



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status of Girl Students in Secondary Schools of Murshidabad

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DOI No. 03.2021-11278686 DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/02.2026-13898326/IRJHIS2602001>

Abstract:

The current research review is based on the correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and the academic performance of girl students in the secondary level of the Murshidabad district of West Bengal with particular reference to the rural urban difference. The results were obtained through a sample population of 200 girl students which consisted of 100 rural and 100 urban students chosen using the stratified random sampling technique in government and government-aided secondary schools. The socioeconomic status was assessed using a standardized scale of SES and academic achievement was determined using the annual examination scores of students. Descriptive analysis indicated that the mean SES score was 52.40 ($SD = 8.65$) which means that majority of students were of low to middle socioeconomic status. The average academic score was 61.85 ($SD = 9.12$) which is a moderate academic performance. There was a group-wise difference in increased mean SES ($M = 56.60$) and academic achievement ($M = 65.40$) by urban students than by rural students (SES: $M = 48.20$; Achievement: $M = 58.30$). Pearson correlation, which is an inferential analysis, showed that there is significant positive correlation between SES and academic achievement ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). A t-test analysis on academic achievement also found significant difference between a rural and urban girl student ($t = 5.72$, $p < 0.01$). These findings are a clear indication that the socioeconomic status and locality play a major role in academic achievement of secondary level girl students and that there should be special educational and socioeconomic interventions given to rural and economically weak girls.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Socioeconomic Status, Girls Students, Secondary Education, Educational Inequality, School Performance.

Introduction:

It is a common fact that education is a potent tool to social change, socioeconomic growth, and gender empowerment. In the developing world like in India, the level performance of girls at the secondary school level is of special concern as it directly affects the women in the tertiary education, job and decision-making. Even though there has been a significant improvement in the enrolment to

schools, the educational outcomes are still different and to a large extent, this difference is influenced by socioeconomic background of students. Academic achievement, in consequence, will not be comprehensible outside the context of the socioeconomic environment in which students are situated. Socioeconomic status (SES) is the cumulative effect of parental income, education and occupation to the social position of an individual (**Sirin, 2005**). Expansive body of research exploring education has continually identified SES as one of the most effective predictors of academic performance among students in different countries and educational systems. The Coleman Report underlined that family background and socioeconomic conditions had a stronger impact on the academic results than school resources (**Coleman et al., 1966**). Later research has supported this finding, proving that students with greater levels of SES through their families are exposed to improved learning settings and more parental engagement and access to learning resources that have a positive influence on grades (**Sirin, 2005; OECD, 2019**). Socioeconomic disparities are a major factor that influences the educational experiences and achievements in the Indian context. It has been shown that at the national level, children with economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds are often vulnerable to various challenges, such as lack of learning resources, nutrition, insufficient parental education assistance, and increased household responsibilities (**NCERT, 2022**). Such limitations are especially severe in girls who can be neglected in terms of education because of the influence of traditional gender norms and economic factors. Though there has been an increase in enrolment due to the enactment of policies like the Right to Education Act and state level incentive schemes, the issue of SES-linked academic achievement gaps still continues to be witnessed most at the secondary level. West Bengal is one of the unique educational environments of India, which has witnessed the increased access to education among girls due to gender-oriented interventions. The Kanyashree Prakalpa and the like have been able to decrease school dropout rates among teenage girls and retention rates in secondary schools. Access, however, does not always mean achievement. Socioeconomic development in different districts still affects the learning outcomes, which means that the empirical research should be local. Murshidabad district with large population density, high rural population and social economic diversity is an interesting setting to study the impacts of SES on academic performance among secondary level girl students. Large-scale testing like the Annual Status of Education Report (**ASER**) has shown that there are still learning gaps in students in lower socioeconomic groups, especially in rural regions (**ASER Centre, 2023**). Economically disadvantaged girls tend to face additional disadvantages such as lack of time to study because of their requirement to be at home and lack of access to additional education support. Studies indicate parental education is very important in determining academic performance because educated parents tend to encourage the use of homework, explain academic standards, and get involved in schools (**Jeynes, 2012**). On the other hand, parental education may limit academic advice and lower academic confidence of students.

The ecological and sociocultural theories can further explain the relationship between the SES and academic achievement in the sense that they highlight the interplay between family, school, and community contexts in influencing the educational performance (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this respect, socioeconomic resources do not only support students, but also determine their aspirations, motivation and learning behaviours. Girls in affluent families will tend to hope to attain higher education and have greater academic interest, whereas girls in poorer backgrounds will have restricted expectations and academic support. Despite many studies carried out on SES and academic performance on national and international scale, little research has been carried out on out-in-district secondary-level girl students. Having a distinctive socioeconomic structure, Murshidabad needs a specific study to comprehend how the SES can affect academic achievement in girls in the local school community. This type of research is necessary when targeting specific interventions that would help reduce differences in achievement beyond the enrolment rates.

