

# **Socio-Economic Factors as determinants of Educational Aspiration among Adolescents**

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## ***ABSTRACT:***

*This study aims to explore the association between socioeconomic background, school-related factors, social support and Adolescents' sense of Educational Aspirations from different educational tracks and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the role of Socio-Economic status on Educational Aspiration among Adolescents. It is expected that socioeconomic background contributes to the development of Educational Aspirations, but this association is modified by available social and individual resources, which may be particularly favorable for the group of adolescents who are on lower educational tracks, since for them such resources may lead to gaining a higher educational level. Statistically significant associations between Educational Aspirations and Parental Socio-Economic status exist. Fathers' unemployment, doubts about the affordability of future study, school atmosphere, attitude towards school, social support from the father. Social support from the mother and friends is also associated with educational aspiration. Besides affinity towards school, the determinants of educational aspirations differed among adolescents on different educational tracks.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Occupational choice is not a smooth process, when an individual is confronted with choice making in career, there are certain prevailing factors which may determine his choice. Among these factors are personality, environment, experiences, religion, academic achievement, family socio-economic status and according to Roe (1956), the individual's needs also determine the kind of job he may like to engage in. Based on the above factors, whether realistic vocational choices are made by our youths in their secondary school years should be a matter of serious concern to all educational agents and most especially our school counselors. There are lots of cause and effect issues in life and in the field of vocational choices these can be observed in the various factors like external factors and values like parents, teacher, peer group that affect the choice of an individual's vocation. Several external factors like, parents, teachers, friend, radio, television and books surround the adolescent in his day-to-day activities and they vary much influence on his way of life. His Educational Aspirations and occupational choice often does not escape being affected. In the second angle are the values an individual holds. What a person regards as worthwhile makes him pursue certain goals in life. How these factors affect vocational choices has to be examined because of the significant effect an individual's vocation has on his life. Actually, the choice of a vocation is one of the most important decisions an individual has to make in life.

Occupation choice occupies a central position in the life of a man. It is of paramount importance that youths at the early stage of their development be guided to harmonize with chosen occupation in order to function maximally in it. Therefore, if an individual explores his abilities, capabilities, personality traits, interest, aptitude and other characteristics and utilizes them in making a choice, there would be minimal dissatisfaction.

There is no doubt that the socio-economic status of the student has a great influence on the value or worth they place on education. The concept of socio-economic status represents one of the socio stratification which arises out of recognition that in all societies, people are ranked in a number of levels on social class and is common to all. One of the student's greatest problems is that of decision making and career choice. They place value on adult world work and would want to acquire the required education that would accomplish their wishes. But some are eliminated due to the factors within and outside the individual which could be intra-personal (e.g. needs), inter-personal (e.g. family and peer group) and extra-personal (economy). Education is seen as a means of achieving personal prestige, higher income means to position of power and authority, an assess entry into occupations that are satisfying and interesting.

Denga (1990) pointed out that Educational Aspiration of Adolescents is strongly influenced by the socio-economic status. Socio-economic status may have a direct and greater effect upon the occupations open toto Adolescents which they find attractive. Socio-economic status is defined as a relative standing in society based on an individual's income, power, occupation, education and prestige. According to them, it would not be wrong to say that the children of bankers, doctors, teachers, merchants and so on have different upbringing from that experienced by children of peasant farmers, domestic workers, cleaners, laborers, petty traders and so on. They went further to state that "differences exist between high, middle and lower class families in kinds of activities they engage in".

On the other hand, observations have shown that many students in their school years choose subjects leading to careers for which they do not qualify in terms of ability while others choose those that are not relevant to any career. Omrod (2004), reported that students' choices of careers are influenced by friends

and peer groups. This study thus intends to examine the extent to which parental socio-economic status affect the Educational Aspiration and occupational choice of Adolescents. Thus it is intended to find a more lasting solution in making Adolescents place more value on education and make realistic and more relevant occupational choices,

Characteristics of the school environment, the family and the individual adolescent are all associated with the level of educational aspiration, but in a different way for different educational tracks. Socioeconomic attainment is strongly linked to educational attainment. The motivation to invest in educational degrees, which is provided by parents via transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the existing educational system It is obvious to find differences in educational aspirations between adolescents having different socioeconomic origins but it is required to know more about the pathways involved. Evidence on the association between socioeconomic background and educational aspirations of offspring are somewhat conflicting, indicating direct as well as indirect pathways. The strong influence of socioeconomic background (parents' education, occupation, family income) on educational expectations was reported by Trusty in his study of US adolescents. While Marjoribanks and Mboya reported unmediated relations of family SEP with the adolescents' learning and performance-goal orientation,

An educationist once said that every intellectual effort is like a building block that is added to other blocks to build a house. Thus in doing a new study, the researcher has to look at other works that have been done in the area on which he is working. A literature review of other works that relate to the influence of parental socio-economic background on the educational value and occupational preference of students is thus very essential.

