

## Future expectations in secondary and high school students from a rural community in the state of Yucatan

### Expectativas de futuro en estudiantes de secundaria y bachillerato de una comunidad rural del estado de Yucatán

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#### Abstract

Objective: to analyze future expectations, which, from the students' perspective, are important; as well as to determine if the expectations are different for secondary level students compared to those of high school and to explore the behavior of future expectations in men and women. Methodology: a study with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design was carried out with students from two schools: a secondary school and a high school in the rural area. This work contributes to understanding the adolescent population of the rural area with which we work, since each approach contained in the questionnaire induces them to reflect and assess their current situation; In the medium and long term, it is expected that the results obtained provide elements that can be translated into Public Policies so that the Ministry of Public Education incorporates them into its educational programs and in this way the adolescent population at all educational levels can be trained as individuals capable of visualize and build their expectations for the future incorporating elements of modern life, but at the same time, valuing their origin and the cultural diversity of their present time, as well as the impact of modernity on their lives

**Future expectations, High school students, Rural communities**

#### Resumen

Objetivo: analizar las expectativas de futuro, que, desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes, son importantes; así como determinar si las expectativas resultan diferentes para estudiantes de nivel secundaria en comparación con los de bachillerato y explorar el comportamiento de las expectativas de futuro en hombres y mujeres. Metodología: se llevó a cabo un estudio con un diseño no experimental, transversal, con estudiantes de dos escuelas: una secundaria y una de bachillerato del área rural. Este trabajo contribuye a entender a la población adolescente del área rural con la que se trabaja, ya que cada planteamiento contenido en el cuestionario los induce a reflexionar y valorar su situación actual; a mediano y a largo plazo se espera que los resultados obtenidos aporten elementos que puedan traducirse en Políticas Públicas para que la Secretaría de Educación Pública los incorpore a sus programas educativos y de este modo la población adolescente en todos los niveles educativos puedan formarse como individuos capaces de visualizar y construir sus expectativas de futuro incorporando elementos de la vida moderna, pero a la vez, valorando su origen y la diversidad cultural de su actualidad, así como, el impacto de la modernidad en sus vidas.

**Expectativas de futuro, Estudiantes de secundaria, Comunidades rurales**

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## Introduction

The governments of countries make efforts to improve people's living conditions with the intention of achieving greater social stability, which allows citizens to have a better quality of life and well-being. Yucatan is an entity with 2,097,175 million inhabitants, distributed according to sex in 1,027,548 men (49%) and 1,069,627 women (51%); 57.4% of the population is (located) in the 31 municipalities of the state and the remaining 42.6% is concentrated in Merida, the state capital according to data provided by the Yucatan Intercensal Survey of 2015.

It has been pointed out that the axis of development of countries is based on the creation of human capital through education and, therefore, public actions are aimed at expanding the supply of education, favouring the incorporation of boys and girls to school from their earliest ages until universal coverage is achieved. In this regard, in 2015 it was reported, for the 3-5 age group, that 72.9% of boys and 73% of girls attend an educational institution; while this makes it evident that, at state level, men and women have equal opportunities, on the other hand, it is also reported that, in areas with larger populations, the attendance of boys is higher than that of girls (Intercensal Survey 2015, 23).

In terms of basic education, actions have also been taken to achieve universal coverage; 97.5% of the population aged 6-14 years attends school, although this percentage decreases slightly (96.9%), in localities with less than 2,500 inhabitants (Intercensal Survey Yucatan, 2015).

Consequently, and with the objective of incorporating the young population to higher levels of schooling, it was decreed that upper secondary education would be compulsory, a goal that was enshrined in the General Education Law, which is why the information provided by the Intercensal Survey 2015 is valuable for the monitoring and evaluation of this decree.

Within this framework, it is noted that the population aged 15-24 attending school increased by 10.8 percentage points between 2000 and 2015.

