliefs and principles that guide individuals' behaviour and decision-making processes. It reflects the priorities individuals assign to different life goals and activities (Rokeach, 1973). Values play an important role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward education, work, and social responsibilities. During adolescence, students develop personal value systems through interactions with parents, teachers, peers, and society (Silistraru, 2016). Dolgova, et al. (2023) "Value orientations" by Rokich, values such as "health", "hardworking" and "honesty" are the most significant for the subjects 70 %; "public recognition", "dedication", "courage in defending one's opinion" and "love" 67 %, "financially secure life" and "integrity" 60 %; "productive life", "commitment", "self-confidence", "entertainment" and "self-control" – 57 %; "cognition", "beauty of nature and art", "obey the constituted authority", and "responsibility" – 50 %. The last places are occupied by "intransigence to shortcomings in oneself and others" 80 %, "high demands" 73 %. According to the results of the methodology "Diagnostics of the real structure of value orientations of personality" by Bubnov S. S. the leading value orientations for students are such values as "pleasant pastime, rest" 60 % (18 people), "help, mercy to other people" 57 %, "health" 50 %. The list of values with an average level of significance included "love" 67%; "pleasant pastime, rest" and "communication" 60 %; "social activity to achieve positive changes in society" and "high social status" 50 %. Thus, a large part of students consider such values as "love" 67 % and "financially secure life" 60 % as significant. Educational

institutions are important agents of value socialization because institution provides opportunities for students to internalize positive values such as discipline, perseverance, honesty, and respect for knowledge. Students who possess strong educational values are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward learning and academic achievement.

Educational aspiration refers to the level of educational desire of an individual attainment in the future. It represents students' academic goals and their expectations regarding future educational attainment. Educational aspirations serve as motivational factors that influence students' academic effort and persistence. Students with high aspirations are more likely to perform well academically and pursue higher education opportunities (Khattab, 2015).

Research indicates that educational aspirations are shaped by both internal and external factors including personal beliefs, family expectations, school environment, and socioeconomic background (Domina et al., 2011). Study by Tani et al., 2022 shown that students' values influence their educational aspirations. Positive values such as discipline, responsibility, and commitment to education also encourage students to pursue higher educational goals (Tani et al., 2022).

Wang et, al., (2025) investigation on the impact of parental educational expectations on subjective well-being among adolescents: The serial mediating role of self-efficacy and learning engagement researchers results revealed the following key findings: parental educational expectations were significantly and positively correlated with adolescents' subjective well-being; self-efficacy mediated the relationship between parental educational expectations and adolescents' subjective well-being; learning engagement also mediated the relationship between parental educational expectations and adolescents' subjective well-being; and self-efficacy and

learning engagement jointly operated as serial mediators between parental educational expectations and adolescents' subjective well-being.

According to Sergeev (2021), "Value orientations of a student age represent a mechanism of personal growth and self-development, which is developing in nature and represents a dynamic system." For a student, it can be useful for a teacher or parent to provide opportunities for the student to look back on their experiences and develop a sense of themselves and what they want to accomplish. This can be done by engaging the student in class discussions, personal goal-setting and other activities. It can also be useful for a teacher or parent to provide opportunities for a student to develop a sense of purpose by relating schoolwork to real-world experiences and opportunities. It is also important for a teacher or parent to understand that a student's value orientation can be affected by their school environment. For example, a student may feel as though they are not being supported by their school, which can affect their value orientation by creating a sense of lower purpose and aspirations. On the other hand, a student may be surrounded by supportive adults and peers, which can create a sense of value orientation that encourages the student to accomplish their educational aspirations. As such, it is important for secondary school heads with support of parents to create an environment that may supports all students in developing a positive value orientation. This might include providing opportunities for student voice, creating a culture of respect and inclusion, and ensuring that all students have access to resources they need to succeed. It has been observed that when a student has a strong value orientation, they are more likely to have a positive experience in secondary school and beyond. Students who perceive education as a valuable tool for achieving success and social mobility are also more likely to aspire to higher levels of education. Conversely, students who attach little importance to education may demonstrate lower academic motivation and aspirations.

Bekomson, et al., (2023) conducted a study to find out if cultural value orientation has any influence on self-efficacy with reference to social self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, language self-efficacy and moral self-efficacy. The Bekomson, et al., (2023) employed ex-post facto design and a sample of 1,586 students was randomly selected from the public secondary schools in Cross River State for the study. A questionnaire titled “Cultural Value Orientation and Self-Efficacy (CVOSEQ) was the instrument used for data collection. The face validity of the instrument was determined by three other research experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation from the department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar while the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The data collected were analysed using One-way Analysis of Variance tested at .05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that cultural value orientation has a significant influence on social self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, language self-efficacy, moral self-efficacy and overall self-efficacy. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended among others that parents should educate the children about their cultural heritage. Also they should be encouraged to communicate in their local language, dress in their cultural outfits and take part in cultural activities. Lastly, the school should lay emphasis on promotion of cultural heritage and values so that the child can have an understanding of his origin.