The current research aims at investigating the connection between socioeconomic status and academic performance of girl students in secondary schools of Murshidabad district, West Bengal. The study will offer empirical evidence to be used in the planning of education, gender-responsive policies, and support systems at the school level by systematically studying the performance of various groups of students with varying SES in academic performance. Knowledge about the socioeconomic predictors of girl's academic performance is essential to advancing equal education as well as to make sure that education provided in school is a true avenue of empowerment and social mobility.

Objectives of the Study:

1. The aim of the study is to measure the academic performance of girl learners studying in the secondary school level in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.
2. To investigate the socioeconomic background of secondary-level female students in terms of their education, occupation, and family income of parents and students.
3. To establish the association between socioeconomic status and academic performance among the girl students in secondary schools of Murshidabad district.
4. To test the academic performance of rural and urban secondary school girls' students as compared to their socioeconomic background.

Hypotheses of the Study:

H01. Socioeconomic status does not have any significant correlation with academic achievement of girl students in the secondary level in Murshidabad district.

H02. Academic achievement of rural and urban secondary school girl pupils does not vary significantly with respect to the socioeconomic status.

Methodology:

The current study has based on the **Descriptive Survey Methodology** and correlational

research design to address the issue of the relationship between academic achievement and socioeconomic status of girl students in the high school level. This design was deemed to be the right design because it allows the compilation and examination of quantitative data in a systematic manner to explain the status quo and the extent to which variables are connected to each other without interfering.

✓ **Population of the Study:**

All girl students in IX and X Classes of government and government-aided secondary schools in the Murshidabad district, West Bengal, formed the population of the study.

✓ **Sample and Sampling Technique.**

The sample size has 200 girl students of the secondary schools in various secondary schools of Murshidabad district. **Stratified random sampling method** has employed in order to have an adequate number of students in rural (100) and urban (100) settings and in various social economic groups. Equity in the consideration of both schools was observed to achieve the balance and minimize the sampling bias.

✓ **Variables:**

1. **Main Variable:** Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Academic Achievement.

2. **Categorical Variable:** Rural and Urban

✓ **Tools:**

1. **Socioeconomic Status Scale:** The assessment of the socioeconomic status of the students has conducted on a standardized Socioeconomic Status Scale. The scale has used to measure important variables like parent education, parent occupation, family income and household facilities. The tool has chosen because it has been proven to be reliable and valid in operation in the Indian education contexts.

2. **Academic Achievement History:** The success in terms of academic performance has determined by the cumulative marks that the students have achieved in their annual examination in the past year as per school records. These labels were perceived as a sure measure of the academic performance of the students.

Analysis on the bases of hypothesis-1

In order to test the null hypothesis of the above, a sample size of 200 secondary-level girl students in government and government-aided secondary schools of the Murshidabad district was used. A descriptive and inferential statistical method was used in examining the correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic success.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Socioeconomic Status

and Academic Achievement (N = 200)

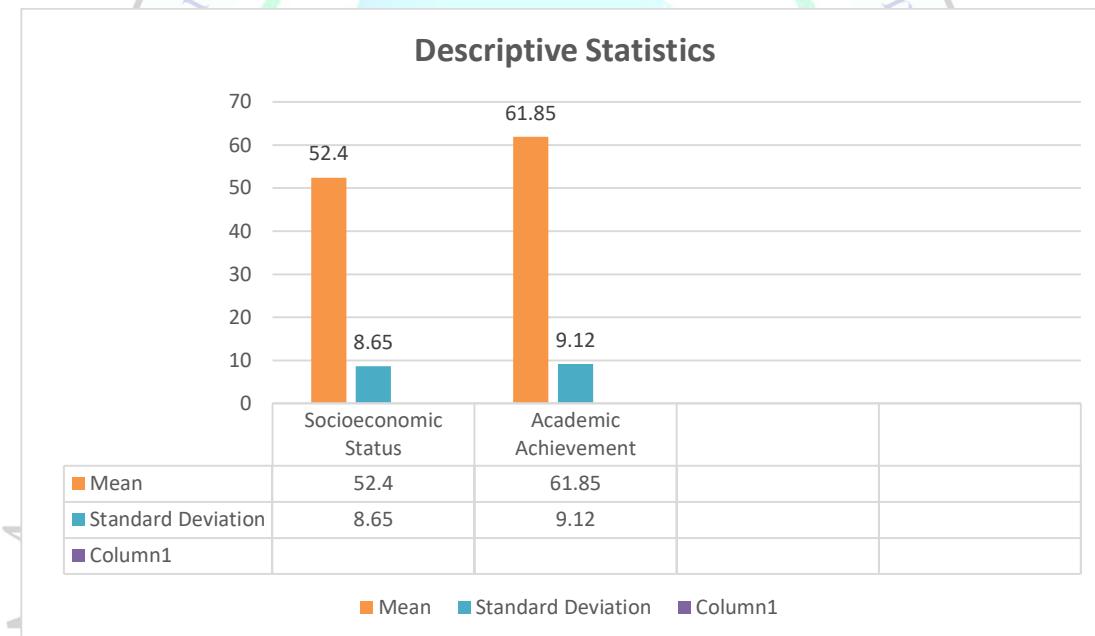
Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Socioeconomic Status	200	52.40	8.65
Academic Achievement	200	61.85	9.12

