

Original Research Article

Study on the Role of Socioeconomic Status in Shaping Students' Academic Aspirations and Achievements in Osmanabad

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Abstract: *Background:* Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the fundamental factors that influence educational performance, more prominent in rural and semi-urban areas in India. Osmanabad is a drought-prone district of Maharashtra, an interesting setting to explore impact of SES on school students' academic achievement and aspirations. Educationally, the socio-economic profile of the district, characterized by subsistence farming as the dominant livelihood, uneven infrastructural development, and scant access to quality education, constitutes plausible ground for investigating educational inequality. *Objectives:* Aim of the Study. The investigation was undertaken to examine the effect of SES on the academic achievement and career aspirations of students in Osmanabad. To meet this need, this study addressed the following questions: What is the relationship between SES and student academic performance? How does SES influence students' educational expectations, and what role does gender and geography play in the relationship between SES and student academic performance? *Methods:* A mixed approaches design was used, utilising quantitative evidence, structured interviews, and qualitative information from semi-structured interviews. The sample comprised 80 secondary students selected through stratified random sampling from government and private schools of both rural and urban areas. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation were applied to quantitative data, which were managed utilizing IBM's SPSS, and qualitative responses were entered. *Results:* The findings indicated a strong, significant relationship between SES and academic success and a moderate relationship between SES and aspirations. High-SES students regularly outperformed their peers and were motivated to aim for professional careers, whereas low-SES students in low-SES households were generally inclined to follow vocational paths because of economic and social limitations. Gender and rural-urban gaps exacerbated these imbalances. *Conclusion:* The research finds that SES strongly patterns both academic achievement and aspirations. To rectify these inequities, targeted, context-specific interventions — such as financial support, mentorship, and involvement in the community — should be implemented to give underrepresented students from all backgrounds the chance to succeed.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Status, Academic Achievement, Educational Aspirations, Rural Education, Gender Disparities, Equity in Education, Osmanabad.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

Socioeconomic status (SES) is still a key factor in educational achievement, affecting not only academic achievement but also aspiration and long-term trajectories. In rural districts of India, such as Osmanabad, having a predominance of agrarian economy, infrastructural constraints, and social stratification, the influence of SES on education is more significant. Poor schooling and drought-proneness in the district combine to further entrench existing inequity, rendering it an important region for investigating the SES-education nexus.

Recent research has shown that students from higher SES receive enriched learning conditions, parental engagement, and learning resources in the form of digital and extra-curricular provision. Alternatively, students from low

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SES backgrounds experience financial deprivation, lack of aspirational role models, and institutional factors that impede their educational movement (Gupta, 2021). This divergence is not only academic but a manifestation of more general trends in social reproduction and intergenerational inequality (Salgotra & Roma, 2018).

1.2 Problem Statement

Although the national pedagogical ideals for inclusive education, there is still a visible knowledge gap for students of diverse class backgrounds. Initial field observations as well as school-level databases in Osmanabad indicate that SES has a strong impact on academic achievement and student aspirations. However, the investigation of this relationship lacks localized empirical evidence. The current study fills the gap by discussing the influence of SES on the academic achievement and educational aspirations of secondary school students in Osmanabad.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To study the correlation between SES and academic achievement among students of Osmanabad.
- To explore how SES affects the educational and career aspirations of students.
- To determine differences in the relationship between SES and education by gender and rurality.
- To suggest policy recommendations that may eliminate educational disparities.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This analysis adds a localized, person-centric perspective on SES and educational attainment to the literature on educational equity. While the study emphasizes Osmanabad, there is a larger relevance as well; the findings can provide important pointers to policymakers and civil society institutions, and also educate the teachers in addressing such behaviour amongst their school children. They are useful in informing focused efforts to increase the participation of women— such as women's associations, scholarships based on need, and parental involvement programs— in a manner that is sensitive to the socio-cultural context of the district.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptualizing Socioeconomic Status (SES)

SES is a multidimensional concept that includes income, parental education, occupation, and access to material and cultural resources. It is increasingly understood as a structural factor in educational opportunity and social mobility (Broer *et al.*, 2019). In the Indian scenario, SES is also enmeshed with caste, rurality, and gender, thereby intersecting the understandings of educational access and achievement (Salgotra & Roma, 2018).

