



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.031 (SJIF 2025)

Socio-economic Status and Educational Aspiration among Undergraduate Students

Gauri Shanker

(Research Scholar),

Research Center -

Department Of Teacher Education,

S. V. College, Aligarh.

University - Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh

University, Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh, India)

E-mail: gskushwaha8273@gmail.com

Dr. Ravendra Rajput

(Associate Professor),

Research Center -

Department Of Teacher Education,

S. V. College, Aligarh.

University - Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh

University, Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh, India)

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/11.2025-49382135/IRJHIS2511018>

Abstract:

Socio-economic status (SES) plays a central and influential role in shaping the educational aspirations of undergraduate students. The SES of a family determines not only the quality and level of education accessible to students but also the opportunities, resources, and academic environment that support their long-term goals. Families with higher socio-economic status are typically able to provide better educational facilities, exposure to academic activities, financial support, and guidance, which contribute to enhanced aspirations. On the other hand, students from lower SES backgrounds often experience limitations in terms of educational choices, affordability of courses, and availability of support systems, which may hinder the development of high aspirations.

The present study aims to investigate the significant differences in educational aspiration among undergraduate students enrolled in various colleges and universities, specifically in relation to their socio-economic status. Furthermore, the study seeks to analyze the nature of the relationship between SES and the educational aspirations of these students. The research was confined to undergraduate students pursuing graduation in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation, and a total of 300 students were selected as the sample of the study.

The study provides deep insights into how socio-economic factors shape the ambition levels and academic goals of undergraduate learners. By examining variations across different SES groups, the research highlights the disparities that exist in educational planning, access to opportunities, and motivational levels. The findings of this study hold significant implications for educators, policymakers, and institutions aiming to enhance student aspirations and bridge socio-economic gaps in higher education.

Based on the outcomes, the paper presents valuable recommendations that may contribute to strengthening academic support systems, promoting equitable opportunities, and fostering an encouraging learning environment for students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Educational Aspiration and Undergraduate Students.

Introduction:

Socio-economic status (SES) plays a crucial role in shaping the educational aspirations of undergraduate students. The SES of a family largely determines the quality and level of education that can be made available to students, as well as the types of courses a family can afford to support. As students gradually become aware of their family's socio-economic conditions, they begin to understand the financial limits within which their education and career development can progress. This awareness often influences the way they plan their academic pathways and future goals. They may recognize the financial constraints associated with pursuing various professional and non-professional courses and accordingly adjust their educational and vocational aspirations. In this context, the present study attempts to assess the impact of socio-economic status on the educational aspirations of undergraduate students in India, with special reference to the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh. The study aims to explore how students' aspirations are shaped, modified, or restricted by their socio-economic background, and seeks to highlight the broader implications of SES on academic planning and career decision-making.

Review of the related literature:

The review of related literature provides a comprehensive background for understanding the relationship between socio-economic status and educational aspiration among undergraduate students. Socio-economic status plays a crucial role in shaping learners' academic expectations, opportunities, and future goals. Several studies conducted in India and abroad have explored how factors such as family income, parental education, social class, and cultural environment influence educational aspirations. To present a clearer and more systematic understanding, the existing literature is reviewed under two major heads: Indian studies and foreign studies.

Rampino and Taylor (2013) revealed significant differences in students' educational aspirations based on gender. Girls generally held higher aspirations and more positive academic attitudes, while boys tended to have more pragmatic expectations. The study also indicates that socio-cultural norms and family support influence educational and social aspirations differently for boys and girls. It underscores the importance of developing gender-sensitive education programs within policy frameworks.

Petrin et al. (2014) analyzed the relationship between the educational aspirations of rural high school students and their residential choices. It found that the quality of education, social capital, and local opportunities in rural areas strongly influence students' future educational plans. Although many rural students aspire to higher education, they face barriers such as resource scarcity and economic limitations. The research highlights the importance of improving educational infrastructure and opportunities in rural regions.

Rutherford (2015) focused on discrepancies between academic expectations among

children, parents, and teachers. The findings revealed that when a child's own aspirations do not align with those of their parents or teachers, it negatively affects their mental and emotional well-being. The study suggests that enhanced school counseling and improved family communication can help reduce this mismatch.

Khattab (2015) emphasized that having high educational aspirations alone is insufficient; realistic expectations and achievements are equally crucial. Students who balanced high aspirations with realistic expectations performed better academically. The study highlighted that alignment between aspiration, expectation, and achievement is key to academic success, offering significant implications for educational counseling.

Berrington et al. (2016) examined inequalities in educational participation and aspirations based on class, gender, and ethnicity in the UK. It found that students from higher socioeconomic and white backgrounds generally held higher aspirations, while social and structural barriers constrained those from minority groups. The research underlines the need for equitable policies ensuring equal access to education for all communities.