Bekomson & Ntamu (2019) conducted a study to find out if religious value orientation has any influence on self- efficacy with regards to social self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, language self-efficacy and moral self-efficacy. Ex -post facto design was adopted for the study and the sample consisted of 1,543 students randomly selected from 47 public schools in Cross River State. A self-designed questionnaire titled;

Religious Value Orientation and Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (RVOASEQ) were used to collect data for the study. The face validity of the instrument was determined by four research experts in Educational Psychology and measurement and evaluation, while the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The data collected from 1,529 subjects were analysed using One Way Analysis of Variance statistical tool, tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the researchers revealed that religious value orientation significantly influence all the dimensions of students' self-efficacy except social self-efficacy. Based on the findings of this study, the investigators recommended that teachers should encourage students to belong to social groups in school, to enable them develop skills that will help them build their social competence and also engage students in religious discussions and activities that will help them build up a positive religious standing that will guide their activities. Onyeji et al. (2024) investigates the relationship between value orientation and home background among senior secondary school students in Akwanga and Lafia Education Zones, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study used correlational survey research design. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between value orientation and home background among senior secondary school students in Akwanga and Lafia Education Zones. The study also revealed that there is significant difference in value orientation between male and female students in Akwanga and Lafia Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

Educational aspiration plays a significant role in shaping students' academic achievement and career development. Students with strong aspirations are more likely to pursue higher education, demonstrate academic persistence, and achieve better educational outcomes (Domina et al., 2011). However, it has been observed that many secondary school

students in developing countries exhibit relatively low educational aspirations due to social, psychological, and environmental factors. In Nigeria, the educational system seems to face challenges related to students' motivation and commitment to learning. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of education, some students still demonstrate weak academic ambition and limited interest in pursuing higher education. It has been observed that such challenges may be related to students' value orientation toward education and personal development. Value orientation influences students' perception of education, their academic behaviour, and the goals they set for themselves. Students who attach high value to education may more likely to aspire to higher academic achievement and professional success. Conversely, students with weak educational values may develop lower academic expectations and aspirations. Although previous studies have examined factors influencing educational aspirations such as socioeconomic status (Kalita & Patil, 2023) and parental support (Adebakin & Hassan, 2024), limited attention has been given to the role of students' value orientation in shaping their academic aspirations in Southwestern Nigeria. This gap necessitates empirical investigation into the relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations among secondary school students in the region.

Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the influence of value orientation on educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria. Therefore the Specific objectives of the study are to:

- (a) assess the level of value orientation of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria;
- (b) examine the influence of value orientation on educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria; and

- (c) establish the relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- (a) What is the level of value orientation among secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: Value orientation does not have influence on educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria

Methodology

The study adopted survey design using quantitative approach. The population of the study consisted of 926,755 secondary students in 2,131 schools of Southwestern Nigeria. The sample of the study consisted of 342 respondents from 21 senior secondary schools across three states in Southwestern Nigeria. A stratify simply technique was used to select three local governments from Osun, two local governments from Ondo and two local governments from Lagos State making seven local governments with similarities in term of location, and diversity of school based on regional proximity and municipal characteristics. From each local government, simple random sampling technique was used to select three secondary schools. From each school, 16 secondary school students were selected using purposeful sampling techniques because they are the class ready to transits to tertiary institution (SSS3) from each school in the sampled local government. The self-design instrument, Value Orientation and Educational Aspiration Questionnaire (VEAQ) was validated by research experts and further subjected to reliability test in two weeks

interval with 0.81 reliable coefficients. Data collected were analysed descriptively and inferentially, using mean and standard deviation (Sd) to answer the research question and chi-square and correlation for hypotheses. At the end of it all, only 330 copies questionnaire out of 342 were counted valid while others were considered invalid due to multiple responses and missing during the administration. The decision level was determined by the use of criterion mean of 2.50; any mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agree while below 2.50 was regarded as Disagree.