According to Table 1, the mean SES score ($M = 52.40$) denotes that the majority of the girl students were either low- and middle-income earners. SD ($= 8.65$) shows that there is a significant difference in socioeconomic status of students implying that the district has economic diversity.

The overall scholarship performance ($M = 61.85$) shows an average level of academic achievement among girl students in secondary level. The SD ($= 9.12$) indicates that there was a considerable difference in academic performance, which implies that the performance of the students was different significantly.

An initial analysis of the data hinted that those students having higher SES scores had a tendency to receive higher academic marks, and students of lower SES backgrounds demonstrated a relatively lower level of achievements. Inferential analysis was conducted to determine whether this relationship was significant or not.

Fig-1: Descriptive Statistics of Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement (N = 200)



- **Inferential Statistical Analysis:**

To test the null hypothesis, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

Table 2: Correlation between Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement (N = 200)

Variables	N	r-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
SES & Academic Achievement	200	0.62	0.000

The corresponding correlation coefficient was $r = 0.62$ which shows a moderate to strong positive dependence between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.01 indicating that there is a statistically significant correlation.

This fact is a clear indication that the higher the socioeconomic status of girl students, the higher academic performance is likely to be.

Table 3: Significance of Correlation

Statistic	Value
Calculated r	0.62
Degrees of Freedom (N-2)	198
Table Value of r at 0.01 level	0.181
Result	Significant

The null hypothesis is rejected because r calculated (0.62) is more than the table value (0.181) at the 0.01 level of significance. This supports the relationship between the socioeconomic status and academic achievement as being statistically significant.

- Discussion:**

The results are that socioeconomic status plays a major role in academic achievement of girl students in secondary level in Murshidabad district. Higher socioeconomic students have increased access to different educational materials (textbooks, personal tutoring, Internet devices, and a positive home environment) that improve their academic results.

Conversely, students of low SES have been known to experience the problem of poverty, poor academic parental encouragement, absence of studying facilities in the home, and more household responsibilities. These aspects have a negative impact on their academic performance.

The findings of the current research are in line with the previous studies that underline the importance of family socioeconomic status as a factor in determining the academic performance of students especially at the secondary level where there is high academic pressure and the curriculum demands are high.

Analysis on the Bases of Hypothesis-2

In order to test this hypothesis, the group of 200 secondary-level students, including girls, was split into the rural ($N = 100$) and the urban ($N = 100$) groups. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Independent Samples t-test) were used to analyse the socioeconomic status (SES) scores and academic achievement scores.

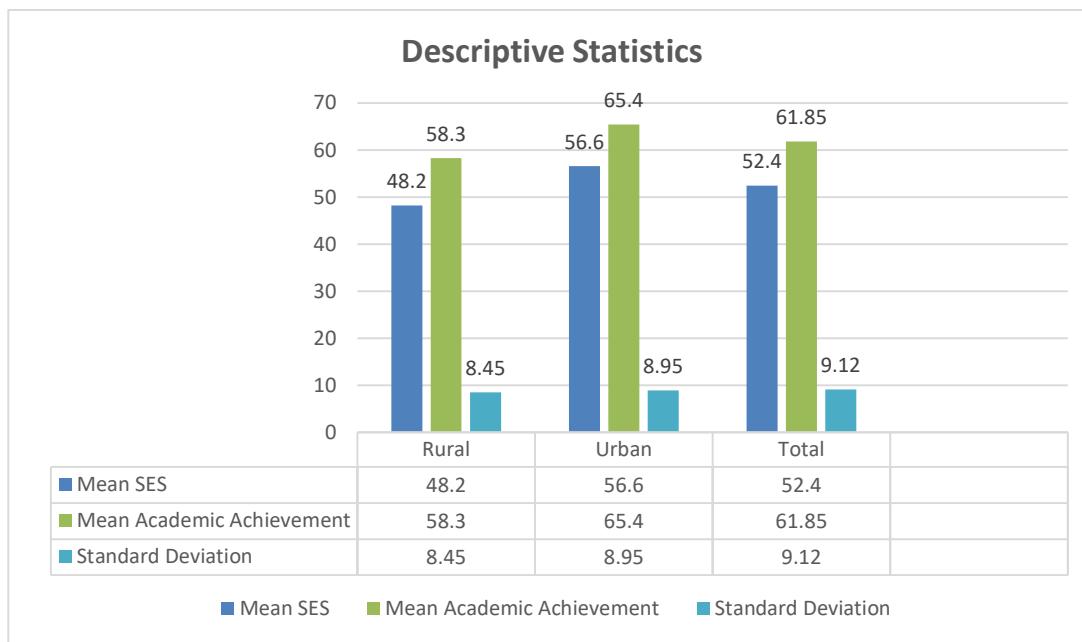
Table 4: Group-wise Descriptive Statistics of Academic Achievement with respect to SES