Hartas (2016) studied that students' educational aspirations depend on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and family support. Young people with positive self-perception and psychosocial stability exhibited higher educational goals. The study highlighted the close association between mental health and academic ambition.

Plenty et al. (2020) explored the role of social relationships, family support, and immigrant background in shaping students' educational and occupational aspirations. The results indicated that strong family bonds and supportive peer networks enhance educational motivation, especially among immigrant students.

Kaur and Gupta (2020) studied in Punjab, India, aimed to examine the relationship between intelligence and academic aspirations among secondary school students. Based on data from 200 participants, the study found no significant gender differences but observed a strong positive correlation between intelligence and aspirations. It concluded that while intelligence contributes to higher aspirations, factors such as family encouragement, teacher support, and social environment are equally vital.

Buchmann et al. (2021) found that parents' educational aspirations and children's self-concepts are interrelated. Over time, high parental expectations enhanced children's self-confidence and motivation to achieve. The research reinforces the role of family as a foundational source of educational inspiration.

Chen and Hesketh (2021) explored disparities between educational aspirations and expectations among adolescents in rural China. Based on data from 606 students aged 14–16, it found that rural young people often experience imbalances between what they want to achieve and

what they believe they can achieve. Lower expectations were associated with reduced self-esteem, self-efficacy, and academic performance. The study emphasized the importance of parental support, school guidance, and social recognition in mitigating these gaps.

Miranda et al. (2022) investigated the link between rural students' academic aspirations and grading systems. It found that students with higher grades tend to have higher aspirations; however, limited local opportunities constrain their potential. The study highlights the unequal distribution of educational resources in rural settings.

González Amador et al. (2022) studied in 45 high schools across Mexico how peer networks influence students' academic aspirations. Using video interventions showcasing successful role models, researchers demonstrated that students' aspirations are malleable and can be elevated through positive peer interactions and motivational exposure. The study emphasizes that school-level interventions can effectively nurture ambition and achievement.

Basu and Khursheed (2023) investigated 150 high school students in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, to explore the effects of school type, parental expectations, and social support on academic aspirations. The study found that students in private and English-medium schools exhibited higher aspirations. Parental expectations, teacher motivation, and peer encouragement were significant contributors to students' career choices, while gender and family type showed no notable effect.

Meinam et al. (2023) studied postgraduate students at Manipur University and found that most expressed a desire to continue higher education and specialize in their fields. Parental encouragement, peer collaboration, and social media influence played key roles in motivating educational pursuits.

Chen et al. (2023) investigated rural adolescents in China and analyzed the combined influence of individual, family, and peer factors on educational aspirations. The findings showed that self-efficacy, family encouragement, and peer relationships jointly shape students' aspirations. The study suggests that multi-level policy interventions can effectively enhance educational motivation among rural young people.

Nevertheless, this is a very broad topic and cannot be covered in one step, since very few studies have been undertaken on this agenda in India. This encouraged the investigator to take up a study of the educational aspiration of adolescents in relation to socioeconomic status and gender, with the intention that the results of the study may serve as a reference for those researchers who are interested in investigating the influence of socioeconomic status on undergraduates' educational aspirations.

Objectives of the study:

- To examine the significant differences in the educational aspirations of undergraduate students studying in colleges with respect to their socio-economic status.

- To analyze the relationship between educational aspiration and socio-economic status among undergraduate students.
- To offer meaningful recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. There will be no significant differences in Educational Aspiration among undergraduate students studying in colleges in relation to their Socio-Economic Status.
2. There will be no significant relationship between Educational Aspiration and Socio-economic status among undergraduate students.

Sampling of the study:

In the present study investigator selected multistage sampling technique. The sample of the present investigation was drawn from the graduation (B.A.) studying in Government degree colleges of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh State of India. Firstly authors of the paper purposively selected Aligarh district. From four tehsils of aligarh district i.e.Koil,Atrauli, Iglas and Khair. There were total 6 government colleges in Aligarh district and out of 6 government colleges 3 colleges selected randomly one from each tehsil. A sample of 300 students studying in (Bachelor of Arts) B.A. class selected randomly from 3 selected Colleges.

Selection of the tools:

In this present study, the researcher used the following tools -

- Level of Educational Aspiration Scale (LEAS) by Dr. Jalota & Dr. M.S. Sharma (1971) Published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra.
- Socio-Economic Status Scale by Rajeev Lochan Bhardwaj (1989) published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra.

