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Relationship between Parental Socio-Economic Background and Children's Educational Aspirations: Evidence from Dooars Tea Garden Communities

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ABSTRACT: The present study examines the socio-economic status of tea garden worker families in the Dooars region and its influence on the educational aspirations of their children. The study adopts a descriptive survey method and is based on a sample of 200 families selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and standardized scales measuring socio-economic status (SES) and educational aspiration levels. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation revealed that 62% of respondents belonged to low SES, while children's educational aspirations were moderate (Mean = 52.4, SD = 10.6). Inferential statistical techniques were used to test three hypotheses. Pearson's correlation ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) indicated a significant positive relationship between parental SES and children's aspirations. The t-test ($t = 3.21$, $p < 0.01$) showed significant differences in aspirations based on parental education. Regression analysis ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) confirmed that parental income significantly predicts children's educational aspirations. The findings highlight the crucial role of socio-economic factors in shaping educational goals and emphasize the need for targeted interventions to improve educational outcomes in marginalized tea garden communities.

KEYWORDS: Parental Education, Family Income, Social Inequality, Rural Communities, Academic Motivation, Educational Attainment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for social transformation and upward mobility, particularly among marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities. In developing countries like India, disparities in socio-economic conditions significantly influence access to education and the aspirations associated with it. Among such marginalized groups, tea garden workers in the Dooars region of West Bengal represent a historically deprived community characterized by low income, limited access to quality education, and poor living conditions (Bhowmik, 2015; Das & Bhowmik, 2020). These structural disadvantages not only affect the present generation but also shape the future prospects and aspirations of their children. Socio-economic status (SES), typically measured through indicators such as income, education, and occupation, plays a crucial role in determining educational opportunities and outcomes (Sirin, 2005). Families with higher SES are more likely to provide better educational resources, supportive learning environments, and exposure to broader career possibilities. Conversely, children from low SES backgrounds often face multiple barriers, including inadequate school infrastructure, lack of parental guidance, and financial constraints, which may limit their educational aspirations (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In the context of tea garden communities, these challenges are further exacerbated by geographic isolation and socio-cultural marginalization (Banerjee, 2017). Educational aspiration refers to the level of education an individual desires to achieve and is considered a key predictor of academic success and future socio-economic mobility (Khattab, 2015). Aspirations are shaped by a complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors. Among these, parental socio-economic background has been identified as one of the most influential determinants. Parents with higher educational attainment and stable income are more likely to encourage their children to pursue higher education, whereas those with limited education may lack awareness or resources to support such ambitions (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). The tea garden workers of the Dooars region have a unique socio-historical background. Originally brought during the colonial period as indentured laborers, these communities have remained socially and economically marginalized for generations (Chakraborty, 2013). Despite various government initiatives aimed at improving educational access, literacy rates and school retention levels among tea garden populations remain



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significantly lower than national averages (Government of India, 2021). This persistent inequality raises important questions about the role of socio-economic factors in shaping the educational aspirations of children in these communities. Previous studies have highlighted the strong correlation between socio-economic status and educational outcomes. For instance, Sirin (2005) conducted a meta-analytic review and found a consistent positive relationship between SES and academic achievement. Similarly, Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009) emphasized that parental education and income significantly influence children's long-term educational and occupational aspirations. In the Indian context, Desai and Kulkarni (2008) observed that socio-economic disparities continue to affect educational participation and attainment across different social groups. However, there is a relative paucity of empirical research focusing specifically on tea garden communities, particularly in the Dooars region. Understanding the relationship between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations is essential for designing effective educational policies and interventions. Aspirations not only reflect individual goals but also indicate the perceived possibilities within a given socio-economic context. Low aspirations may perpetuate cycles of poverty and social exclusion, while higher aspirations can motivate individuals to overcome structural barriers (Appadurai, 2004). Therefore, examining this relationship in marginalized settings like tea garden communities is of critical importance. The present study aims to fill this research gap by adopting a descriptive survey method to analyze the socio-economic status of tea garden worker families and its influence on their children's educational aspirations. By employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how socio-economic variables such as parental education and income impact aspiration levels. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on educational inequality and offer insights for policymakers, educators, and social workers working towards inclusive development.

The intersection of socio-economic status and educational aspiration is a crucial area of inquiry, particularly in contexts marked by historical marginalization and economic deprivation. The tea garden communities of Dooars present a compelling case for such an investigation. By exploring the dynamics between parental background and children's aspirations, this study endeavors to highlight the structural challenges and potential pathways for enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes among one of the most vulnerable sections of society.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To examine the socio-economic status of tea garden worker families in the Dooars region.
- 2) To assess the level of educational aspirations among children of tea garden workers.
- 3) To analyze the relationship between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations.

Hypotheses:

- 1) H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations.
- 2) H_{02} : There is no significant difference in educational aspirations of children based on parental educational level.
- 3) H_{03} : Parental income does not significantly predict children's educational aspirations.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a **descriptive survey method** to examine the relationship between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations among tea garden communities in the Dooars region. This method is appropriate as it facilitates the systematic collection and analysis of data to describe existing conditions and explore relationships among variables.