2.2 SES and Academic Achievement

A rich literature supports a positive relationship between SES and academic achievement. Children of high SES families have been shown to do better in standard achievement tests because of their access to enriched environments, private lessons, and parental guidance. Meanwhile, low-SES students are more likely to encounter a lack of resources at schools, nutritional imbalances, and a lack of academic scaffolding (Nefa *et al.*, 2020). The gaps in infrastructure and pedagogical inputs are even starker in rural districts such as Osmanabad.

2.3 SES and Academic Aspirations

Students' educational aspirations per se are not only determined by their motivation, but by the social and economic resources available to them as well. Evidence reveals that students with affluent parental backgrounds are more inclined towards professional careers and advanced education, and on the contrary, those from disadvantaged backgrounds curtail their career aspirations owing to perceived financial and social limitations (Gupta, 2021). Bourdieu's cultural capital is specifically important for this interaction, since it influences students' confidence, language use, and familiarity with academic rules (Broer *et al.*, 2019).

2.4 Gender, SES, and Educational Outcomes

The relationship between SES and education is also mediated by gender. Girls from low-income households are faced with intersecting challenges such as early marriage, housework, and restricted movement (Salgotra & Roma, 2018). Nevertheless, intervention strategies, which include scholarships, mentorship programs that are locally developed, etc, have proven to reduce these barriers (Kumar & Sahoo, 2020).

2.5 Rural-Urban Disparities in SES Impact

The F/RP composition of schools is most sharply affected by the rural-urban division in the way that SES relates to educational outcomes. And urban students tend to have better infrastructure, digital access, and exposure to diverse career paths. However, the sense of agency conveyed through educational expectations is less common among students in rural areas, particularly in districts such as Osmanabad, who are deprived of quality education and career guidance, which is a deterrent for aspiration and achievement (Nefa *et al.*, 2020; Karunakar & Ramana, 2022).

2.6 Theoretical Perspectives

The literature heavily emphasizes the use of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and social reproduction theory in the explanation of how we achieve educational inequality through SES. These models share the belief that schools frequently accommodate the cultural behaviours of hegemonic groups and marginalize students from subordinated backgrounds (Broer *et al.*, 2019). This theoretical framework is specifically useful for India, wherein systemic inequalities are deeply ingrained.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The method used in this study is mixed; it combines quantitative and qualitative methods, capturing the subtle relationship between the SES and learners' aspirations and accomplishments. The triangulation of the data can take place based on the design, adding to the credibility and depth of the results.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in the Osmanabad district of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. It is mostly a rural district with a population that is mostly engaged in agriculture and informal labour. Educational facilities in both urban and rural blocks are extremely heterogeneous in capacity and, therefore, prove to be an appropriate location for exploring the differences of SES in the education sector.

3.3 Study Population and Sampling

The study population was secondary school students (Grade IX and X), studying in government and private schools in Osmanabad. A total of 80 students were selected by using a stratified random sampling method of which included representation of:

- School type (government vs. private)
- Geographic location (urban vs. rural)
- Gender (male and female)
- Socioeconomic status (common urological be categorized by the parents' income, education, and occupation).