Many counselors have done much research and formulated theories to explain how and why individuals value education and choose occupations and eventually enter different occupations.

Rajput (1989) studied the educational aspiration and academic achievement of secondary school students with the objective to examine the influence of family socio-economic factors on the academic achievement of adolescents by taking a sample of 1000 higher secondary school students through stratified random sampling technique and found that the academic achievement of students was influenced in proportion to their parental encouragement. There was no effect of socio economic status on the academic achievement of the rural students, but academic achievement of urban students was influenced by the socio economic status of family; academic achievement was influenced by their family environment.

Verma et al. (1991) undertook a study with the major objective to identify factors responsible for poor results in the secondary school examination and examining their bearing on school success. The sample consisted of 515 randomly selected students of class X from different academic streams and found that students' who expressed high degree of ego involvement, indicated the degree of persistence and secured better marks in their final examination.

Wongoo (1991) conducted a study to find out whether the students from government and private schools differ significantly so far as their socioeconomic status and academic achievement was concerned and found that the government and private school students from highly advanced and normal schools differed significantly so far as their socioeconomic status was concerned.

Chauhan (1996) noted that in studying the socio-economic status of any given individual, socialists have therefore often relied on socio-economic indices such as occupation, level of education and income. Based on one of these indicators, the various social classes are usually organized into an overall hierarchical structure. The commonest and basic structure is usually the high/upper, middle and lower class structure.

Chauhan (1996), in his study of Indian adolescents found out that a child's particular socio-economic inheritance may have a direct and important effect on the career open or attractive to him that does his physical inheritance. The economic and occupational level of the home affects the educational and vocational goals of youths by influencing their aspirations to be similar to those held by their parents and by discouraging aspiration to level much above or below the parental occupational status.

To a large extent, the parents determine the initial environment into which a child is born, and provide for his needs. Thus, if the parents can afford a congenial environment for the development of the hereditary potentials of the child such as providing for Medicare, proper feeding, toys, exercise and educational facilities, the child may benefit immensely and develop well. Such a child will have positive educational aspirations and also be properly exposed to various occupations available to the society.

Parental socio-economic status and intelligence have either facilitatory or inhibitory effect on the child depending on the traits inherited of the environment in which he is brought up. The self and work roles begin early in life and the home in conjunction with its related social system has great influence on them. The family comprising the parents, siblings, relatives, friends and neighbors, providing

the initial social encounter through socialization process, also provides the modes with which the child can identify. Usually a child may consciously or unconsciously learn from the parents by role-playing or imitation.

Family influences including child rearing practices and socio-economic level, appear to affect career choice and development among adolescents. According to Nwachukwu (2003), certain groups of occupations are inherited. Though it is not known why an association exists between a father's occupation and his child's career choice, this relationship is present and influences the career choice of Adolescents.

Chauhan (1996), pointed that children from low socio-economic home, more often than others, preferred nursing, teaching and engineering, while those with high socio-economic background preferred Medicine; Business Administration and Law. On the other hand, some parents in the low socio-economic status may be seen giving way to "fate" as it were and find it difficult to motivate their children even where such children have the intellectual ability and aptitude for higher occupations. They may show their children variety of low income earning careers, corresponding to the edge that "water finds its level".

In any case, there has been instance of many parents who are classified as low socio-economic status families who have either acquired better education and occupy key posts in the society or their children have achieved the feat; such parents are often seen as strong motivating forces behind their children urging them to strive hard to become persons of substance such as doctors, engineers, pharmacists, lawyers, business executive or accountants, provided the children have the aptitude, intelligence and ability to cope with the high standard of education as pre-requisition for the careers.

Nwachukwu (2003), stated that boys from high income earning families tended to assume that they would go for higher Education and have occupational choice restricted to a professional executive type. And also found out that boys from lower income families tended to prefer skilled jobs which offer higher rates of study. It is common today to see youths born into either higher or low socio-economic families tending to look a career choice in terms of how real they are to them, what prestige is attached to such career and what satisfaction they can get from their careers. To support this, in Nigeria today, with the wide exposure and establishment of educational institutions even in rural areas, parents either of low or high socio-economic status now urge their children to work hard at their studies in order to occupy one of the highly prestigious jobs or position. Some low socio-economic status families and indeed some rural communities often rally round to jointly educate any outstanding child to any level of education.