Locality	N	Mean SES	Mean Academic Achievement	Standard Deviation
Rural	100	48.20	58.30	8.45
Urban	100	56.60	65.40	8.95
Total	200	52.40	61.85	9.12

Table 4 demonstrates that the mean score of the SES of urban girl students (56.60) is more significant than the rural girl students (48.20). On the same note, the average mark of students in the city (65.40) is significantly better as compared to rural students (58.30).

This descriptive evidence indicates that locality, when combined with the socioeconomic status, can have effects on academic achievement. This observed difference however was to be established as being statistically significant by conducting an inferential test.

Fig-2: Group-wise Descriptive Statistics of Academic Achievement with respect to SES



- Inferential Statistical Analysis:**

An Independent Samples t-test was applied to examine whether the difference in academic achievement between rural and urban girl students is statistically significant with respect to SES.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test for Academic Achievement of Rural and Urban Girl Students

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	Sig.
Rural	100	58.30	8.45	5.72	198	0.01
Urban	100	65.40	8.95			

The t-value calculated is 5.72 with a degree of freedom of 198. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) is lower than 0.01, which means that the difference in academic achievement between the rural and the urban girl students is statistically significant.

This finding confirms that there is a very high difference between academic performance between rural and urban students considering the socioeconomic status.

- Discussion:**

It is evident that the analysis indicates that urban secondary school girl students perform well in the academics, mainly because of disparity in socioeconomic status, in comparison to rural students.

The urban students usually include an advantage in their educational facilities, educational attainment of parents, availability of individual tuition, electronic learning resources, and academic environment. Contrarily, the rural girl pupils tend to have problems in terms of low family income, poor parental guidance, school facilities, and increased domestic work. This has an adverse impact on their academic achievement despite the similarities in the level of motivation.

The results emphasize that the issue of socioeconomic disparities between rural and urban regions still influences the educational performance of girl students in secondary educational institutions in the Murshidabad district.

Findings:

The researchers found out that the general state of socioeconomic status (SES) of secondary-level girl students in the Murshidabad district was moderate and the majority of students were low to middle socio-economic background. The average academic achievement score revealed that there was an average academic performance among the students, but with a significant difference among the students. Descriptive analysis revealed that the mean SES and academic achievement score of urban girl students was higher as compared to rural students. The significant positive correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement was determined in the course of inferential analysis, which proved that higher economic and social status is connected with high level of academic performance. The independent samples t-test also demonstrated that there was statistically significant difference between the rural and the urban girl students in terms of academic achievement with regards to SES and that therefore, locality is significant in educational performance. Neither of the two null hypotheses was accepted, which proved that the socioeconomic status has a significant effect on academic achievement and that urban-rural variations have not disappeared. The results also reveal that educational access, parental education, and home environments promoting the achievement of the girls play an important role in their success in school.

Conclusion:

In the current research, the conclusion made is that socioeconomic status is a key threshold in academic success among the secondary-level girl students in the Murshidabad district. Girls in high socio-economic status and urban girls exhibit higher academic results than girls in rural and underprivileged families. The strong correlation between SES and academic performance means that economic stability, parental support and accessibility to learning environments have direct influence on the academic performance of students. The rural girl especially encounters the issues of lack of educational facilities, low financial status, and low academic provision that adversely affect their performance. Thus, the research highlights the importance of the specific educational interventions, funding, and school enhancement programs to overcome the achievement gap. Academic equity can be strengthened through the provision of better infrastructure of rural schools, the rise of parental

awareness and the access of better education of secondary school girl students.

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