



Beyond the Classroom: The Dynamics of Social Factors in Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Many sociologists have worked on deriving the relationship between social factors, like socioeconomic status, gender, family, and friend circle- and the academic achievements of students. In the same manner, this study also attempts to establish a linkage of five social factors, namely, socioeconomic status, gender, family environment and family values, peer groups, and career aspirations and choices induced by society with academic achievement. Existing literature has been reviewed from different journals related to the mentioned theme. After this, it has been concluded that social factors play a pivotal role in shaping academic performance.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Socioeconomic status, Family values, Peer groups, Career Aspiration.

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Introduction

The contribution of Sociology to the field of education can be broadly classified into three ways. Firstly, sociologists talk about curriculums, pedagogy, and educational policies, e.g., teachings of gender sensitization in text, inclusive policies, and related research, etc. Secondly, they (sociologists) focus on the infrastructural development, the types of resources being provided by the institution or state at educational institutions, and the organizational culture of that particular institution. Thirdly, they seek to find out the impact of society on the personality development and academic achievement of the individual. (Glazer, 1959).

Academic Achievement is one of the key criteria for judging someone's caliber and potential (Boxtel et. al, 1992). In this society of technological advancement, an academically successful member of the society has higher employability skills than the unsuccessful member and thus the former shows her/his utility more to the society than the latter. From the level of the State-providing educational subsidies offering fellowship, implementing policies of inclusion- to the level of a young adult- who is trying to get admission to a good college and trying to get a fellowship for further studies- everyone is trying to develop a human capital who is academically sound and have some skills to prove his utility to the

society. The best way to develop the skill is through education.

Academic Achievement can be defined as the potentiality of an individual in learning new skills and the capacity for knowledge grasping. Academic achievement is observed as the direct outcome of learning. It is an indicator that shows that learning has occurred. (Lawrence, A. S., & Deepa, T. 2013) Academic achievement represents Learning outcomes that represent the level to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in academic institutions. (Steinmayr, et.al,2014). The achievement of students is not only confined to the student itself, rather it is the achievement of teachers and institutions also. So, Defining Academic achievements in absolute terms or just as a psychological phenomenon will be an injustice to social factors like the organizational culture of the school, peer groups, the family of the individual, his/her socioeconomic activities, the demography of the individual, etc. Murray (1938) studies the motives behind academic achievement and points out that major motives are the human urges and their need to accomplish something difficult, to overcome obstacles and attain a high standard of living, to excel one's self in the field of his studies, career or job, to compete with his colleagues and surpass them, etc. (Acharya, N., & Joshi, S. 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Analyzing the academic achievement of students is not a new theme of research reflecting socio-psychological aspects of a student's life. Academic achievement and their relation with reading habits, socio-economic conditions, occupational

aspirations (Le T, et al., 2019), Individual and school factors affecting Students' Participation and success in higher education (Shulruf B, Hattie J, Tumen S, 2018), family effects on students' achievement (Lockheed M, Fuller B, Nyirongo R, 1989) and many other names and works are in a row. In India, many works are available on analyzing academic achievement among school achievement or analyzing from a view of a particular gender or any particular community. In this article, it has been tried to point out all those major social factors which affect the academic success of students. Based upon that, the Researcher was seeking the answer to the following questions:

1. Does the socio-economic status of the students affect their academic performance?
2. Does the Gender of a Student play an important role in his/her performance?
3. Does family have any role in shaping the academic achievement of a student? If yes, then How?
4. How do peers influence the motivation behind the academic performance of a student?
5. Is there any role of Society in shaping the Career Aspirations of the students?

The main factors that contribute to one's achievement are personality, motivation level, chances and opportunities, education, and training levels. There are several other factors also which influence the achievement of students like study habits, self-concept, socioeconomic status, intelligence, etc. The factors which influence academic

achievement can be broadly classified into social and psychological/personal factors.

Methodology

This study employed a review-based approach to gather data from existing literature. Related articles and research papers that critically analyze the role of social factors like SES, gender, and friend circles in academic achievement are gathered from different journals across the globe. Most of the articles and papers which has been reviewed to conclude this study were downloaded from online sources.