Shuell (1996), found out that the socio-economic background of a person has a link with his/her educational and career development. He observed that students from high income families tend to assume they would go to university. He also found out that students from lower income families tend to think in terms of skilled jobs. He outlined that one of the problems of students from low socio-economic status was their inability to aspire higher. Vincent (1990) testifies that much of the child's educational development starts at home, before he actually starts the formal education. To him, the high and middle class homes are always able to provide the necessary pre-requisites for success of the children. Example, they can provide good environment, motivation, the necessary financial help and so on.

Kumari (1998) investigated intelligence, achievement, adjustment and socio economic patterns of different sociometric group of adolescents. A sample of 529 students was drawn from nine schools (government and private) of Jalandhar city

(Punjab). The sociometric status of these students was worked out on the basis of a sociometric questionnaire and four extreme groups of popular, neglected, isolates and rejecters were formed. The main findings of the study was that there existed a positive relationship between intelligence and achievement for all the sociometric groups; positive correlation exists between achievement and total adjustment for populars, neglectees, isolates and rejecters.

Alam (2001) studied academic achievement in relation to socio economic status, anxiety level and achievement motivation with the objective to study academic achievement in relation to socio economic status and to view the extent up to which academic achievement of the children was affected by their anxiety level and revealed significant positive relation between socio economic status and academic achievement, achievement motivation and academic achievement; and a negative relationship between anxiety and academic achievement.

Jagannadhan (2003) studied the effects of certain socio psychological factors on the academic achievement of students studying in classes VIII to X and found that the three levels of home environment as low, middle and high obtained 41.38, 47.05 and 62.37 of mean academic achievement respectively. Statistically the differences between the means yielded a significant effect of home environment on academic achievement ( $F=17.23$  at 0.01 level). Home environment yielded a correlation of 0.42 with academic achievement, which was highly significant. The partial correlation between home environment and achievement was 0.179, which was also significant. For boys and girls the respective correlations were 0.391 and 0.450 which were positive and significant.

Kasinath (2003) studied interactive effect of mental health, school adjustment and socio economic status on academic achievement with the objective

to find out the difference among students who were well adjusted and mal-adjusted to school environment differ in their academic achievement by taking a sample of 200 students (102 boys and 98 girls) with the age range of 15-16 years and found that mental health had significant determinant effect on achievement in school subjects; students having better social and emotional adjustment attain good academic scores.

Pandey et al. (2003) studied relationship between socio economic status and academic achievement of adolescents and found significant relationship between academic achievement and socio economic status; significant difference between academic achievement of adolescents studying in different types of school depending upon the socio economic status of parents.

Jayaswal et al. (2003) examined the role of parental support and academic achievement of tribal school students by taking a sample of 300 students through multistage sampling technique and found that parents of high achievers exerted significantly more support in their children's studies than the parents of low achievers students; the parents of high achievers had higher aspiration for their children's educational success and high prestigious occupation with attractive financial return, but the parents of low achievers were not strongly ambitious of children's upward mobility; the high achievers parents believed in counseling for correct behavior whereas the parents of low achievers believe in physical punishment like frequent beating. High achievers parents were liberal and allowed their children to mix with their peers whereas the parents of low achievers were authoritarian and did not allow peer mixing.

Ganguly (2004) studied determinants of academic achievement in rural and urban areas and found that parental care about child's education, emotional climate

at home and socio-economic status of family had a positive correlation and crowded living conditions at home had a negative correlation with the academic achievement of students in rural and urban areas;

Panigrahi (2005) studied academic achievement in relation to intelligence and socioeconomic status of high school students with the objective to examine the influence of intelligence and socioeconomic status on academic achievement of high school students by taking a sample of 100 students from Bhubaneswar city of Orissa and found that there was significant and positive correlation between academic achievement and intelligence; high intelligence leads to better academic success; a low positive correlation between academic achievement and socioeconomic status; there was no significant difference between boys and girls with respect to academic achievement.

### **NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

Adverse childhood conditions might affect educational chances, job opportunities and life chances in general, but this process might be ameliorated via available social sources (supportive family and school environment) and individual sources. A supportive family and school environment contribute to the development of educational aspirations. However, while parental support seems to be more influential within lower and middle SEP adolescents, school attitudes had a stronger effect on educational expectations for upper SEP adolescents in a study of Australian adolescents

As with having a better education, higher educational aspiration is important across all educational tracks and it might be important to know how those students allocated to vocational tracks differ in setting up their educational aspirations in comparison to those allocated to more academic tracks. This study aims to follow

this effort and to explore the association between socioeconomic background, school-related factors, social support and educational aspirations among adolescents from different educational tracks and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the role of educational aspirations related to Socio-economic factors.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

On the basis of the problem analysis, the following are the research questions:

1. Do students from high socio-economic status desire for more education and better career than those in the middle class?
2. Do the students from high socio-economic status desire for more education and better career than those of the lower class?
3. Do the students from middle socio-economic status desire for more education and better career than those of the lower class?

