

## **EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENT**

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### **Introduction**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a combined measure of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analyzing a family's SES, the mother's and father's education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed (GOP,2008). The article is based on a study, which is an attempt to explore the various factors that have an impact on achievement, depending upon different socioeconomic status in the society and how does it effect the academic achievement of students. The study also examines the literature that reveals that the socioeconomic status of the parents can significantly contribute in the achievement of good grades at colleges. The paper illustrates the impact of income, occupation on educational attainment of students. The paper delineates the effect of many socioeconomic indicators on individual student achievement.

### **Factors Effecting Socioeconomic Status**

#### **Income**

"Income" can be defined invariably as wages, salaries, profits, rents, and any flow of earnings received. However, another way of looking at revenue generation (income) is in the form of workers compensation, social security, pensions, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance.

Income can be looked at in two terms, relative and absolute. Absolute income, as theorized by economist John Maynard Keynes, is the relationship in which as income increases, so will

consumption, but not at the same rate (Economyprofessor, 2008). Relative income dictates a person or family's savings and consumption based on the family's income in relation to others. Income is a commonly used measure of SES because it is relatively easy to figure for most individuals.

Income inequality is most commonly measured around the world by the Gini coefficient, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 means perfect inequality. Economic inequality in the US is on the rise, leaving low income families struggling in society. Low income families focus on meeting immediate needs and do not accumulate wealth that could be passed on to future generations, thus increasing inequality. Families with higher and expendable income can accumulate wealth and focus on meeting immediate needs while being able to consume and enjoy luxuries and weather crises (Boushev, 2005).

## **Education**

"Educational attainment" corresponds to the SES because it is a cross cutting phenomena for all individuals. An individual's educational attainment is considered to be the bench mark for his over all achievement in life, reflected through his grades or degree.

Consequently, education plays a role in income. Education gives impetus and thus increases earnings. As conveyed in the chart, the highest degrees, professional and doctoral degrees, make the highest weekly earnings while those without a high school diploma are financially penalized. Higher levels of education are associated with better economic and psychological outcomes (i.e.: more income, more control, and greater social support and networking).

Education plays a pivotal role in honing the skills of an individual that makes him/her a ready person to seek and acquire jobs, as well as specific qualities that stratify people with higher SES from lower SES. Annette Lareau speaks on the idea of concerted cultivation, where middle class parents take an active role in their children's education and development by using controlled organized activities and fostering a sense of entitlement through encouraged discussion. Laureau argues that families with lower income do not participate in this movement, causing their children to have a sense of constraint. A division in education attainment is thus born out of these

two differences in child rearing. In theory, lower income families have children who do not succeed to the levels of the middle income children, who feel entitled, are argumentative, and better prepared for adult life (Annette, 2003).

## **Occupation**

"Occupational prestige" as one of the components of SES, comprises income and educational attainment. Occupational status corresponds to the educational attainment of an individual through which, obtaining better jobs, exploring and retaining better positions becomes inevitable and thus improvement in the SES. Occupational status consequently becomes an indicator for our social position/ status in the society, hence, describing job characteristics, decision making ability and emotional control, and psychological demands on the job (termed as emotional genius).

Occupations are ranked by the Census (among other organizations) and opinion polls from the general population are surveyed. Some of the most prestigious occupations are physicians and surgeons, lawyers, chemical and biomedical engineers, computer support specialists, and communications analysts. These jobs, considered to be grouped in the high SES classification, provide more challenging work and ability and greater control over working conditions. Those jobs with lower rankings were food preparation workers, counter attendants, bartenders and helpers, dishwashers, janitors, maids and housekeepers, vehicle cleaners, and parking lot attendants. The jobs that were less valued were also paid significantly less and are more laborious, physically hazardous, and provide less autonomy (Janny & L. David, 2005).

However, it is imperative to say, that occupation may become misleading at times as well to measure an individual's status as in today's modern world, so many exist, and there are so many competing scales. Many scales rank occupations based on the level of skill involved, from unskilled to skilled, manual labor to professional or use a combined measure, using the education level needed and income involved.

In today's world, depletion of resources and recession has caused quite a chaos in the minds of the individuals; usurpation of basic rights of the powerless is the vogue of our society in which

we live. Therefore, identifying the right occupation has also become one dilemma in our society, therefore, in the existing circumstances, occupations that are in line with an individuals education are quite hard to be found, hence, compromises on occupations is inevitable as long as the financial reward addresses the basic needs of an individual allowing him to maintain the social strata in which we survive and interact.