This stratification was necessary to account for the variation in experiences and SES exposure across the district.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Quantitative Data

Survey: All 80 respondents were approached with a structured questionnaire. It included:

- Demographics (age, sex, family size, parent education, and occupation)
- Academic indicators (latest exam results, attendance at school)
- Wishlist-type metrics (what they want to be when they grow up, college plans)

3.4.2 Qualitative Data

To supplement the survey, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposive sub-sample of 12 students (equal numbers of boys and girls and from middle and low SES families). These interviews explored:

- How students see themselves as learners
- Family and Community Influences on Educational Aspirations
- Factors affecting academic performance

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

- Mean, median, and standard deviation were reported for SES indicators and academic achievements.
- There are no such denominations of the value of SES that were tested to be the most appropriate denominations; therefore, in this study, the product of S and E values was directly multiplied for a linear correlation analysis using the Pearson correlation method to verify the relationship between SES and academic achievement.
- Bivariate associations between SES and aspirational categories were examined using cross-tabulation.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

- Results: Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, evidencing recurring themes concerning SES, motivation, and educational barriers.
- Coding was performed manually with peer debriefing to support reliability.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

- All participants and their guardians provided written informed consent.

- All responses were anonymous and confidential.
- The research met ethical standards for research involving minors, including attention to power issues and voluntary participation

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview

Findings: The following were the key findings of the study based on the analysis of data from 80 secondary school students of Osmanabad. We present the findings by weaving patterns in academic performance and ambition across different socioeconomic backgrounds. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation, and qualitative insights from interviews were thematically analysed to gain depth to the results.

4.2 Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

A significant trend was found that SES yielded a positive effect on scholastic attainment. Students with high-SES backgrounds had school assessments that, on average, exceeded those of low-SES students.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

SES Category	Mean Exam Score (%)	Standard Deviation
Low	58.4	6.2
Middle	66.7	5.4
High	74.1	4.8

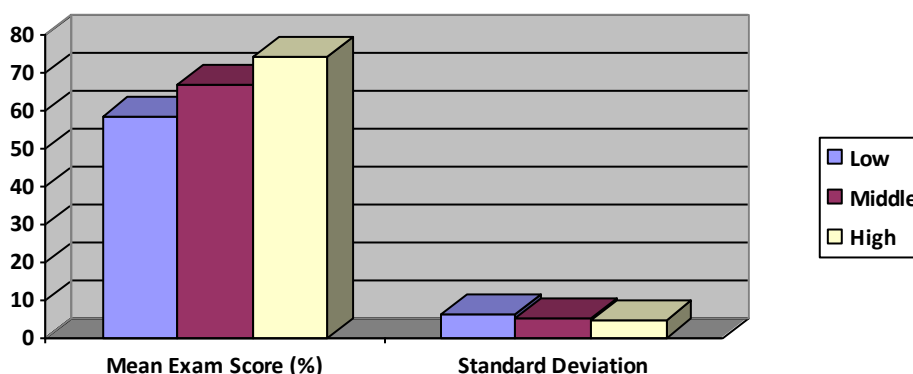


Figure 1: Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

The large difference of 15.7% between low- and high-SES groups reflects the structural advantage of economic and educational capital, which is well known as a powerful determinant of health.

4.3 SES and Academic Aspirations

The social class background of students had a significant effect on their career aspirations and their educational aims.

Table 2: SES Academic Aspirations.

SES Category	Most Common Aspiration	% of Students
Low	Vocational/Skilled Trades	53%
Middle	Undergraduate Degrees	61%
High	Professional Careers (e.g., medicine, engineering)	75%

Higher-aspirational ceilings evidenced among these low-SES students were frequently based on financial constraints and lack of exposure to the wide array of career routes.

4.4 Correlation Between SES, Achievement, and Aspirations

Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between SES and academic achievement ($r = 0.68$), and a moderate correlation between SES and aspirational level ($r = 0.59$).