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

The parents' guide the Educational choice of their children. The opportunities and facilities available to the child and hence his Educational Aspiration can be either facilitated or inhibited to a large extent by the experiences that his parents make available to him. For this purpose the Statement could be written as: Socio-Economic Factors as determinants of Educational Aspiration among Adolescents

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:**

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. There is no significant difference between the educational aspirations of students from high and middle socio-economic status.

2. There is no significant difference between the educational aspirations of students from high and low socio-economic status.

3. There is no significant difference between the educational aspirations of students from middle and low socio-economic status.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **SAMPLE**

The sample consisted of 100 Adolescents. Parents were informed prior to the study via the school administration in a regular meeting of parents with the staff of the school and could opt out if they disagreed with their child's participation. Children were informed prior to the study; participation in the study was fully voluntary and anonymous with no explicit incentives provided for participation. Data were collected in classrooms, in the absence of teachers. The mean age of respondents was 16.9 (SD = 1.1, 14-23 years). Firstly, 10 Senior Secondary Schools were selected through random sampling. Secondly, from each school, 10 students were selected using simple random sampling technique. Thus, 100 students constituted the sample for the study.

### **INSTRUMENTATION:**

To measure socioeconomic status, four indices were used: highest completed education of the father and mother and employment status of the father and mother. Three levels of education were distinguished: university education, secondary school education (with a leaving certificate), and vocational education or lower (without a leaving certificate). Respondents were asked to indicate

whether their father and mother were employed or unemployed. Moreover, respondents were asked if they tended to have doubts about the affordability of further study. Respondents could choose one of five responses: (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often and (5) very often. The last two responses were merged into one category.

Perceived social support from father, mother and friends was measured using 18 items derived from the Measure of Perceived Social Support. These items focus on the following aspects: closeness with the respondent, availability for chatting with the respondent, expressing worth to the respondent, feeling relaxed when being together, being available when needed and confidence in the respondent. Each item has a four-point response scale (1-4) with the sum score ranging from 6 to 24 separately for father's support, mother's support and friends' support. A higher score indicates lower social support. The internal reliability of this questionnaire is highly satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are 0.92 for father's support, 0.87 for mother's support and 0.86 for friends' support; mean inter-item correlations were 0.54, 0.65 and 0.50, respectively.

Among school-related variables, school atmosphere, study conditions at school and attitudes towards school were included. Respondents were asked to choose one of three responses describing school atmosphere as (1) relaxed, friendly, feeling well and safe at school, (2) moderately tensed, irritated but bearable, and finally (3) tensed, irritated, and not feeling safe at school, unbearable. The last two responses were merged into one category. Under study conditions we included classroom conditions, quantity and quality of educational aids and quality of the educational process. Respondents could choose one of three responses: (1) excellent conditions - appropriate classrooms, enough aids of satisfactory quality, good team of teachers, (2) sufficient conditions - something is missing, and (3)

insufficient conditions - most of the named attributes are missing. Attitudes towards school were tested with one item. Respondents were asked if they usually liked school and could choose one of four responses: (1) I like it a lot; (2) I like it moderately; (3) I do not like it very much; and (4) I do not like it at all. The last two responses were merged into one category.

Educational aspiration was measured with one item. Respondents were asked what they thought they would do in the future. They could choose one of five responses: (1) I will study in future; (2) I will be unemployed; (3) I will work, or I will go abroad; (4) I will start my own business; (5) I do not know. The item was dichotomized into those who planned to study in the future (i.e. 'yes') and the rest of the respondents (i.e. 'no').

#### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS:**

The collected data was analyzed using t-test statistic and mean scores. The research question 1 was answered using mean scores. Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 were tested using t-test statistic.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant differences between the educational values and career aspirations of students from high and middle socio-economic status. The data collected to test the hypothesis is presented below.