In 2000, 34.9 per cent attended school, while in 2015, 45.7 per cent of this population in the same age range attended an educational centre in the state system, with a gender difference of 1.9 percentage points (46.7 per cent of men and 44.8 per cent of women) (Yucatán Intercensal Survey, 2015).

From another point of view, most of the population in Yucatán is bilingual; however, there are still people who speak only the Mayan language, a condition that limits their interaction with other people outside their community and even limits their own development. 29.6% of the population aged 5 and over speak an indigenous language and almost 70% are bilingual (Yucatan Intercensal Survey, 2015).

In this context, access to information technologies has increased in recent years; internet access has led to the incorporation of the population into modern life (in 2015, 30% of households had internet) and more than 50% have pay TV (Yucatán Intercensal Survey, 2015).

While all these conditions favour a large part of the young population to have access to education and better living standards, it is also true that there are other situations that limit people's own development. According to the UNICEF Annual Report (2017; 20) in Mexico, "around 4.1 million children are out of school and more than 600 thousand are at risk of dropping out.

The reasons why children and adolescents do not attend school vary depending on the level of education"; it is noted that at secondary level, the degree of poverty in the home and child labour play a role, as they are forced to drop out of school to help support their households; the same is true for young people at secondary level, where living in poor homes in urban areas and working to help their families are some of the main reasons why adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age do not continue their studies.

At the same time, the phenomenon of globalisation coupled with access to school means that secondary school students face a world where tensions are generated in the way they conceive their expectations for the future; firstly, they are educated using terms that are not their referents, that is, terms that do not exist in their socio-cultural context.

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Secondly, they face a competitive environment in which they face new challenges and questions about their future such as: Who do I want to be? How do I want to be? What do I value for my life? What do I value to have and to live in a complex society? These are questions that, although they can be answered in some way, life skills and values are elements that can help to answer them.

Garzón (2016) states that the educational environment should be a space for adolescents that contributes to their all-round development, where habits, skills, competences and values are instilled. Terigi (2010) argues that the pedagogical relationship is a meeting of knowledge.

The family values debate in many countries seems to be far removed from globalising influences, but in reality it is not. Traditional family systems are being transformed in many parts of the world; this is a global revolution in everyday life, the consequences of which are being felt around the world, in areas ranging from work to politics and even education (Guidens, 2007).

It should be noted that, although research has been conducted on the future expectations of secondary and high school students, many of these are carried out from a qualitative approach and some with the design and validation of questionnaires. Some examples are mentioned below.

Gaeta *et al.* in 2015 carried out a study on the psychometric properties of a questionnaire to assess academic goals in students with the understanding that academic goals are one of the most important variables from a motivational point of view to explain the different reasons for students to engage in learning tasks and activities.

At the same time, they are related to different patterns of students' thinking, emotions and actions and, moreover, to their academic achievement. Hence, it is important to increase empirical work in this area and to have assessment instruments that allow a better understanding of the processes involved in students' learning, particularly in higher education.

This paper examines the psychometric properties of the Academic Goals Assessment Questionnaire in a sample of Mexican university students; this self-report instrument assesses students' personal orientation towards academic goals. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out with a sample of 735 Mexican university students from the engineering area. The results obtained corroborate in general the factor structure of the original questionnaire and sufficiently guarantee the internal consistency of the scale to be used in the research in the Mexican context.

The work of Segura and Chávez (2016) points out the importance of the school as a space where a model of society, knowledge and social recognition is shown and where students must develop strategies to enter into a process of socialisation that is also an education. There are ruptures and tensions in their passage through the university that affect their ethnic identity, for example in the maintenance of their family and community ties, the sense of belonging and identification with their peers, the possibility of remaining outside their community and building decontextualised life expectations, as well as the possibility of being autonomous and choosing their own future without undermining their cultural integrity, as pointed out by Figuera and Ariza (2015).