Research Design

The study follows a **quantitative research design** with a relational approach, aiming to identify associations between socio-economic variables and educational aspirations.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of tea garden worker families in the Dooars region of West Bengal. A sample of **200 respondents** (parents and their children) was selected using a **stratified random sampling technique** to ensure representation from different tea gardens and socio-economic strata (low, middle, and high SES categories).



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Variables of the Study

- **Independent Variable:** Parental Socio-Economic Status (SES)
- **Dependent Variable:** Children's Educational Aspirations

Tools for Data Collection

1. **Socio-Economic Status Scale (SES):** A standardized scale measuring parental education, occupation, and income.
2. **Educational Aspiration Scale:** A structured questionnaire designed to assess the level of children's educational goals and expectations.
3. **Personal Information Schedule:** Used to collect demographic details such as age, gender, and family background.

Procedure of Data Collection

Data were collected through field visits to selected tea garden areas. Respondents were approached personally, and the purpose of the study was explained to them. Questionnaires were administered in a simple and understandable language, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Statistical Techniques Used

Both **descriptive and inferential statistics** were employed for data analysis:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to summarize socio-economic status and educational aspiration levels.
- **Inferential Statistics:**
 - **Pearson's Correlation** to examine the relationship between SES and educational aspirations.
 - **t-test** to analyze differences in aspirations based on parental education.
 - **Regression Analysis** to determine the predictive effect of parental income on children's aspirations.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 200 tea garden worker families in the Dooars region. The primary objective of the study is to examine the socio-economic status (SES) of parents and its relationship with the educational aspirations of their children. The data were analysed using both **descriptive statistics** (mean, percentage, standard deviation) and **inferential statistics** (Pearson's correlation, t-test, and regression analysis). The results are presented systematically in tables followed by an interpretation.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Economic Status (SES)

| SES Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Low | 124 | 62% |
| Middle | 56 | 28% |
| High | 20 | 10% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |

Interpretation:

Table 1.1 reveals that the majority of the respondents (62%) belong to the **low socio-economic category**, followed by 28% in the middle category and only 10% in the high category. This clearly indicates that tea garden worker families in the Dooars region largely experience economic deprivation. The low-income levels, limited occupational opportunities, and low educational attainment of parents contribute to their poor socio-economic conditions. Such conditions are likely to influence children's educational opportunities and aspirations.



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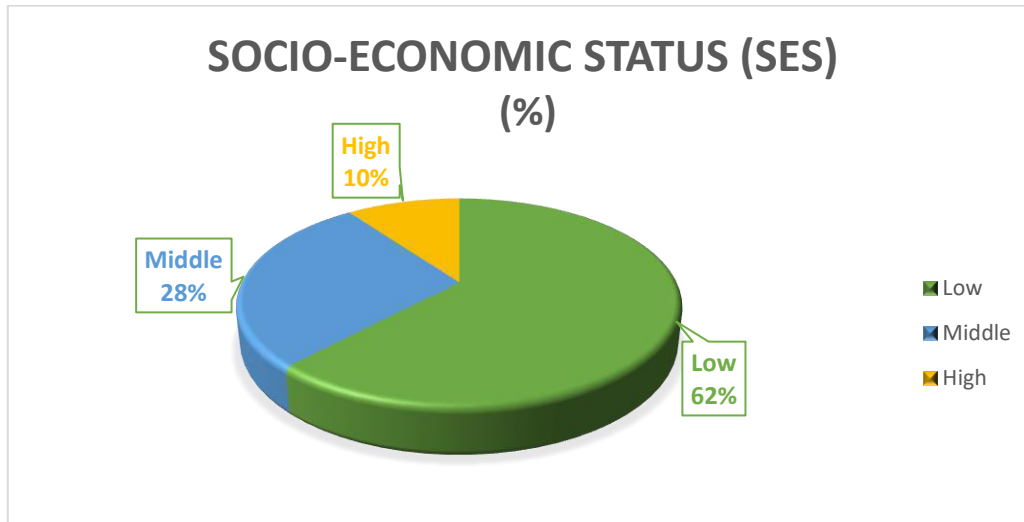


Fig. 1: Socio-Economic Status (SES) (%)

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of SES and Educational Aspirations

| Variables | N | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Socio-Economic Status (SES) | 200 | 45.30 | 11.20 |
| Educational Aspirations | 200 | 52.40 | 10.60 |

Interpretation:

The mean score of SES (45.30) indicates that the overall socio-economic level of the respondents is relatively low. The standard deviation (11.20) suggests moderate variability in SES among families.

Similarly, the mean score of educational aspirations (52.40) reflects a **moderate level of aspiration** among children. The standard deviation (10.60) indicates variation in aspiration levels, which may be influenced by differences in family background, parental education, and exposure to educational opportunities. Despite economic challenges, children show a reasonable level of aspiration, indicating their desire for better future prospects.

