

Correlation Between Academic Performance, Level Of Aspiration, And Socio-Economic Status Of Senior Secondary Students

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Abstract

Senior secondary students' aspirations, academic anxiety, and academic orientation are deeply affected by their socio-economic status (SES). Variables associated with SES affect the access adolescents have to education and their psychological well-being and orientation toward future goals. The study attempts to examine significant differences between senior secondary school students, with a focus on aspiration level, academic anxiety, and socio-economic status, and gender and type of school are key variables used. The research continues into the interaction between these critical dimensions—including the connections between level of aspiration and academic anxiety, aspiration and SES, and academic anxiety and SES. Pupils from government and private schools in class XI and XII were recruited in the study using a multistage sampling methodology. The final sample comprised 300 students. The practical implications of the research findings are looked at in an educational and a counsellor's perspective, as well as from a policymakers' perspective. At the same time, the paper ends with recommendations moving forward to enhance educational policies and student support.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Educational aspiration, Academic anxiety, Senior secondary students, Gender differences

I. Introduction

Socio-economic status (SES) plays an important role in the formulation of aspirations of adolescents. SES of the family basically determines the level and quality of education that can be provided to the adolescents. The educational options for Adolescents and the academic programmes that can be offered by a family depend on the family's SES. When adolescents gain awareness of their family's conditions, they can understand how their family's resources control their educational opportunities. Perhaps, they may understand the extent to which their family can help them financially to achieve their career. They can learn the reason why their family finds it hard to afford a wide range of educational programs as both career-based and informal ones. In turn, they may change their educational as well as career plans to match their family's economy.

Another psychological factor, namely academic anxiety, plays an important role in students' academic performance as well as aspiration. Likewise, the students of poor backgrounds may experience increased anxiety because of scarce resources, and the peer pressure from society, together with excessive parental expectations. Anxiety of such nature can negatively affect their school performance and blight their ability to set higher educational goals. In addition, elements like gender and the type of school that a student goes to play a major role in their academic and psychological preparations as they continue on to senior secondary education.

The study attempts to evaluate the impact of socio-economic status, gender and type of school on both aspiration and academic anxiety in the senior secondary student population. This research addresses the issue of correlations between aspiration, anxiety and socio-economic status with the intention of giving insight into psychosocial and education characteristics of adolescents in the Indian context.

2. Literature Review

Through examination of the interrelationships between socio-economic status, academic anxiety, and aspiration, we can better understand how to fill in gaps in student achievement and motivation. The process of educational aspirations formation is intrinsically connected with a poly-dimensional framework of psychological, family, and institutional environments. A review of existing research suggests that the socio-economic status has a strong impact on students' resource opportunities, sense of self, academic anxieties, and aspirations for the future. These interconnections have been studied through later research in different settings, revealing the way various elements are involved in adolescents' educational paths of life.

Studying middle school students, Mau (1995), demonstrated pronounced racial and gender differences in desires and expectations from parents perceived in the students. These conclusions highlight the way the demographic backgrounds of students determine their level of motivations and imply that the aspirations of people depend less than the people may assume upon their personal desires and on the background of medical society more. According to Knowles (1997), disadvantaged people in communities with low educational mobility, are noticeably confined by their socio-economic lives in terms of seeking higher education. This exhibit of this research further illustrates how social class becomes a significant condition that informs educational opportunity and motivation.

Buckingham, Wheldall, and Beaman-Wheldall (2013) observed that poor children tend not to have access to early literacy experiences and thus suffer from persistent academic problems. This finding is also supported by Aikens and Barbarin (2008), who showed the importance of home literacy environment quality, access to books, and level of parental stress in the development of children's reading ability and their educational outcome in the future. Consistent with these findings, the work of Van Bergen et al. (2017) shows that early cognitive growth is highly associated with SES-related influences, which goes to explain how differences in socioeconomic status led to persistent academic distinctions.

Research by Bradley et al. (2001) and Orr (2003) has proved that children from the lower levels of the social class do not have good access to basic learning tools such as books and computers, which are pivotal to academic success. Such restrictions not only affect students' academic performance but also slowly sabotage their desire for further education. As reported in the studies on minority youth by Kao and Tienda (1998), despite similar levels of initial aspiration across different groups of SES, persistence of these aspirations was conditional on continuous support and adequate provision of resources. This means that SES not only generate aspirations, but also is highly important for maintaining them in the long term.