**Level of Educational Aspiration Scale (LEAS) by Dr. Jalota & Dr. M.S. Sharma (1971)
Published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra.**

The Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) is a standardized psychological instrument designed to assess the educational aspirations of students. The tool comprises 30 items that encompass various factors directly or indirectly influencing students' levels of aspiration and their academic achievement. It serves as a comprehensive psychological measure aimed at evaluating the extent to which a student aspires to advance in his or her educational journey. The test reflects the learner's current motivation, self-concept, and socio-psychological background, and is suitable for assessing the educational aspirations of students within the age range of 15 to 25 years.

Reliability of the Test -

The Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT), developed by Dr. S. P. Jalota and Dr. M. S. Sharma (1971), was administered to a tryout sample of 200 undergraduate students to assess its reliability. To examine the test-retest reliability, the instrument was readministered twice to the

same group at different time intervals. Of the initial sample, 168 students participated in both retests. The resulting correlation coefficients demonstrated a high level of stability and internal consistency, confirming the reliability of the test.

Table 1: Reliability of Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT)

S.No.	Aspects Related	Gap between the Tests	Coefficient of Relationship (r)
1.	Test vs. Retest 1	10 days	0.87
2.	Test vs. Retest 2	3 weeks	0.84
3.	Retest 1 vs. Retest 2	2 weeks	0.82

Split-Half Reliability:

The Split-Half Reliability of the LEAT was found to be 0.81, while the Test–Retest Reliability was calculated as 0.87. These values indicate that the test is highly reliable and consistent for assessing the educational aspirations of secondary school students.

Validity of the Test:

Content Validity:

The content validity of LEAT was established through a detailed item-wise evaluation conducted by two eminent teacher educators and five experienced school teachers with research expertise. Based on their analysis and suggestions, the final set of 30 items was retained. The overall content validity of the tool was rated as high.

Cross-Validation:

Following the experimental trial, the finalized version of the test was administered to a new sample of 60 students randomly selected from various colleges in Patna city for cross-validation. The LEAT scores were then correlated with the scores obtained from A. Singh and V. C. Tiwari's "Level of Aspiration" test for the same group. Using Pearson's product-moment correlation method, a coefficient of 0.72 was obtained, indicating a higher level of concurrent validity compared to earlier findings.

Socio-Economic Status Scale by Rajeev Lochan Bhardwaj (1989) published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra.

The Socio-Economic Status (SES) scale comprises seven areas, with items and alternatives corresponding to each area. The reliability of the revised SES scale was established using the Test–Retest method. The coefficients of correlation for seven areas and the scale as a whole are given below:

Table 3: Reliability of Socio-Economic Status (SES) Scale by Rajeew Bharadwaj

Sr. No.	Area	Coefficient of Correlation (Original N=100)	Coefficient of Correlation (Revised N=200)
1	Family	0.72	0.78
2	Social	0.68	0.74
3	Education	0.84	0.88
4	Profession	0.76	0.81
5	Caste	0.92	0.95
6	Total Assets	0.67	0.73
7	Monthly Income	0.73	0.78
—	Scale as a Whole	0.76	0.82

Interpretation -The SES Scale demonstrated strong reliability and internal consistency across all seven areas.

Delimitations of the Study:

1. The study was limited to undergraduate (B.A.) students only.
2. Data for the study was collected exclusively from the Aligarh district.
3. The sample consisted of 200 students, of whom 164 participated in the retest phase.
4. The study was restricted to B.A. students enrolled in government colleges of the Aligarh district.

Analysis and Interpretation-

Table 1: Showing Critical Ratio of Mean Score of Educational Aspiration of Students in Relation to their Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Variables	N	Mean (M)	SD (σ)	C.R.
Low-SES	150	21.8	4.5	7.46**
High-SES	150	25.3	3.2	

Interpretation:

Table 1- clearly indicates that the critical ratio of the mean scores of Educational Aspiration between low-SES and high-SES students is significant at the 0.01 level. The obtained C.R. value of 7.46 exceeds the table value of 2.56, demonstrating that students from high socio-economic status exhibit significantly higher educational aspirations than their counterparts from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Table 2: Relation Between Socio-Economic Status and Educational Aspiration among Undergraduates.

Variables	N	Df	r
Socio-Economic Status	300	298	0.482**
Educational Aspiration			

Interpretation:

Table 2- reveals that the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.482$) between Socio-Economic Status and Educational Aspiration among undergraduate students is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level for 298 degrees of freedom. This indicates a meaningful and positive association between SES and educational aspiration. In other words, students belonging to higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to exhibit stronger educational ambitions and clearer academic goals, whereas those from lower SES groups generally display moderate or comparatively lower levels of aspiration.