Sánchez, Y *et al.* (2016) carried out a study with the aim of designing and validating the Escala de Expectativas de Futuro en la Adolescencia (EEFA) instrument. A sample of 1,125 participants of both sexes from the province of Cádiz, aged between 11 and 15 years, was analysed. From the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), carried out with subsample 1 (n= 551), four factors were identified: Economic/labour expectations (occupation and profession), Academic expectations (level of studies that the subject expects to achieve), Personal well-being expectations (they expect to establish good social relationships and imagine themselves as safe and healthy people) and Family expectations (expectations regarding the possibility of finding a partner, forming a stable family and having children in the future).

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), using subsample 2 (n=574), confirmed the factor structure of the scale, whose model showed a good fit. Item and reliability analyses demonstrated acceptable internal consistency of the scale. In order to obtain further evidence of validity, the data obtained with the EEFA instrument were contrasted with other instruments that assess self-esteem and life satisfaction, and positive relationships were expected to be obtained between them. It was concluded that the EEFA instrument, composed of 14 items, has adequate psychometric properties, and is considered a valid instrument for assessing the future expectations of adolescents.

González and Andrade (2016) conducted a study with a psychological approach whose purpose was to design and validate a scale to assess the perception of Psychological Well-Being (PW) in Mexican adolescents. Phase I was exploratory, two studies were conducted, one to identify the meaning that adolescents gave to BP, and the other to design and validate the scale. Phase II allowed the psychometric characteristics to be confirmed. The first study involved 30 adolescents aged 15-20 years; the second involved 665 adolescents aged 14-20 years (M=16.7; SD=1.36). In phase II, 1064 students aged 15-20 participated (M=16.10; SD=.941). The results grouped 29 items into seven factors ( $\alpha=.76$ ), which explained 60.51% of the total variance: personal growth ( $\alpha=.79$ ), positive relationships with others ( $\alpha=.81$ ), life purpose ( $\alpha=.80$ ), self-acceptance ( $\alpha=.74$ ), future plans ( $\alpha=.77$ ), personal rejection ( $\alpha=.77$ ) and personal control ( $\alpha=.83$ ).

Another study by Pérez and Ochoa (2017) analysed civic participation in secondary school students. Information was collected through a 36-question questionnaire that probed students' ideas of participation before and after the intervention, as well as participant observation and field diary. It was found that the ideas of participation changed after the intervention and that students were involved in all phases of the project. Through the Application of a Service-Learning Project (SLP), the ideas, spaces and forms of participation of 3rd year secondary school students in getting involved in a participatory project in the school environment were analysed.

The dimensions addressed by the questionnaire were: concept of participation (expression, consultation, information, decision-making and respect for decisions); areas of participation (classroom, institution and community); conditions for participation (recognition of the right to participate, availability of capacities to participate, mechanisms or spaces for participation), and type of participation (simple participation, consultative, projective and meta-participation). It was found that the ideas, forms and spaces for participation are limited; working through projects, and specifically through service-learning, was an important element, on the one hand, to modify these ideas and, on the other hand, for students to carry out genuine participation experiences, which allow them to be heard and influence the context in which they are inserted, involving all the subjects that make up the school.

Molina, M., Raimundi, M. and Gimenez, M. (2017) developed a research with the aim of exploring how a group of adolescents from the City of Buenos Aires (Argentina) perceive themselves in the future, that is, to explore and describe the possible selves (PSs). Seventy-two adolescents (69.4% female) from a public school participated in this study. They answered a questionnaire of open-ended questions in which they were asked to list their PSs when they finish secondary school. A thematic content analysis of the responses and a frequency count of the categories were carried out. Adolescents generated PSs in five broad areas: personal, academic/occupational, physical, social, and satisfaction and achievement.

The most prevalent area was academic/occupational. A socio-demographic questionnaire was used to characterise the sample and another questionnaire of possible selves (Oyserman (2004), Adaptation: Molina (2014). It is a questionnaire of open-ended questions in which the adolescent is asked to list four possible expected, desired and feared selves.