Psychological/Personal Factors Affecting Academic Achievement

Motivation: The word “motivation” originates from the word “motive” which means desire or urge to achieve any goal. It can be categorized into two types namely, Intrinsic motivation and Extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within whereas for extrinsic motivation, external factors are responsible. In this context, intrinsic as well as extrinsic in terms of social factors play a pivotal role in shaping academic performance.

Study habits: Study habits show behavioural aspects of one’s daily routine. Good study habits show that students are consistent and disciplined in their studies. This determines the personality of the student. Such students are more likely to perform well in academics. (Siahi, E., & Maiyo, J. 2015).

Self-discipline: The inner call of an individual to prioritize something that is required over something that is not required is called self-discipline. It has been observed that students who prioritize their studies and overcome distractions are more likely to achieve better results in examinations.

(Hampson, S., Edmonds, G., Barckley, M., Goldberg, L., Dubanoski, J., & Hillier, T. (2016)

Goal-setting: A student with realistic and achievable goals is more likely to put effort and stay focused on their studies for longer than those who do not. (Hampson, S., Edmonds, G., Barckley, M., Goldberg, L., Dubanoski, J., & Hillier, T. (2016)

Self-esteem and confidence: Self-esteem and confidence is the inner force that helps to remain motivated. So, positive self-esteem and confidence are directly proportional to excellence in academic performance. (Stankov, L., Morony, S., & Lee, Y., 2014). The self-esteem and confidence of a student are part of his emotional intelligence which is a prerequisite to develop self-efficacy for better academic success. (Yazıcı, H. et.al., 2011)

Health and well-being: Living with a healthy lifestyle is the character of one’s personality. A good academic performer requires a healthy mind to gain and sustain knowledge. (Johnson, M., & Brown, A. 2023).

Prior knowledge and skills: The academic accomplishment of a student can be impacted by their prior understanding and fundamental proficiencies in different subjects. (Maric, M., & Sakač, M., 2014). Constructing a robust basis in essential concepts and abilities can pave the way for triumph in more advanced areas of study. (Shapiro, A. 2004).

Socio-Economic Status and Its Relation with Academic Achievements

The socioeconomic status of a person is a combined total of an individual’s or the

family's economic and social positions based on their income, education, and occupation. Williams (2004) defines SES as the relative position of a family or individual in a hierarchical social structure, based on their access to, or control over, wealth, prestige, and power. Socioeconomic status (SES) can significantly affect a student's academic achievement. Students from higher SES backgrounds have greater chances to avail of required resources like technological tools, connections with experts, and financial support than those having lower SES. However, while SES is influential, it doesn't determine a student's potential. With peer support and government interventions, damage caused by the lower socioeconomic status of a student to the learning process at any institution can be minimized.

In this regard, the interpretation by James Coleman (1966) should be kept in mind. Coleman suggested that students from lower socio-economic status perform better academically when they attend school or college with children from more affluent families.

Gender of the Student and Academic Achievement

Gender is a social construct equipped by the cultural elements of society. In India, the education of girl children was out of focus in the past. But with time, things are changing in a positive direction. But still, gender stereotype related to education has not been fully omitted from society. Girls are more laden with domestic responsibilities than boys and it drastically affects their studies. Girls are forced to marry soon and conversely, boys are facing the expectations to excel in certain subjects and are pursuing a career that is considered more prestigious.

Girls in India have faced barriers to accessing education, such as limited school infrastructure, safety concerns, and early marriage, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

In the current times, when the whole world is talking about gender sensitization, gender bias is currently manifesting within the school environment, affecting the quality of education and opportunities available to students. Gender-based discrimination or biased teaching practices create an unfriendly or hostile learning environment, which may impact academic performance, particularly for girls.

When a child is up to 5 or 6 years old, she/he does not know the concept of gender. He can play the role of a girl or boy in school drama without any hesitation. But after a few years, he started making his identity as a girl and a boy. He starts choosing Maths and Science over Arts, Music and Drawing. (Gottfredson, 2005)

Girls currently have additional household responsibilities or face cultural restrictions on their mobility, which are limiting their time and energy for academic pursuits. In contrast, boys currently enjoy more freedom and support for their educational endeavours. (Boo, F., & Canon, M. 2014) Efforts are currently being made in India to address these gender-related challenges and promote gender equality in education. Initiatives like the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign, scholarships for girls, and gender-sensitive educational policies are currently aiming to bridge the gender gap in academic achievement.