Results

Research Question: What are the levels of value orientation among the secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria? To answer research question, 15 items were raised on the levels of value orientation among the secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria. The interpretations of the mean scores reveal that the minimum mean was 1 and the highest was 4. Therefore, mean score between 1.00-1.99 was regarded as “Low”, mean score between 2.00 to 2.99 was adjudged to be “Moderate” and mean score between 3.0 to 4.0 was categorized to be “High” levels to enhance clarity, facilitate interpretation, and enable meaningful discussion of findings, When four point Likert scale is used, the total scale range from (1.0-4.0) is divided into approximately to represent meaningful categories of magnitude (Boone & Boone 2012).

Table 1. Value Orientation among the Secondary School Students in Southwestern Nigeria

S/N	Value Orientation	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	Decision
Achievement Orientation					
1	I believe that hard work leads to success.	330	3.16	.778	High
2	I always try to do my best, even when no one is watching.	330	3.17	.724	High
3	I take pride in achieving high	330	3.10	.694	High

	academic performance.				
4	I prefer to complete tasks on time, even when it's difficult.	330	3.07	.803	High
5	I feel responsible for my own success in school	330	3.13	.720	High
	Moral Orientation				
6	I respect the opinions and beliefs of others.	330	3.09	.777	High
7	I believe it is important to help others when I can.	330	3.15	.659	High
8	I try to be honest in all situations, including at school.	330	3.15	.704	High
9	I avoid cheating in schoolwork, even if I could get away with it.	330	3.03	.757	High
10	I try to be a good example to others in my behaviour	330	3.20	.716	High
	Long-Term Thinking				
11	I have a clear plan for my future	330	3.21	.672	High
12	I think about how today actions will affect my future.	330	3.05	.786	High
13	I set goals for what I want to achieve after secondary school.	330	3.14	.671	High
14	I am willing to make sacrifices now for a better future.	330	3.09	.711	High
15	I regularly think about what kind of person I want to become	330	3.18	.765	High
	Average Mean	330	3.13	0.729	High

Result in Table 1 indicates that secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria demonstrate a consistently high level of value orientation across achievement, moral, and long-term thinking dimensions. All 15 items recorded mean scores above the 3.0 threshold for the “High” category, with an overall average mean of 3.13 (Sd = .729). The direction of the findings is clearly positive, showing strong endorsement of values related to hard work, responsibility, honesty, respect for others, and future planning. Although the mean scores range modestly between 3.03 and 3.21, they remain firmly within the high category, suggesting that these value orientations are

not isolated traits but widely shared dispositions among the students. The relatively moderate standard deviations further indicate a reasonable level of consensus in responses.

Ho₁: Value orientation does not have any significant influence on educational aspirations of secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria.

To establish the analysis, a Chi-Square analysis was used. The results were presented in Tables below.

Table 2. Value Orientation on Educational Aspirations

Variable	$\bar{x}$	Sd	df	χ^2	P	Decision
Value Orientation	46.92	8.784	658	3862.304 ^a	.000	H ₀ Rejected
Educational Aspirations	32.11	5.836				

Sig, df = 658, p>05

The mean score (46.92) of value orientation, as shown suggests that students mainly display high value orientation which is represented by the values of achievement, moral, and long-term thinking. Besides, the ($\bar{x}$ =32.11) for educational aspiration indicates that students have high educational aspirations which include completing secondary school and pursuing higher education. The chi-square test (χ^2 =3862.304) establishes a statistically significant influence of value orientation on educational aspirations. In other words, students' value orientation among which are achievement values, moral values, and long-term thinking significantly raises their educational aspirations. Thus, the findings reject the null hypothesis ($p < 0.05$) and accept the alternative hypothesis that value orientation has a significant influence on educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria. The implications of the findings are that schools and parents should always nurture strong value orientations (discipline, responsibility, goal-setting, and moral

behaviour) since these values help students to aspire to higher educational levels.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between value orientation and educational aspirations of secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 3. Relationship between Value Orientation and Educational Aspiration of Secondary School Students in Southwestern Nigeria

Variables	$\bar{x}$	Sd	df	r	P	Remark
Value Orientation	46.92	8.784			p<0.05	H ₀
Educational Aspiration	32.11	5.836	658	.759		Rejected

The average score (46.92) for value orientation suggests that the students overall are very much up to the mark in moral and long-term thinking values Besides, the mean score (32.11) for educational aspiration means that the students are very much willing to go through secondary school, participate in higher education, and get professional qualifications. The $r = 0.759$ reflects a powerful positive correlation between value orientation and educational aspiration which infers that those students who have greater value orientation will generally have higher educational aspirations. Moreover, $p < 0.05$ ensures that the correlation is statistically significant which indicates that the connection is not merely a coincidence. The outcome gives it that value orientation is a very important factor that determines the level of students' aspirations. In this regard, those students who manifest strong values such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, perseverance, and future-oriented thinking are more likely to set high educational goals and plan for higher education and professional qualifications.