Adolescents in the City of Buenos Aires (Argentina) project their vision of themselves in the future in five broad areas: their personal characteristics or personality traits; their occupations and lifestyle; their physical appearance and aptitudes; their interpersonal relationships; and their general satisfaction, aspirations and achievements.

Within the domains included in these areas, an idiosyncratic content of Buenos Aires adolescents is that of goals: the value of having goals and commitment to them. Also, some adolescents achieve an articulation and integration between their PSs, which implies a more complex vision of themselves in the future. The most prevalent PSs are those related to profession and occupation, and to studies and academic interests. The domain of work takes prevalence among the feared SPs. Although the different types of SPs are expressed in the same areas, there are some differences.

In terms of diversity, the majority of adolescents generated SPs in one or two areas, with the maximum being five areas. The low percentage of adolescents who were able to generate complex PSs and in more than one or two areas, as well as the high prevalence of PSs in the academic/occupational sphere leads us to consider the need to encourage them to explore a greater diversity of possible selves, as well as other areas in which to project and deepen the characteristics of the PSs they propose for the future, articulating different domains among themselves.

Another work (Iglesias (2015) shows in his review how, from the perspective of the adolescent, "being fashionable" is to be part of the majority of the group, which generates a feeling of acceptance by their peers; they struggle to develop their identity and their body appearance and the way they dress are important; the media and social networks play an important role with their "marketing" work that fosters a consumer society.

With this bibliographical review on the future expectations of students, it is considered necessary to carry out research that shows, from a social perspective of education, the elements that are important for men and women to build better alternatives for their lives and provide foundations that help the educational institution to train young people with quality future expectations; the model of analysis that is presented integrates the new global reality in which adolescents are inserted on a daily basis and that generates new questions for them, as they are facing a society that is changing rapidly and where information is constantly changing.

In the short term, this research will benefit the adolescent population in the rural area with whom we work, as each question contained in the questionnaire will lead them to reflect on and assess their current situation, In the medium and long term, it is hoped that the results obtained will provide elements that can be translated into public policy so that the Ministry of Public Education can incorporate them into its educational programmes, so that the adolescent population at all levels of education can be formed as individuals capable of visualising and building their expectations for the future, incorporating elements of modern life, but at the same time valuing their origins and the cultural diversity of their current situation, as well as the impact of modernity on their lives.

Hence, the aim of this paper is to analyse future expectations, which, from the students' perspective, are important; to determine whether expectations are different for secondary school students compared to high school students; and to explore the behaviour of future expectations in males and females.

### **Methodology**

A non-experimental, cross-sectional design study was carried out with students from two schools: a secondary school and a high school in a rural area. Permission was previously requested from the school authorities and they were informed of the objective of the research; once permission was obtained, an instrument on future expectations was applied to the students, who were also informed of its objective, the confidentiality of the information and the use to which the information would be put.

The instrument is a structured questionnaire with a scale of 0 to 10, consisting of a total of 119 items divided into a general data section and nine sections according to the complex variables.

The first section corresponds to general data made up of 8 items, the second corresponds to the complex variable of axiological principles made up of 20 items, the third corresponds to the complex variable of ontological principles and is made up of 23 items, the fourth corresponds to the complex variable of interpersonal skills, made up of 20 items, the fifth corresponds to the complex variable of intrapersonal skills made up of 20 items.

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The sixth corresponds to the complex variable of personal expectations for the future with 5 items, the sixth corresponds to the complex variable of personal future expectations with 5 items; the seventh section corresponds to academic expectations with 4 items; the eighth refers to economic-labour expectations with 4 items, the ninth corresponds to family expectations with 7 items and finally the tenth section of social expectations is made up of 8 items. For the purposes of this chapter, only the future expectations axis will be analysed.

The information was captured and processed in SPSS and descriptive statistics and Student's t-test were used to analyse the data.