Conclusion:

The present study concludes that socio-economic status plays a decisive role in shaping the educational aspirations of undergraduate students. Those belonging to higher socio-economic backgrounds consistently displayed stronger academic ambitions, higher confidence, and clearer educational goals compared to students from low-SES families. Key components such as parental education, financial stability, and a resource-rich learning environment significantly contribute to elevating students' aspirations.

Moreover, the positive correlation between SES and educational aspiration suggests that socio-economic differences create wide aspiration gaps among learners. These disparities influence students' motivation, goal-setting skills, and their perceived capacity to achieve higher education. The study reaffirms the findings of earlier research, emphasizing that family background and access to socio-economic resources are critical determinants of students' educational outcomes. Therefore, addressing socio-economic inequalities is essential for ensuring that all students—regardless of their background—have equal opportunities to develop and pursue meaningful educational aspirations.

Implications:

1. High-SES students show higher educational aspiration than low-SES students.
2. SES positively influences students' motivation and goal-setting ability.
3. Schools should provide special support to low-SES students.
4. Scholarships and financial aid are necessary to help economically weak students.
5. Digital learning resources should be made available to low-income learners.

6. Career guidance and counseling services must be strengthened.
7. Programs to boost self-efficacy and confidence are needed for low-SES students.
8. Policies should focus on reducing aspiration gaps across SES groups.
9. Parents must be made aware of the importance of educational support at home.
10. Collaboration with government and NGOs can improve access to learning resources.

References:

1. Rampino, T., & Taylor, M. (2013). *Gender differences in educational aspirations and attitudes*. [Journal Source].
2. Petrin, R. A., Farmer, T. W., Meece, J. L., & Byun, S. Y. (2014). *Educational aspirations and residential choices of rural youth*. [Journal Source].
3. Rutherford, T. (2015). *Expectation discrepancies and child well-being*. *Child Development Research*, 2015, 1–12.
4. Khattab, N. (2015). *Students' aspirations, expectations and academic achievements: Alignment for success*. [Journal Source].
5. Berrington, A., Roberts, S., & Tammes, P. (2016). *Education and aspirations across ethnic groups*. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(14), 2474–2492.
6. Hartas, D. (2016). *Young people's aspirations and psychosocial factors*. *Educational Review*, 68(4), 511–531.
7. Plenty, S., Östberg, V., & Modin, B. (2020). *Family relations and educational aspirations*. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(8), 1020–1038.
8. Kaur, J., & Gupta, S. (2020). *A study of academic aspirations and intelligence among secondary school students*. [Journal Source].
9. Buchmann, C., DiPrete, T. A., & McDaniel, A. (2021). *Parental aspirations and child self-concept*. *Sociology of Education*, 94(2), 125–143.
10. Chen, X., & Hesketh, T. (2021). *Educational aspirations and expectations of adolescents in rural China: Determinants, mental health, and academic outcomes*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(21), 11524. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182111524>
11. Miranda, D., Silva, A., & Lopez, R. (2022). *Rural youth and educational aspirations*. *Rural Sociology*, 87(3), 558–576.
12. González Amador, M., Cowan, R., & Nillesen, E. (2022). *Peer networks and malleability of educational aspirations*. *UNU-MERIT Working Paper Series*, 2022-028.
13. Basu, S., & Khursheed, F. (2023). *A study of educational aspirations among high school students*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Education and Research*, 8(3), 7–13.

14. Meinam, M., Ojha, S. N., Singh, Y. J., Lahiri, B., & Meinam, T. (2023). *Educational aspirations among the students of Manipur University, India*. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 59(4), 77–81. <https://doi.org/10.48165/IJEE.2023.59416>
15. Chen, L., Wang, X., & Liu, Y. (2023). *Educational aspirations among rural adolescents in China*. *Youth & Society*, 55(4), 678–699.
16. Aikens, N. L., & Barbarin, O. (2008). Socio-economic differences in reading trajectories: The contribution of family, neighborhood, and school contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100:2, 235-251. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.100.2.235
17. Buckingham, J., Wheldall, K., & Beaman-Wheldall, R. (2013). Why poor children are more likely to become poor readers: The school years. *Australian Journal of Education*, 57:3, 190-213. doi:10.1177/0004944113495500
18. Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2009). Risk factors for learning-related behavior problems at 24 months of age: Population-based estimates. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37, 401-413. doi:10.1007/s10802-008-9279-8
19. Mau, W. (1995). Educational planning and academic achievement of middle school students. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 73:5, 518-526.
20. Tafesse, T. (2015). The influence of socio-economic status of parents' on academic achievement of grade ten students in addis Ababa city administration with special reference to kirkos sub-city administration. Retrieved from - <Http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/7538/1/13.%20%20Tariku%20Tafesse.pdf>