On the other hand, students with a less pronounced value orientation might display low motivation or a lack of clarity in their educational goals.

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 suggest that students internalise values that support academic diligence, ethical conduct, and purposeful living. The strong endorsement of achievement-oriented items such as believing that hard work leads to success and taking pride in academic performance reflects a performance driven mindset grounded in personal responsibility. Similarly, high moral orientation scores particularly on honesty and avoiding cheating indicate a tendency toward ethical self-regulation rather than rule compliance based solely on surveillance. The long-term thinking dimension, with high agreement on having future plans and making present sacrifices for future gains, reflects goal-directed behaviour and delayed gratification. Collectively, these value patterns suggest students who are disciplined, morally guided, and future-focused traits that are strongly aligned with sustained academic engagement and aspiration formation. This implies that schools in Southwestern Nigeria are nurturing not only cognitive development but also positive character formation. However, maintaining these high value orientations will require consistent reinforcement through character education programmes, mentorship initiatives, and value-driven school cultures. Policymakers and educators should leverage these strong value foundations by integrating leadership training, career planning, and civic responsibility programmes that translate internalized values into tangible academic and societal outcomes.

The findings in Table 2 also found that students' value orientation is a major predictor of educational aspiration. This implies that students with a strong emphasis on achievement, long-term thinking, and moral discipline are more likely to set high academic goals and plan for higher education. The implications of the findings are that schools and parents should always nurture strong value orientations such as

discipline, responsibility, goal-setting, and moral behaviour since these values help students to aspire to higher educational levels. This finding was in congruence with the study of Khattab, 2015 who concurred that Educational aspirations serve as motivational factors that influence students' academic effort and persistence. Students with high aspirations are more likely to perform well academically and pursue higher education opportunities.

Findings in Table 3 finally reported that value orientation is strongly positively related to educational aspiration. The direction of relationships is positive, meaning that increases in one variable are associated with increases in the others. The magnitude of the coefficients indicates strong associations according to conventional interpretation standards. The finding also agreed with the study of Akhter and Peerzada (2023) on value orientation and academic achievement of female higher secondary school students. According to outcome, urban female higher secondary school students exhibited higher levels of both value orientation and academic achievement compared to their rural counterparts. The findings corroborated with Dolgova, et. al. (2023) According to the results obtained by the researchers on method of "Value orientations" by Rokich, values such as "health", "hardworking" and "honesty" are the most significant for the subjects 70 %; "public recognition", "dedication", "courage in defending one's opinion" and "love" 67 %, "financially secure life" and "integrity" 60 %; "productive life", "commitment", "self-confidence", "entertainment" and "self-control" – 57 %; "cognition", "beauty of nature and art", "obey the constituted authority", and "responsibility" – 50 %. The last places are occupied by "intransigence to shortcomings in oneself and others" 80 %, "high demands" 73 %. According to the results of the methodology "Diagnostics of the real structure of value orientations of personality" by Bubnov S. S. the leading value orientations for students are such values as "pleasant pastime,

rest” 60 % (18 people), “help, mercy to other people” 57 %, “health” 50 %. The list of values with an average level of significance included “love” 67%; “pleasant pastime, rest” and “communication” 60 %; “social activity to achieve positive changes in society” and “high social status” 50 %. Thus, a large part of students consider such values as “love” 67 % and “financially secure life” 60 % as significant. The study also concurred with Wang et, al., (2025) conducted an investigation on the impact of parental educational expectations on subjective well-being among adolescents: The serial mediating role of self-efficacy and learning engagement researchers results revealed the following key findings: parental educational expectations were significantly and positively correlated with adolescents’ subjective well-being; self-efficacy mediated the relationship between parental educational expectations and adolescents’ subjective well-being; learning engagement also mediated the relationship between parental educational expectations and adolescents’ subjective well-being; and self-efficacy and learning engagement jointly operated as serial mediators between parental educational expectations and adolescents’ subjective well-being.

Conclusion

The study highlights the important role of value orientation in shaping students’ educational aspirations. Positive values such as discipline, perseverance, and commitment to education encourage students to set higher academic goals and pursue further educational opportunities. The study finally concluded that value orientation significantly influenced the student’s educational aspirations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for the study

1. Therefore, educational institutions should emphasise value education programs that promote positive attitudes toward learning and academic success also
2. Schools, families and policymakers should promote positive values to enhance student academic ambitions and educational attainment.
3. Government should promote policies encouraging good value system to enhance students' academic attainment.

Educational counsellors should guide students to be committed, disciplined, hardwork and sacrifice towards the educational attainment.

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