## **Literature Review**

Socioeconomic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on [income](#), [education](#), and occupation. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' [education](#), and occupation are examined, as well as combined income versus an individual, when their own attributes are assessed (Wikipedia Encyclopedia).

A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family), *note Demarest, Reisner, Anderson, Humphrey, Farquhar, and Stein (1993)*. Families with high socioeconomic status often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they typically have access to a wider range of resources to promote, explore and support young children's mental and physical development. The parents have more resources to focus on the needs of a child's growth with regard to his/ her mental and physical care, access to better books, educational toys (edutainment concept) which assist in the grooming of a character. Since the families with a better socioeconomic status do most of the activities together, their togetherness at home also helps in developing better characteristics. These opportunities help parents in understanding the emotional, mental, social, physical, psychological and most of all the cognitive growth or development. Higher socioeconomic status in itself builds the confidence of an individual to face various challenges in life compared to poverty stricken individual who is hopelessly meeting the ends in his life, particularly challenges that children face at school.

Families with low socioeconomic status not only lack financial, social, and educational support from their siblings, peers or the community at larges; they may also be deprived of communal

support around them at crucial times in their life. These are extremely important factors that promote and support child's development and school readiness. Parents with low socioeconomic status find themselves struggling to augment financial resources and lack time for their children in imparting values, good habits, manners, which may even end up in ignorance about immunizations or basic nutrition for their child. Zill, Collins, West, and Hausken (1995) state that "low maternal education and minority-language status are most consistently associated with fewer signs of emerging literacy and a greater number of difficulties in preschoolers." Having inadequate resources and limited access to available resources can negatively affect families' decisions regarding their young children's development and learning. As a result, children from families with low socioeconomic status are at greater risk of entering kindergarten unprepared than their peers from families with median or high socioeconomic status.

Poverty does not become a curse for adults alone but for children more. It is the children who become easy victims to hunger, growth, diseases, physical and mental disabilities, abuse, early marriages, child trafficking, homelessness etc...these are the environmental factors that contribute immensely to children that live in poverty being four times more likely to have learning disabilities than non poverty students (Apple & Zenk, 1996). According to Casanova, Garcia-Linares, Torre and Carpio (2005), it is a combination of these environmental factors as well as family influence that contributes to student academic success. If a student has not eaten for days and has clothes that don't fit, how can he/she be expected to maintain focus in a classroom? Children coming from poverty are not provided the same tools as the wealthy; they are entering schools already behind those not living in similar conditions. According to Li-Grining (2007), research suggests that the problem starts with the parents and their lack of education and understanding of the needs of children.

The nature of the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and student achievement has been debated for decades, with the most influential arguments appearing in *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, et al., 1968) and *Inequality* (Jencks, et al., 1973) in the United States of America, and a number of commissioned inquiries in Australia (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1976; Karmel, 1973). A person's education is closely linked to their life chances, income and well being ( Battle and Lewis, 2002). Therefore it is important to have a clear understanding of what benefits or hinders one's educational attainment.

Socioeconomic background actually sets the road map of achievements. Therefore, since it is the determining factor for academic achievement, we experience in our daily lives as well. There are various topics that closely related to academic performance. It includes the aptitude of the student, his approach to academics, environment of the school, peer pressure and his relationship with the mentors. Therefore, Student Role Performance (SRP) is a term which can be used to describe how well an individual fulfills the role of a student in an educational setting. Gender roles, race, and schools effort, co-curricular activities, deviance are all important influences on SRP and have been shown to effect achievements. These all come under the umbrella of socioeconomic conditions.

Research has found that socioeconomic status, parental involvement and family size are very important factors in students' academic performance (Majorbanks 1996). Family background is a key to student's life and outside of school is the most important influence on student learning. The environment at home is a primary socialization agent and influences a child's interest in school and aspirations for the future.

The socioeconomic status of a student is most commonly determined by combining parent's educational levels, occupational status and income level (Jeynes 2002). Studies have repeatedly found that socioeconomic status (SES) affects student's outcomes (Baharudin and Luster, 2002). What is to be imbibed is that educational attainment correlated with the parental socioeconomic status in conservative and traditional sense, particularly parental education. The study stipulated above and below is meant to examine the impact of parental socioeconomic status on child's education. The study assesses the impact of age, gender, martial status, income, region, and parental socioeconomic status on education from cross-section data collected in 1974 and 2004. These data are from General Social Survey of 1974 and 2004. Multivariate analysis of data shows a moderate decline in the effect of parental education particularly for the younger cohort (25-39). Overall, there is more room for future governmental policies to influence the educational attainment of poor and lower middle class children particularly with respect to attending college.

