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Achievement Emotions in Disadvantaged High School Students: Differences by Employment Status, Family Background, and Future Aspirations

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Abstract

The emotions that high school students experience in the classroom, shaped by their perceived control over academic activities and the value they place on them, have a decisive impact on their motivation, academic performance, and psychological well-being. However, evidence on these dynamics among socially vulnerable populations remains scarce. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the emotional component of motivation among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, given that factors such as employment status and parental educational level differentially shape their perceptions of control and the value associated with academic success. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how key sociodemographic variables and future aspirations are associated with achievement emotions in a sample of 321 Mexican high school students, aged 15 to 18, who completed the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ; Pekrun, 2011) and questions specifically designed to explore their future aspirations and sociodemographic variables (employment status, gender, parental education, and family structure). Results show significant differences in students' anger based on their work and academic aspirations and whether they have a paid job. There were significant differences in hope and pride by family structure and the mother's educational level. There were no differences by gender. Taken together, these findings provide empirical evidence to guide the design of psychoeducational interventions that are attentive to high school students' study and work dynamics and family diversity, thereby promoting inclusive and emotionally healthy learning environments.

Keywords: Academic Motivation; Control-Value Theory; Educational Equity; Vulnerable Adolescents; Work-Study Conflict