Gender and age played weak roles concerning aspirations, yet SES and ethnicity were major predictors; thus, the a need for analysing educational motivation in a wider socio-cultural framework (Strand and Winston 2008). As targeted by Brook et al. (1974), parental ambitions often shaped the children in particular, in the high socioeconomic settings, indicating the familial flow of educational impetus. What Paul Boxer (2011) noted was that the students of

lower SES backgrounds are more often than not in conflict with their aspirations and expectations, leading to heightened academic anxiety and behavioural problems.

Buchmann, DiPrete & McDaniel (2008) noted an increasing trend in girls' educational aspirations that they ascribed to increased female empowerment and increased academic competition. The study affirms the preceding findings that gender overlaps with SES to influence students' motivational goals. The relation between parental education and family income, and academic achievement is mediated by its impact on the home environment and parental expectations (Davis-Kean, 2005).

Eccles and Roeser (2011) emphasised that educational institutions influence the development of adolescent motivation by either reinforcing or discouraging it. Their findings agree with Sirin (2005), who reported on a strong positive relationship between socioeconomic status and academic success in many international settings. Evans and Schamberg (2009) offered information from a neurocognitive standpoint, stating that continuous poverty-stress has been shown to compromise working memory, which in turn leads to poor academic performance, which in turn motivates students. Morgan et al. (2009) also brought out this by emphasising early SES-related risk factors for behaviour problems that arise in learning, which are likely to persist into adolescence.

The negative impact of test anxiety on academics and self-confidence in UK school children was discussed in Putwain (2007). Our present research indicates that academic anxiety presents with a negative correlation to SES and educational ambition, or concurrent with these other studies. From a perspective, Reardon (2011) pointed out that greater disparities of school funding and access to quality education have widened the achievement gap between students from high socio-economic status and those from low socio-economic status.

These works collectively indicate how far SES is from being a mere economic factor, but a multi-polluted facet for access to education, emotional well-being, and the ability to have high aspirations. Collectively, studies point to the relevance of developing an insight into the way these SES, academic anxiety and aspiration are interrelated in Indian senior secondary students, who were poorly represented in the existing studies.

Research Gap

There has been a consistent showing of the importance of socio-economic status (SES) in influencing both academic aspirations and educational outcomes across many research studies (Knowles, 1997; Sirin, 2005; Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Sirin, 2005; Eccles & Roeser, 2011). The fact is that a series of consistent research shows that adolescents of elevated SES predominantly enjoy superior access to education, favourable parental involvement, and reduced academic anxiety; these elements can collectively lead to higher levels of academic ambition and accomplishment. As a matter of fact, previous literature has also shown that academic anxiety thwarts student motivation as well as their goals (Putwain, 2007; Boxer, 2011). Boxer's (2011) results, as well as those of Davis-Kean (2005) and Aikens & Barbarin (2008), report that parental education and enthusiasm for literacy are influential in shaping both academic performance and achievements.

Most of the current research is characterized by Western contexts or focuses on middle childhood and young adolescence. Although these factors have been studied, the precise relationships between SES, academic anxiety, and aspiration in a senior secondary school cohort—the students embarking upon a great transition to other educational pursuits and

careers—is little explored. Notably, very few studies have explored how SE, [1] academic anxiety, and aspiration are entangled in this specific demography at the same time.

Furthermore, there are many studies that reviewed gender and ethnic differences (Mau, 1995; Strand & Winston, 2008). The relationship between gender, school type (public and private), and socioeconomic status has not been commonly examined in Indian schools (Strand & Winston, 2008). There is minimal Indian research that brings up these variables or looks at aspects other than the academic aspects of the phenomena, and the psychological components of anxiety and aspiration.

There is a remarkable scarcity of work that delves into both correlational and comparative aspects—including differences in academic anxiety by school type, the peculiarity of gender in aspiration, and the mediating effect of the SES in the formulation of such relationships.

By investigating the general Indian senior secondary students' SES, academic anxiety and level of aspiration, and factoring in the masculine and school type variables, this study is by no means an attempt to fill a research gap. The work seeks to advance a more refined comprehension that will stand to facilitate the generation of customized strategies for educational efforts and mental health services.

