



Short Article

Volume-05|Issue-12|2024

The Drift of Unconscious Societies – How Today's Children and Communities Lose Sight of Their Authentic Aspirations

Mohd Manshoor Ahmed¹, Febina V Rahoof², Jilly John³¹ASCO & APA USA, Doctorate fellow, Department of Social Work, Central University of Kerala²JRF, Doctorate fellow, Department of Social Work, Central University of Kerala³Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Central University of Kerala

Article History

Received: 21.11.2024

Accepted: 08.12.2024

Published: 14.12.2024

Citation

Ahmed, M. M., Rahoof, F. V., John, J. (2024). The Drift of Unconscious Societies – How Today's Children and Communities Lose Sight of Their Authentic Aspirations. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(12), 12-14.

Abstract: This article explores the cultural phenomenon of "unconscious societies," where a single success story in high-ranking exams, such as the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), redirects entire communities toward idealized career paths, often at the expense of individual aspirations and diverse talents. Highlighting the psychological and societal consequences, the paper addresses how this collective fixation results in "aspiration traps," stifling innovation, personal fulfillment, and societal progress. The authors advocate for a cultural shift toward celebrating varied professional pathways, nurturing individuality, and promoting critical thinking, resilience, and self-awareness in youth. The article underscores the need for families, communities, and institutions to embrace diverse definitions of success and foster an environment where authenticity thrives.

Keywords: Unconscious societies, Indian Administrative Services (IAS), Idealized career paths, Individual aspirations, Diverse talents, Aspiration traps

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

In India and other emerging nations, a solid cultural phenomenon exists in civilizations where one success story may ignite the dreams of a society (Kopf, 2023). When a young individual from a rural region wins a top position in a prominent national examination—such as qualifying for the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) or getting high scores in challenging medical or engineering exams—a whole community typically changes its emphasis (Dutt, 2024; Soubhari et al., 2023). Families, professors, and classmates gather behind the belief that this route is the ultimate aim, frequently urging other young people to mimic it. This mass redirection of expectations, led by a single success story, symbolizes the growth of “unconscious societies,” where personal objectives and distinctive abilities are disregarded in favour of an idealized yet externally imposed route (Leledakis, 2020; Sadler & Woody, 2020; Stoknes, 2021).

Many young people in these areas find the road toward IAS or another top-rank difficult, demanding and, most crucially, outside their interests or abilities (Taub, 2023). Nevertheless, regardless of any young person's particular goals, one person's accomplishment can set off a chain reaction that shapes the expectations of an entire generation. In close-knit rural and less wealthy areas, where few role models exist, exceptional achievers become symbols of optimism and social progress (Saeed, 2022). In areas with few possibilities, they reflect a desire for social mobility, economic stability, and respect—

qualities that might particularly appeal (Connor & Storper, 2020). However, this appeal comes at a significant cost. The diversity of goals among young people sometimes gets overwhelmed by a collective fixation with a restricted route to apparent achievement (Heath & Li, 2023).

Many young people who experience this inadvertent but intense pressure choose to prepare for tests that might not fit their aptitudes or passions instead of following their real interests and natural skills. This group reorientation produces what sociologists call an “**aspiration trap**” (Heifetz & Minelli, 2013; White, 2021). In which youngsters give their aspirations to follow pathways that do not fit them. Families and communities who, in their enthusiasm and pride, occasionally pressure youngsters to follow in the footsteps of adults who accomplish such accomplishments help to magnify the impact.

There is quite a psychological cost associated with this unconscious slippage. Students who find themselves studying for tests they do not relate with typically suffer high levels of tension, anxiety, and a sense of inadequacy. Not reaching comparable achievement could cause disappointment, frustration, and, in extreme situations, mental health issues. This emulation cycle also stifles innovation, as young people focus entirely on completing tests rather than developing critical thinking, emotional intelligence, or interests. This

approach can lead to a generation driven by obligation rather than passion—a generation that achieves achievement at the price of personal fulfilment and inventiveness (Craggs, 2022; Aldarwish, 2024).

On a societal level, the impact is similarly tremendous. When societies promote a limited notion of success, they must understand the significance of varied abilities and contributions. Artisans, teachers, sportsmen, scientists, and entrepreneurs provide distinct abilities that improve society in diverse ways. However, these routes typically stay untapped in cultures that idealise specific occupations. A society that funnels its youth into a limited array of occupations risks stunting its growth as it sacrifices the benefits of a varied talent pool for a few narrow success metrics (Salmony & Kanbach, 2022).

A purposeful adjustment in society's ideals is needed to fight this phenomenon. Schools, community leaders, and governments should promote the value of varied professional pathways, applauding individuals who excel in several disciplines and demonstrate that joy and success come in many forms. Educational institutions may assist in nurturing this transition by encouraging critical thinking, resilience, and self-awareness from an early age. Programs in rural and developing countries can focus on extending young people's exposure to a wide range of vocations, giving role models from varied professional backgrounds who have achieved success on their terms (Morgan, 2024; Swargiary, 2024).