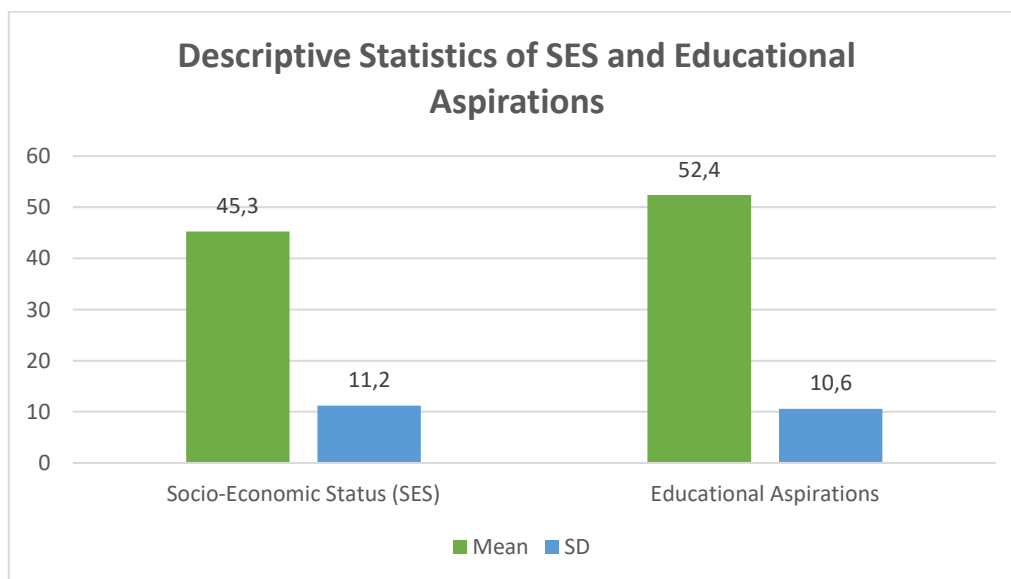


Fig-2: Descriptive Statistics of SES and Educational Aspirations



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IV. INFERENCE ANALYSIS

Testing of Hypothesis (H_{01})

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations.

Table 3: Correlation between SES and Educational Aspirations

| Variables | N | r-value | Sig. (p-value) |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|----------------|
| SES & Educational Aspirations | 200 | 0.58 | 0.000 (<0.01) |

Interpretation:

Table- 3 shows the correlation between parental socio-economic status and children's educational aspirations. The obtained **correlation coefficient ($r = 0.58$)** indicates a **moderate positive relationship** between the two variables. This suggests that an increase in socio-economic status is associated with an increase in educational aspirations among children.

The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.01, indicating that the result is statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is **rejected**, and it is concluded that a significant relationship exists between SES and educational aspirations.

Testing of Hypothesis (H_{02})

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in educational aspirations based on parental educational level.

Table 4: t-test for Educational Aspirations Based on Parental Education

| Group | N | Mean | SD | t-value | Sig. (p-value) |
|-----------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------|----------------|
| Low Educated Parents | 110 | 48.20 | 9.80 | 3.21 | 0.001 (<0.01) |
| High Educated Parents | 90 | 57.10 | 10.20 | | |

Interpretation:

Table-4 indicates that children of highly educated parents have a higher mean score (57.10) compared to children of less educated parents (48.20). The calculated t-value (3.21) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is **rejected**, indicating that parental education significantly influences children's educational aspirations. Educated parents are more likely to guide, motivate, and support their children in pursuing higher education.

Testing of Hypothesis (H_{03})

H_{03} : Parental income does not significantly predict children's educational aspirations.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Parental Income and Educational Aspirations

| Predictor Variable | β (Beta) | t-value | Sig. (p-value) |
|--------------------|----------------|---------|----------------|
| Parental Income | 0.46 | 5.12 | 0.000 (<0.01) |

Interpretation:

Table -5 shows the results of the Oregression analysis. The beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.46$) indicates that parental income has a **moderate positive effect** on children's educational aspirations. The t-value (5.12) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, as indicated by the p-value (0.000).

Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is **rejected**, confirming that parental income is a significant predictor of children's educational aspirations. Families with higher income levels are better able to provide educational resources, thereby enhancing children's aspirations.



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Findings:

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. A large proportion (62%) of tea garden worker families belong to the **low socio-economic category**, reflecting economic deprivation.
2. Children of these families exhibit a **moderate level of educational aspiration**, despite socio-economic challenges.
3. There exists a **significant positive correlation** between parental SES and children's educational aspirations ($r = 0.58$).
4. Parental education significantly influences children's aspirations, as indicated by the t-test results.
5. Parental income is a strong predictor of educational aspirations, as confirmed by regression analysis.

V. CONCLUSION

The analysis clearly demonstrates that parental socio-economic status plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational aspirations in tea garden communities of the Dooars region. The rejection of all three null hypotheses indicates that SES, parental education, and income significantly influence aspiration levels. The findings suggest that improving socio-economic conditions, enhancing parental awareness, and providing better educational support can help raise the aspirations of children in marginalized communities. Therefore, targeted interventions such as scholarships, awareness programs, and improved school facilities are essential to promote educational advancement among tea garden populations.

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