**Table 1: t-test comparison of high and middle socio-economic status groups of students educational aspirations**

Class	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit
High SES	20	14.38	1.6	7.28	1.96
Middle SES	54	14.2	3.8		

Analysis in table 1 above show that t- cal of 7.28 is greater than the critical t of 1.96 at alpha level of 0.05, therefore, there is significant difference between the educational values and career aspirations of students from high and middle socio-economic status.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the educational values of students from high and low socio-economic status. The data collection to test the hypothesis is presented below:

**Table 2: t-test comparison of high and low socio-economic status groups of student educational aspirations**

Class	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t— crit
High SES	20	14.84	1.6	3.62	1.96
Low SES	26	13.49	4.78		

Analysis in table 2 above shows that t- cal of 3.62 is greater than the critical t of 1.96 at alpha level of 0.05, therefore, there is significant difference between the educational values and career aspirations of students from high and low socio-economic status.

**Table 3: t-test comparison of middle and low socio-economic status groups of student educational aspirations**

Class	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t— crit
Middle SES	54	15.04	1.6	3.48	1.96
Low SES	26	13.89	4.78		

Analysis in table 3 above shows that t- cal of 3.48 is greater than the critical t of 1.96 at alpha level of 0.05, therefore, there is significant difference between the educational values and career aspirations of students from middle and low socio-economic status.

This study has revealed that

1. There is significant difference in educational aspirations of the students from high and middle socio-economic homes in favor of the former.

2. There is significant difference in educational aspirations of the students from high and low socio-economic homes in favor of the former.

3. There is significant difference in educational aspirations of the students from middle and low socio-economic homes in favor of the former.

Educational values and career aspirations of students from high and middle socio-economic status groups The study of the hypothesis 1 shows that there is significant difference educational aspirations of students from high and middle socio-economic status groups. To support this result, Vincent (1990), highlighted some factors that influence the educational preference of adolescents and they include: the parents, home, environment, ignorance, finance and so on.

Educational values and career aspirations of students from high and low socio-economic status groups The study of the hypothesis 2 shows that there is significant difference in educational aspirations of students from high and low socio-economic homes in favor of the high socio-economic status groups. Most of the students of high socio-economic status wished to continue their Education while most of those from low socio-economic status do not wish to continue. This may be due to lack of finance and ignorance on the part of the parents of low socio-economic status group.

Educational values and career aspirations of students from middle and low socio-economic status groups The study of the hypothesis 3 shows that there is significant difference educational aspirations of students from middle and low socio-economic status groups. To support this result, Vincent (1990), highlighted

some factors that influence the educational preference of adolescents and they include: the parents, home, environment, ignorance, finance and so on.

## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the study was to find out if differences exist in educational aspirations of students from different socio-economic status groups. Three null hypotheses were postulated and tested using sample size 100 of senior secondary Adolescents from 10 schools. Random sampling technique was used to select the schools.

The instrument for the study was structured questionnaires designed by the researcher to obtain information on personal data and future plan. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation scores and hypotheses were tested using t-test test at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

The findings based on the information obtained revealed that all the three hypotheses were accepted, which indicated that there was significant difference in educational aspirations of students from different socio-economic status groups.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, one concludes that socio-economic status has much influence on students' value of education and vocational preferences. The students from high and middle socio-economic status groups preferred to continue and aspire higher for high yielding jobs than those of the low socio-economic status who do not wish to continue their education due to ignorance and finance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study was designed to study adolescents' educational aspirations with a particular focus on different educational tracks. A better understanding of the background of educational aspirations might help to tailor more effective intervention programs aimed at enhancing success in the educational system, and consequently increasing chances in the job market. The findings indicate that stimulating a friendly atmosphere at school, a positive attitude towards school, encouraging fathers providing social support as well as strengthening adolescents' sense of coherence might increase the educational aspirations of young people. Adolescents in different educational tracks require different approaches. Only attitudes towards school proved to be a significant factor of educational aspiration among Adolescents.. While educational aspiration among Adolescents seem to be sensitive to the father's education, the mother's education and perceived social support from fathers , all contribute significantly to educational aspiration.

In the light of the above findings, the following recommendations are made

1. Trained and professional guidance counselors should be employed and posted to schools to help provide wide range of information in the requirement of education.

2. The government should provide financial aid to the less privileged students through scholarship and bursary awards to the students to enable them continue their education and improve on their lives.

3. Adult literacy campaigns should be better organized and encouraged to educate parents on the need for their children's education.

### **SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1. This study can be carried out using large number of students and increasing the number of schools to make the result with better generalization.
2. The research should be extended to other schools of the State and the Country.
3. Other methods of investigating this study can be used.
4. Other factors influencing students' educational values and aspirations should be investigated.

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28. Wongoo (1991): *Educational Psychology*, Boston Allyn and Baco The process of socialization refers to the manner by which a child, through education, training, observation, and experience, acquires skills, motives, attitudes, and behaviors that are required for successful adaptation to a family and a culture