3. Objectives Of The Study

- To study the level of aspiration of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
- To study the academic anxiety of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
- To study the socio-economic status of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
- To study the relationship between the level of aspiration and academic anxiety of senior secondary students.
- To study the level of aspiration of senior secondary students in relation to socio-economic status.
- To study the level of academic anxiety of senior secondary students in relation to socio-economic status.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There will be no significant difference in the level of aspiration of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
2. There will be no significant difference in the level of academic anxiety of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
3. There will be no significant difference in the socio-economic status of senior secondary students on the basis of gender and types of school.
4. There will be no significant relationship between the level of aspiration and academic anxiety of senior secondary students.
5. There will be no significant relationship between socio-economic status and level of aspiration of senior secondary students.
6. There will be no significant relationship between socio-economic status and level of academic anxiety of senior secondary students.

4. Sampling of the Study

In the present study, the investigator adopted a multistage sampling technique. The sample was drawn from senior secondary students (Class XI and XII) studying in both government

and private schools. A total of 300 students were selected, with due representation from both genders and school types. The sampling ensured proportional representation across multiple regions to maintain the diversity of background variables such as school environment and socio-economic condition. Students were selected randomly within each identified school to minimise bias.

Selection of the Tools

The investigator employed the following standardised tools to collect relevant data for the present investigation:

1. Level of Aspiration Test by Mahesh Bhargava

This instrument measures the educational and vocational aspirations of adolescents. It contains a balanced number of items assessing personal ambition, goal clarity, and the realistic planning capabilities of the student in academic and professional contexts. The test has been widely used and standardised in Indian contexts.

2. Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) by A.K. Singh and A. Sen Gupta

This tool consists of items that evaluate the extent of anxiety experienced by students related to their academic performance, examinations, and classroom learning situations. It is specifically designed for school-going children between the ages of 13–18 years.

3. Socio-Economic Status Scale by B.K. Tiwari and G. Mishra

The scale includes dimensions such as parental education, occupation, income, living conditions, and access to educational resources. It provides a cumulative SES score that categorises the students into different socio-economic brackets.

Reliability and Validity of Tools

Level of Aspiration Test (Bhargava)

The test-retest reliability of the Level of Aspiration Scale was found to be high. It was administered to a tryout group multiple times, and the following correlations were observed:

S. No.	Comparison	Gap Between Tests	Co-efficient of Correlation
1	Test vs Retest 1	7–10 days	0.92
2	Test vs Retest 2	About 1 month	0.89
3	Retest 1 vs Retest 2	About 20 days	0.83

The Split-Half Reliability was calculated to be 0.88, indicating the instrument's internal consistency.

Academic Anxiety Scale and SES Scale

Both tools have established reliability and validity in previous Indian studies. The AASC has an internal consistency reliability above 0.80, while the SES scale demonstrates robust content validity, as per evaluations by multiple educational psychologists.

5. Validity Of The Test

Content Validity

The items of the Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) were analysed item-wise by two eminent teacher educators, two psychologists, and five experienced school teachers actively engaged in educational research. Based on their suggestions and agreement, 30 items were retained for the final tool. The items were reviewed to ensure that they reflected the academic and vocational aspirations of adolescents realistically.

Cross Validation

After the experimental tryout, the final version of the LEAT was administered to a fresh sample of 50 randomly selected students from various senior secondary schools to determine cross-validation. The scores obtained from the LEAT were correlated with the scores from H.M. Singh and G. Tiwari's Level of Aspiration Test for the same group. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.66, calculated using Pearson's product-moment correlation, which confirms satisfactory concurrent validity.

Socio-Economic Status Scale by Rajeev Bharadwaj

The SES scale measured socio-economic status across seven areas: family background, education, profession, social status, caste, total assets, and monthly income.

Reliability

Reliability was tested using the test-retest method and calculated by the Spearman-Brown formula. The correlation values in both the original and revised scales are presented below:

Sr. No.	Area	Co-efficient (Original Scale)	Co-efficient (Revised Scale)
1	Family	0.72	0.76
2	Social	0.68	0.69
3	Education	0.82	0.86
4	Profession	0.70	0.74
5	Caste	0.92	0.94
6	Total Assets	0.67	0.69
7	Monthly Income	0.73	0.76
	Overall Scale	0.74	0.76

Validity

The revised scale was developed based on empirical evidence and expert-reviewed items. As such, its content validity is considered very high and appropriate for measuring socio-economic background in the Indian context.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was confined to senior secondary students only.
2. The investigation covered only students of Class XI and XII.
3. The sample was limited to 300 students from both.
4. The scope was limited to selected schools across various urban and rural areas, without focus on any single state or region, government or private schools

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Educational Aspiration and Socio-Economic Status

Variables	N	Mean (M)	SD	C.R.
Low SES Students	104	20.3	4.8	
High SES Students	101	23.8	3.4	6.14**

Interpretation: The calculated Critical Ratio (6.14) is higher than the table value at the 0.01 level (2.56), indicating a statistically significant difference. Students from high socio-

economic backgrounds exhibited significantly higher educational aspirations than their low SES counterparts.