## Results

We worked with a total of 141 students: 80 students from a secondary school and 81 students from a high school, both from a municipality in the rural area of Yucatan. The gender distribution is shown in table 1.

The mean age for secondary school students was 13 years with an SD of 0.83 and for baccalaureate students it was 16 years with an SD of 0.96. Among other general data collected is that 80% of the students' parents and 91.5% of their grandparents speak Mayan; however, reading the data shows that less than 20% of the secondary school students understand Mayan, while 75% of the high school students speak Mayan.

Table 2 presents an analysis of the information from the centrality, dispersion and distribution statistics on future expectations in the sample studied. According to the mean scores, it can be noted that students' expectations are focused on supporting their families in difficult times, finishing their high school studies, providing a pleasant atmosphere in their family, being there for their friends, sharing important anniversaries with family members, finding a job they like, owning a house, having health insurance for their family, having a stable partner, mastering their fears and getting to know themselves better and better. To be working or living somewhere else, to have several children, to promote the use of the Mayan language in their community are expectations with the lowest averages.

The minimum and maximum scores indicate that, in most of the items, participants made full use of the scale, the minimum value being 0 and the maximum 10. The Standard Deviation (SD) values indicate that there are 17 variables with good stability due to the fact that they deviate little from their mean.

According to the distribution of the data a negative skewness could be observed in most of the variables, which means that the distribution is elongated to the left at the extreme of the low values and concentrated to the right at the high values. The kurtosis scores give evidence of leptokurtosis for most of the variables.

In order to find significant differences between the grouping variable according to level of education and the variables corresponding to the future expectations dimension, a t-test for independent samples was performed on the sample studied. For the null hypothesis, equality of variances was accepted, an assumption that was calculated from Levene's test.

It could be observed that there are statistically significant differences between secondary school and high school students with regard to the dimension of expectations. It can be observed that for high school students it is more important to have several while for middle school students it is more important to be aware of the safety of their community and to be committed to the care of the environment of their community (Table 4).

In order to assess whether there is a difference between the variables of future expectations and gender in the sample studied, a t-test for independent samples was performed. The evidence allowed us to reject the null hypothesis since a value of  $p \leq .05$  was obtained, thus fulfilling the assumption of homoscedasticity. A statistically significant difference was found between men and women in the variable "having several children" (Table 5).

## Annexes

Secondary			High school	
Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Man	30	37.5	32	52.5
Women	50	62.5	29	47.5
Total	80	100.0	61	100.0

**Table 1** Distribution by sex

Source: Questionnaire on future expectations of secondary and high school students

Items	n	$\bar{x}$	Med	Mo	R	Min	Máx	DS	As	K
I will support my family in their difficult times.	141	9.72	10.00	10	9	1	10	1.15	-5.95	38.75
I will finish high school	141	9.62	10.00	10	9	1	10	1.24	-4.20	20.29
I will create a pleasant environment in my family.	141	9.62	10.00	10	8	2	10	.93	-4.73	31.95
I will be there for my friends in good times and bad.	140	9.57	10.00	10	7	3	10	1.08	-3.40	13.56
I will share important anniversaries with my family.	141	9.49	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.27	-4.32	24.25
I will find a job that I like	141	9.45	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.27	-4.16	23.31
I will have my own house.	141	9.44	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.60	-4.35	21.29
I will have health insurance for my family.	141	9.39	10.00	10	4	6	10	1.00	-1.53	1.35
I will have a stable partner.	141	9.18	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.64	-2.88	9.51
I will conquer my fears.	141	9.07	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.73	-2.88	10.35
I will know myself better and better	141	9.03	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.85	-2.97	10.58
I will defend the citizen rights of my community.	141	8.97	9.00	10	98	0	10	7.90	10.27	116.9
I will have a well paying job.	141	8.85	9.00	10	10	0	10	1.76	-2.67	8.83
I will be studying a bachelor's degree.	141	8.84	10.00	10	10	0	10	2.22	-2.27	5.06
I will support the conservation of my community's traditions.	141	8.83	9.00	10	8	2	10	1.53	-1.67	3.16
I will feel confident in myself	141	8.82	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.88	-2.31	6.32
I will be committed to caring for the environment of my community.	141	8.80	10.00	10	10	0	10	1.98	-2.44	7.04
I will promote healthy living in my community.	141	8.72	9.00	10	10	0	10	1.57	-2.20	7.76
I will have healthy eating habits.	141	8.57	9.00	10	10	0	10	1.68	-1.79	4.73
I will participate in the electoral processes of the communal authorities.	141	8.30	9.00	10	10	0	10	2.16	-1.81	3.57
I will be studying a technical career.	141	8.30	10.00	10	10	0	10	2.98	-1.82	2.16
I will be alert for the safety of my community.	141	8.06	9.00	10	10	0	10	2.16	-1.66	3.28
I will combat the vices present in my community.	141	8.01	9.00	10	10	0	10	2.39	-1.76	3.29
I will be working in another city.	141	7.57	8.00	10	98	0	10	8.33	9.16	100.4
I will promote the use of the Mayan language in my community.	141	7.55	8.00	10	10	0	10	2.61	-1.32	1.35
I will live in another city.	141	5.52	6.00	0	10	0	10	3.62	-3.35	-1.28
I will have several children.	141	5.24	5.00	5	10	0	10	3.01	.05	-1.07