It is crucial to challenge gender stereotypes, promote equal access to education, provide safe and inclusive learning environments, and encourage girls' participation in STEM subjects and higher education to ensure equal opportunities and academic success for all students, regardless of their gender.

It is undeniable, however, that despite 76 years of independence, gender discrimination and its other types (based on caste, class, region, etc.) still exist in the Indian education system at every level. So that Dr. Ambedkar's vision of liberty, equality, and fraternity can be realized, it is still necessary to reconsider and put into practice various policies and initiatives of the government in a more practical manner (Choudhary, S. K. 2008).

While there are general trends and patterns, it's important to remember that individuals vary widely, and gender should not be seen as the sole determinant of academic success or failure.

Family And Academic Achievement

Irrespective of their economic status, educational background, or cultural heritage, all families possess the capacity to make positive contributions toward their children's accomplishments. When parents create a supportive atmosphere that prioritizes the significance of education and fosters ambitious aspirations for the future, they instill crucial attitudes essential for academic triumph. Students who feel empowered to shape their destiny and believe that hard work can lead to societal recognition are more likely to excel academically. Although these attitudes are primarily nurtured within the family, their reinforcement or discouragement can also occur within the educational institution. (Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. 1994). Moreover, families of more

socially competent students tended to be verbally and emotionally expressive, democratic in terms of discipline, decision-making, close but not authoritative, higher in their level of parent-adolescent communication and family ideals, and lower in external locus of control. (Carson, D. et al., 1999). Socioeconomic status, parent participation in the child's education, and family environment quality were all linked to increased academic efficiency over time. (Jimerson, S. et.al., 1999)

Educational institutions play a vital role in strengthening the collaboration between families and their children, as well as equipping them with valuable knowledge and skills. By doing so, they establish a beneficial cycle of growth that benefits both parents and students. Research affirms that interventions designed to promote this collaboration, regardless of whether they commence at home or within the school environment, and whether implemented before or after a child's enrollment, have a substantial and enduring impact. (Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. 1994)

Similarly, the converse holds. Educational institutions undermine parents, perceive them as negative influences or exclude them from their children's educational journey, and foster attitudes within families that hinder academic achievements. To enhance student outcomes, programs, and policies must acknowledge and leverage the strengths of families, recognizing them as invaluable allies in the educational process. (Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. 1994)

Peer Groups and Academic Achievement

The findings reveal that peers have a significant impact on academic achievement in college. Several mechanisms through

which peer influence operates were identified, including collaboration, motivation, competition, tutoring, and social learning. Collaborative study groups and project work enhance understanding and knowledge sharing among peers, positively affecting academic performance (Wickens, E., Forbes, A., & Tribe, J., 2006). Academic performance encompasses excellence in various academic disciplines. As stated by Steinberg (2005), it encompasses students' abilities and performances, exhibiting a multidimensional nature that is closely tied to their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Academic performance also refers to a student's proficiency in completing tasks and studies. The relationship between peer groups and academic performance is intertwined, with a belief that a student's academic performance is influenced by their peer group (Filade, B. A., et.al, 2019) Peer influence can have both positive and negative effects, with negative peer influence being detrimental to academic performance. However, academically strong students can positively impact their peers and contribute to their overall academic achievements. On the contrary, positive peer influence on academic performance depends on individual factors such as self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. Peer influence can also serve as a source of inspiration, igniting a student's academic drive and motivation to succeed (Lashbrook, 2000).

Positive peer influence can greatly enhance academic achievement but it is important to acknowledge that negative peer pressure and distractions have the potential to impede students' performance. Therefore, students must diligently select their peer groups to minimize the adverse effects of such influences. Students need to strike a balance between socializing and studying to achieve

optimal academic outcomes. To make the most of positive peer influence and avoid potential setbacks students should set high standards for themselves remain committed to their educational goals and seek assistance from academic resources when needed.