Table 2: Correlation Between SES and Educational Aspiration

Variables	N	df	r-value
Socio-Economic Status			
Educational Aspiration	351	349	0.291**

Interpretation: The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.291$) is positive and significant, implying a moderate but meaningful relationship. Higher SES is associated with higher educational aspiration among senior secondary students. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Educational Aspiration Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Male	145	21.6	4.5	
Female	155	23.1	3.9	3.29**

Interpretation: Female students demonstrated significantly higher levels of educational aspiration compared to male students, with the difference being statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 4: Academic Anxiety by School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	C.R.
Government	150	26.2	5.1	
Private	150	22.8	4.3	4.87**

Interpretation: Government school students displayed significantly higher academic anxiety than private school students. The difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting a possible link to limited resources and support.

Table 5: Correlation Between Academic Anxiety and Level of Aspiration

Variables	N	df	r-value
Academic Anxiety			
Educational Aspiration	300	298	-0.42**

Interpretation: The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.42$) is negative and statistically significant. This suggests that higher academic anxiety is associated with **lower educational aspiration**.

Table 6: Correlation Between SES and Academic Anxiety

Variables	N	df	r-value
SES			
Academic Anxiety	300	298	-0.38**

Interpretation: A negative and significant relationship exists between socio-economic status and academic anxiety. Students from higher SES backgrounds experience less academic anxiety, possibly due to better academic support and resource availability.

7. Discussion And Implications

Academic success and access to better opportunities are becoming an increasing desire on the part of students in all levels of socio-economic groups. Such aspirations both express individual drive and, more broadly, the development of society. However, such aspirations are, in actuality, very hard to achieve due to systemic barriers (especially for students from

low-income families). Therefore, educational options, educators, and policymakers play a very pivotal role of providing well informed and available support to achieve these ambitions. Current data show striking differences in how students view their learning potential and how anxious they feel about school based on gender, SES, and school setting. Female students' educational ambitions were stronger than those among males, which is a sign of a wider tendency towards gender equality in education and changing career plans for young women (Nguyen & Blomberg, 2014). Further, private school pupils expressed high aspirations and low levels of school-induced stress, which is not the case in government schools. Especially, those differences may be caused by better educational settings, fewer student-teacher ratios, and a richer assortment of extracurricular activities by the private institutions (Coleman, 1988).

It was discovered that the higher SES significantly relates to greater educational aspiration, meaning that students from richer backgrounds are more likely to receive encouragement and are influenced by aspirational role models. They are usually from more supportive homes and receive more stable participation from parents- conditions that translate to more aspirational education desires (Parcel & Dufur, 2001). The financial stability offers possibilities for other learning arrangements such as coaching, tutoring and technological tools, which enhance academic aspiration and the long-term aspirations (Erola, Jalonen, & Lehti, 2016).

Moreover, a clear negative relation was manifested between academic anxiety and SES and aspiration itself. Low-income students are also prone to suffer from increased anxiety due to unstable environment, parents' educational limitations and poor access to academic resources (Luthar & Ansary, 2005). In that case of increased anxiety, cognition can be negatively impacted, the motivation to learn can degenerate, and the goal-setting process can be harmed (Muris, 2002). Low SES puts psychological pressure that interferes with both academic achievement and the formulation of sustained educational ambitions.

Upholding the current research, it shows that long-term SES deficits in childhood lead to the weak development of the necessary cognitive and language skills, which affect later academic successes (Hackman, Farah, & Meaney, 2010). Such early spaces still impact students in adolescence, hence limiting their career ambition and lowering their expectations (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Also, schools within economically disadvantaged areas are plagued by deficient budgeting, poor facilities, and resourceful workloads for staff, aspects that are harmful to students' academic results and general welfare (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This realisation brings the point that education policy and practice must adjust to handle these challenges. Taking into account both the suppression of aspirations as well as the rising anxiety level among students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, schools should implement specific aid measures. Strategies may include: introducing services for in-school counselling at schools, introducing a mentoring initiative, and an all-inclusive teaching approach that validates and celebrates students of different socioeconomic status. Equal distribution of the funds between the government and private sectors, together with extended financial support (scholarship, incentives) should become a top priority for policymakers.