Table 3: Correlation Between SES, Achievement, and Aspirations

Variable Pair	Pearson's r	Strength of Correlation
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SES & Academic Achievement	0.68	Strong
SES & Academic Aspirations	0.59	Moderate

These links support the view that SES is not just a predictor of academic success but also an important factor in students' future-related thinking.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

This study further confirms the long-established relationship between SES and educational achievement. Perceived Academic Achievement and Career Aspiration: Students with higher SES in Osmanabad exhibited better academic performance and more ambitious aspirations. These results accord with emerging evidence suggesting that SES affects not only access to learning resources but also students' self-efficacy and long-range educational plans (Kundu & Chakraborty, 2021; Khan & Jabeen, 2022).

The high correlation between SES and academic performance ($r = 0.68$) mirrors the trickle-down of such resources available through economic capital, parental education, and exposure to academic support services. Also, the moderate correlation with career aspirations ($r = 0.59$) implies that SES may affect not only what students accomplish, but what they think they can achieve.

5.2 Gender and SES Intersections

This data supported that girls from low-SES homes had to contend with two themes: the socio-economic deprivation and gender biases. This is consistent with the findings of Sharma and Singh (2020), who observed a tendency of rural adolescent girls to internalize proscriptive social norms, which (de)motivate their educational aspirations. Local scholarship programs and NGO sponsored interventions in Osmanabad have, however, started turning this around and given hope for a fairer outcome.

5.3 Rural-Urban Disparities

Rural students and especially students from low-income families reported having little access to digital tools, career counselling, and quality instruction. These results are similar to those of Mishra and Yadav (2021), who highlighted the impact of infrastructural disparities in widening educational disparities. Disparities in access to digital learning were further magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic when it became a requirement rather than an option (Rani & Thomas, 2022).

5.4 Theoretical Implications

The findings are consistent with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which argues that schools routinely value the language and action style of ruling-class groups. High-SES parented students in Osmanabad showed huge confidence, understanding of school discourse, and access to enrichment in line with the expectations of the system (Kundu & Chakraborty, 2021). This is another powerful reminder of the sometimes-frustrating tendency for education systems to replicate, rather than interrupt, social hierarchies.

5.5 Policy and Practice Implications

The report highlights the critical necessity of region-specific measures to narrow the gap in enrolment rates between the higher- and the lower-SES strata in Osmanabad. These may include:

- Scholarships that are based on need as a means of breaking down the financial barriers for low-SES students.
- Community mentorship programme to uplift and serve as role models.
- Parent involvement programs to match home environments to the academic mission
- Renovation of Rural School infrastructures to promote equity and quality in Education

Any interventions to do so should be context-specific and co-created with local stakeholders to have a sustainable and cultural value.

6. CONCLUSION

The present research investigated the influence of SES on the academic aspirations and academic success of the secondary school students in Osmanabad, Maharashtra. The results unequivocally show that SES is a strong predictor of what students attain as well as what they envision in their future. Students with higher SES backgrounds scored higher in tests and reported professional career and higher education expectations. Low-SES students, in contrast, encountered structural impediments, i.e., restricted resources, financial instability, and limited social networks that didn't just get in the way of high academic achievement, but also of broad and high career aspirations. These differentials were exacerbated

further by gender and rural-urban differences, with girls from low-income rural families experiencing the greatest difficulties.

Nevertheless, the research also revealed signs of resilience and potential for positive change. Focused interventions, like scholarships, mentorship, and community involvement, have slowly started to change the script for select students, offering them ways out of socioeconomic barriers. But for those efforts to be effective, they need to be scaled and localized. The results centre the importance of a comprehensive, equitable vision of education policy that understands how economic conditions, cultural norms, and institutional supports interact with one another. Compounding these challenges, there is little interconnection between those combating these issues; together, stakeholders can journey toward an Osmanabad in which all children, regardless of their background, can succeed and aspire for a future beyond their own.

7. Conflicts Of Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest related to this study. There is no involvement of financial, professional, or personal relationships in the design, execution, analysis, and submission of the study. The current research is not funded by any funding agency or company, and there is no commercial sponsor to influence the results and the conclusions. Ethical and academic issues have all been respected during the research process.

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