Role of Society in Shaping the Career Aspiration of Students

The impact of society on the career goals of students and how it relates to their academic achievements is currently being critically examined from different angles. Society often establishes certain expectations and norms when it comes to choosing a profession, which influences the aspirations of students. Factors such as gender stereotypes, cultural beliefs, and socioeconomic backgrounds significantly affect the range of career options that students are exposed to or encouraged to pursue (Gottfredson, L.S. 2005). For example, in some societies, there is a stronger focus on traditional careers like medicine, law, or engineering while creative fields or unconventional paths are undervalued. These societal expectations shape how students view their abilities and restrict their choices accordingly. Additionally, the existence of role models within society including successful professionals and public figures helps shape students' ambitions by offering them tangible examples to aspire towards. Positive role models inspire students to chase after their dreams while also striving for academic excellence. Conversely, the lack of diverse role models or limited representation of certain professions is restricting students' awareness and limiting their aspirations. The media, educational institutions, and community are playing a crucial role in exposing students to a wide range of career options and promoting inclusivity.

Students' expectations for their careers are substantially influenced by their socioeconomic position. Students from low-income families face more difficulties and have less access to a variety of job alternatives. Their ability to pursue their intended jobs is hampered by financial limitations, a lack of access to excellent education, and a lack of resources for career exploration. Inequalities are also maintained, and upward mobility is constrained, by cultural assumptions that certain occupations are only appropriate for particular socioeconomic groups.

The job goals of youngsters are greatly influenced by their parents. They frequently impart to their children their values, viewpoints, and aspirations for their future jobs. Academic success and professional decisions of students are favorably influenced by parental support, encouragement, and direction. However, parental pressure to adhere to cultural norms or seek occupations based only on financial security is preventing children from following their actual passions and excelling in school.

Students' academic and professional goals are influenced by their peers and social networks. Students' job decisions are impacted by their peers' choices, current events, and the need to fit in. Students may pick occupations that do not fit their interests or skills due to peer or societal pressure to fit in, which might have an impact on their motivation and success in school.

The cultural and regional environment in which students live has a considerable influence on their career aspirations. Different civilizations prioritize and value different vocations, which determines

students' choices. Some cultures, for example, place a larger priority on group aims or community service, driving students to choose careers in disciplines including social work or public service. In contrast, students in cultures that value individual achievement or financial security are more likely to choose careers in business or finance.

Conclusion

Finally, this study provides significant insights into the various factors that impact students' academic achievements in India, such as socioeconomic position, gender dynamics, family effects, peer interactions, and career goals. The findings provide light on the complexities of educational outcomes and highlight the importance of these elements in determining students' performance.

Socioeconomic status has emerged as a critical element in influencing academic achievement. Students from higher socioeconomic origins frequently have access to more educational resources and opportunities. However, it is crucial to note that this link is not absolute, since there have been cases where students from underprivileged circumstances outperform expectations due to their dedication and perseverance.

Gender also plays a significant role in academic achievement. Despite progress in promoting gender equality in education, girls still face societal barriers and biases that affect their educational outcomes. It is crucial to address these challenges and create an inclusive and supportive learning

environment that empowers all students, regardless of gender.

The family environment, as well as parental participation, have a significant impact on a student's academic success. Student success is influenced favorably by supportive family structures with actively involved parents. Unstable family dynamics, little parental support, or undue pressure, on the other side, could hamper academic performance.

Peer groups can have an important influence in determining students' academic accomplishments. Positive peer interactions, defined by academic enthusiasm, collaboration, and support, lead to a conducive learning environment and higher performance. Detrimental peer impacts, on the other hand, such as peer pressure, bullying, or a culture that devalues intellectual pursuits, can have a detrimental impact on students' academic results.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of career targets in motivating academic accomplishment. Students who have clear and attainable professional objectives exhibit better levels of desire, engagement, and tenacity, which leads to improved academic success. It is critical to give students thorough career counseling and exposure to a variety of alternatives, allowing them to create specific goals and make well-informed educational choices.

Overall, this study report emphasizes the complex interplay of socioeconomic status, gender dynamics, familial influences, peer networks, and career ambitions in affecting students' academic accomplishments in India. The findings highlight the importance of comprehensive and targeted interventions aimed at addressing underlying inequities

and impediments to achieving equitable access to high-quality education for all pupils. We can enable students to attain their full academic potential and contribute to a vibrant society by implementing evidence-based policies and providing supportive learning environments.

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