Families, too, play a critical role in encouraging their children to consider alternative career possibilities. Instead of perceiving a high-ranking exam as the lone pinnacle of accomplishment, parents and mentors may urge young people to seek vocations matched with their genuine passions and aptitudes. Through community support, young people may be directed toward self-discovery, prepared to make professional choices that reflect their particular skills and interests rather than society's fleeting conceptions of success (Woods, 2024; Radd et al., 2021).

Although honouring the achievements of high achievers is crucial, communities must protect against the unconscious drift that can lead entire generations away from their potential. As a culture, we must encourage authenticity in our young people, providing circumstances that allow them to take important and rewarding pathways. In a world where options and definitions of success are growing, let us remember that genuine development resides not in uniformity but in the diversity that comes from various objectives and unique desires. By valuing personal fulfilment as highly as social honours, we may direct future generations toward lives of purpose, resilience, and true accomplishment.

Significant in the Contemporary Context

In the contemporary era, marked by rapid globalization, technological advancements, and an expanding array of career opportunities, this study addresses a critical cultural challenge that remains deeply rooted in many societies. The phenomenon of "unconscious societies," where collective aspirations overshadow individual talents and passions, is especially relevant in emerging economies like India. As nations strive to compete globally, emphasising a narrow definition of success risks creating a workforce ill-prepared for the demands of innovation, creativity, and adaptability required in today's dynamic world.

The article's focus on aspiration traps resonates in a time when mental health issues among youth are escalating globally due to academic pressure and misaligned career pursuits. By shedding light on the psychological cost of societal expectations, the article underscores the urgent need for redefining success beyond traditional metrics, such as high-ranking exams or prestigious occupations.

Moreover, in an era where diversity, inclusion, and sustainability are paramount, the article advocates for a paradigm shift that values varied professional pathways and individual fulfillment. It challenges communities to nurture environments that encourage authenticity and resilience, fostering a generation capable of contributing uniquely to societal progress. This perspective is critical as nations work toward building inclusive economies that harness the full potential of their youth.

By aligning its message with contemporary priorities like mental well-being, innovation, and equity, this article offers timely insights for policymakers, educators, families, and societies striving to navigate the complexities of modern aspirations.

REFERENCES

1. Kopf, D. (2023). *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835*. Univ of California Press.
2. Dutt, Y. (2024). *Coming Out as Dalit: A Memoir of Surviving India's Caste System (Updated Edition)*. Beacon Press.
3. Soubhari, T., Nanda, S. S., & Shah, M. A. (2023). Is New Wine in a New Bottle? Re-Engineering Poverty Architecture Through the Finnish Model of Education in India. In *Fostering Sustainable Businesses in Emerging Economies: The Impact of Technology* (pp. 167-186). Emerald Publishing Limited.
4. Leledakis, K. (2020). *Society and psyche: Social theory and the unconscious dimension of the social*. Routledge.
5. Sadler, P., & Woody, E. (2020). Interpersonal complementarity. In *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences* (pp. 2374-2378). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

6. Stoknes, P. E. (2021). *Tomorrow's economy: A guide to creating healthy green growth*. MIT Press.
7. Taub, R. P. (2023). *Bureaucrats under stress: administrators and administration in an Indian state*. Univ of California Press.
8. Saeed, A. (2022). *Education, Aspiration and Upward Social Mobility: Working Class British Women*. Springer Nature.
9. Connor, D. S., & Storper, M. (2020). The changing geography of social mobility in the United States. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(48), 30309-30317.
10. Heath, A., & Li, Y. (2023). *Social mobility*. John Wiley & Sons.
11. White, B. (2021). Human capital theory and the defectology of aspirations in policy research on rural youth. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 33(1), 54-70.
12. Heifetz, A., & Minelli, E. (2013). Aspiration traps. *The B.E. Journal of Theoretical Economics*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/bejte-2013-0120>
13. Craggs, A. (2022). *The change mindset: The psychology of leading and thriving in an uncertain world*. Kogan Page Publishers.
14. Aldarwish, A. (2024). *Citizenship in the Mind: An Exposé of Modernist Character* (Doctoral dissertation, Morgan State University).
15. Salmony, F. U., & Kanbach, D. K. (2022). Personality trait differences across types of entrepreneurs: a systematic literature review. *Review of managerial science*, 16(3), 713-749.
16. Morgan, J. D. (2024). *Developing a capacity for lifelong learning: self-regulation and autonomous learning competencies within the European Framework* (Doctoral dissertation).
17. Swargiary, K. (2024). *Principles of Education*. Google.
18. Woods, C. (2024). *An empirical investigation of the early university entrance programme in CTYI* (Doctoral dissertation, Dublin City University).
19. Radd, S. I., Generett, G. G., Gooden, M. A., & Theoharis, G. (2021). *Five practices for equity-focused school leadership*. ASCD.