Note: n = sample,  $\bar{x}$  = Mean, Median = Median, Mo = Mode, R = Range, Min = Minimum score, Max = Maximum score, SD = Standard deviation, As = Asymmetry coefficient, k = Kurtosis

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics of the Future Expectations dimensión

Source: Questionnaire on future expectations in secondary and high school students

Variables	n	Mean		Prueba t			DE			Levene's test	
		S	H	t	gl	Sig. (bilateral)	S	B	F	Sig.	
I will have several children.	141	4.53	6.18	-3.34	139	.001	2.90	2.91	.21	.64	
I will be alert for the safety of my community.	141	8.40	7.61	2.18	139	.030	1.86	2.44	3.02	.08	
I will be committed to caring for the environment of my community.	141	9.16	8.33	2.51	139	.013	1.76	2.17	1.54	.21	

Note: S= secondary school; B= Baccalaureate

**Table 3** Independent samples t-test for the future expectations dimensión

Source: Questionnaire on future expectations of secondary and upper secondary school students

Variable	n	M	W	prueba t		DS			Levene's test	
				t	gl	Sig. (bilateral)	H	M	F	Sig.
I will have several children	141	5.9	4.71	2.40	139	.017	2.87	3.03	.013	.910

Note: M = Male; F = Female

**Table 4** Independent samples t-test for the future expectations dimension according to gender

Source: Questionnaire on future expectations of secondary and high school students

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## Conclusions

The results of the research lead to the inference that students' future expectations are in the process of transformation. Despite the fact that the state government carries out multiple actions for the conservation and use of the Mayan language in the Yucatecan population, the findings reveal that the youngest, secondary school students not only do not speak the Mayan language, but no longer understand it, and this scenario is reinforced when, in their expectations for the future, they show no interest in promoting the use of the Mayan language in their community. However, it is striking that there is a desire among them to remain living in their community. It seems that the students are in a process of ruptures and tensions, as was also seen in the work of Sánchez-Sandoval *et al* (2016).

Although the students' expectations focus on family aspects, friends and some personal particularities, the differences according to the level of studies allow us to infer that high school students base their expectations on having children, while the youngest students, those in secondary school, project themselves towards aspects of social integration. In this respect, it is worth noting the contributions of Guidens (2007) on transformations in traditional family systems.

In this total sample of students, the expectation of having offspring is a role that is diminished in importance for women; however, for men it is still a matter of major interest to them. In this sense it could be concluded that, for women, contact with school has permeated their vision of the future and the role society expects of them.

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