Eventually, it will take collaborative efforts from institutions, households and legislative bodies to eliminate the chasm of aspirational disparity and stress. When support means are available, students from all economic profiles can actively strive and achieve their educational goals. Further research is required to know how social interactions at home, school and peer environment can influence the complicated interactions between socio-economic status, anxiety and educational ambition.

8. Conclusion And Suggestions

The current study aimed at analysing the relationship between educational aspiration and academic anxiety in relation to the socio-economic status of senior secondary students, taking note of gender and school type differences. The findings validate the fact that students' socio-economic environment has a relevant influence on their aspirations and on the felt anxiety in academic contexts. SES students of high SES exhibited consistently higher educational aspirations and less anxiety, whereas students with lower SES environments have lower aspirations and greater anxiety, reflecting the intricate dance of social and financial aspects in producing academic desire and stress.

There emerged a discernible gender effect whereby the female students exhibited higher aspirations than males, who on average achieved slightly lower aspiration values and reportedly had marginally increased academic anxiety. The community school type also indicated variations and openings. Students from private schools scored better in terms of aspiration levels, while manifesting lower academic anxiety, maybe due to better facilities and assets for studying.

Moreover, there was a strong statistical relationship between socio-economic status and aspiration for education as well as an inverse relationship between socio-economic status and academic stress. It was also found that aspiration and anxiety have an inverse relationship, and low-SES students experience substantial psychological strain while working towards goals that are constrained by a lack of resources.

In line with prior research, this study reinforces socio-economic disadvantages are serious obstacles for adolescents' academic motivation and psychological well-being. Research that Crosnoe and Cooper (2010) conducted also found that decreased involvement and excessive emotional distress are associated with a lower SES among high school students, while Yoshikawa, Aber, and Beardslee (2012) highlight the way adolescent poverty ruins mental health and academic progress through prolonged stress and limited access to developmental supports in terms of well-being. These challenges must be addressed to guarantee an equal and useful form of educational infrastructure.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. **Strengthen School Counselling Services:** It would be possible if competent counsellors were hired in schools to manage the educational anxieties of students from disadvantaged families and guide them to build their academic plans. Counselling can help students reduce anxiety and raise expectations through time management and stress management skills, and motivation.
2. **Parental and Community Awareness:** Low-income parents must appreciate the idea of fostering and cultivating their children's academic ambitions. Workshops and awareness programs targeting parents can close the gap between what students are taught at school and what they are encouraged at home.
3. **Equity-Based Educational Interventions:** Policy planners and the government have a responsibility to provide the right resources, both material and education, to the government schools so as to ensure that the school pupils from these schools are not discouraged from pursuing their dreams.
4. **Incorporate Aspiration-Building Activities in Curriculum:** Revise the curriculum to incorporate modules on understanding careers, motivational talks conducted by successful

people from varied backgrounds; include practical exhibits that will lead the students in dreaming about and planning their course of work.

5. **Need-Based Financial Support:** Efforts must be made to popularize and simplify financial aid opportunities to students of low income families, so they can achieve higher learning with the least financial burden.

6. **Peer Mentoring Programmes:** Youths from equivalent actual or potential socioeconomic backgrounds who have demonstrated academic/professional success could be excellent mentors as they could elevate the adolescents' incentive levels in terms of ascertaining ambitious aspirations and overcoming academic stress.

7. **Focus on Teacher Training:** Apart from pedagogical skills, teachers need to have the ability to identify and react to isolated or stressed out students. Encouragement and inspiration from educators are highly needed for students grappling with the same socioeconomic situation.

8. **Longitudinal Tracking and Further Research:** If more longitudinal research were conducted, we would be able to get insights into how goals for education are developed by the students as their socio-economic background and psychological well-being are altered. It may provide policymakers with a better foundation for designing customized approaches.

Final Remark

The results of this study illustrate the idea that aspiration is a product of larger social and psychological settings. It has a very large extent to which economic conditions and one's feelings weigh in. It is imperative that there exists cooperation between educational institutions, families, and governments to empower all students regardless of their backgrounds to not only dream but opportunities to make those dreams come true.

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