### **Sample**

This article examines the influence of socioeconomic status on students' achievement using data from the three women colleges situated in district Gujrat. The college students were randomly

selected as respondents for the study, the students were chosen from the colleges which are as follows:

1. Government Degree College for Women, Gujrat
2. Government Ibne-e-Ameer College for Women JPJ, Gujrat
3. Government Degree College for Women, Maraghzar Colony, Gujrat

### **Data and Methodology**

Questionnaire was used in this study as a tool for the data collection to analyze the SES on students' academic achievements. The questionnaire was consisted on twenty eight questions. Data was collected personally and analyzed by drawing percentages of the responses of the students.

There could be many indicators to measure SES but six have been identified to include in this study, which are as follows:

1. Education
2. Occupation
3. Income
4. Material possessed
5. Servants
6. Means of transportation

### **Discussion and Implications**

The data used in this paper are drawn from a questionnaire based on twenty eight questions and these questions are developed on the six indicators of SES. The one indicator is about the level of parents' education and it inquires about the significance of parents' education in the achieving good outcomes in school settings. The data shows that the students of educated parents have secured maximum percentage of marks (68 %). The second question is about the occupation of

father and the data says that the children of Government employees secured more marks (60.02 %) than the private job holders because of the certainty and reliability of the government jobs people feel more secured and the family is at peace relatively. The third questions talks about the occupation of the mother, the maximum percentage of marks that is 64.5% is of students whose mothers are government servant, so it seems that profession of mother too effects the achievement of students to some extent. Income of the family is a great indicator which can very well predict about the mental and physical stability of the family. The data shows that maximum percentage of marks that is 62.09% is of students whose parents' income is above ten thousand rupees. It depicts that economic stability of a family leads to good performance of students at school. In reply of a question about the number of servants at home student's responses show that the maximum percentage of marks that is 69.02% is of those students who do not have servants at their home. Data shows that percentage of marks that is 68.39% is of students who don't work at home, it represents that students who get more time for studies do well in their academic levels. One of the questions asked about the students' participation in debates or co-curricular activates and the responses show that maximum percentage that is 69.54% is of students who participate in debates because they learn a lot from such activities. The percentage of marks 61.94 is of those students who like to ask questions to their parents. They have good relations with their parents and don't feel any hesitation to closely interact with them. Educated parents are always in a better position to guide their children and intermingle with them to bridge the generation gap. On a question about sitting in a class in the first rows or in at the back benchers, the response shows that the percentage of marks that is 62.54% is of students who sit on the front seats in the class. The students who sit on the front seats are more motivated and confident to learn and participate. Hostel plays vital role in the academic achievement of the students. The data shows that the percentage of marks that is 61.54% is of those students who live in the hostels. Perilous transportation also effects academic achievement of students. The study shows that maximum percentage of marks that is 62.23% is of those students who come to college by car. Scholarships are given to high achievers and students with good scholarly caliber. Research shows that 69.93% is of those students who get scholarships. Tuitions were not considered a healthy activity now a days, but because of the low educational standards parents send their children to tuition academies and data indicates that 61.87% of marks abstained by those students who receive tuitions. Physical development fortified mental development. Healthy



body occupies healthy mind. The percentage of marks of students who are not involved in outdoor sports is 59.42%. Information Technology increases the standard of teaching learning process. One question deals with the availability of the computer and its impact on the students' achievement. The percentage of marks that is 61.32% is of students who have computer at their houses. The marks of students who don't use internet is 57.95% and the marks of those students who use internet is 60.13%, so internet is an important, faster and cheaper source of getting knowledge. Helping books can be an additional source for the learning. Textbooks provide limited knowledge to students but other helping books help them learn beyond classroom and inculcate thirst to learn themselves. The percentage of marks of students who use helping books is 63.33% and of student who do not use helping books is 56.19%.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to investigate the effects of socioeconomic status on the achievement of college students. The achievement was measured by the overall marks of college students in Matric and F.Sc level. The sample was drawn randomly from three colleges of Gujrat district. Questionnaire was used as data collection tool. The results were calculated in percentage form. The findings revealed that the stable socioeconomic status of a family reflects in the academic achievement of the students in many ways. It is also concluded that parent's education does matter in the educational attainment of their children. Information Technology and other facilities enhanced the performance of the students and they do well in the schools. Eventually it was proven by the result that stable socioeconomic status of a family brings comfort, positive attitude and healthy environment which leads to high academic achievements at the parts of students.

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