



MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND THE CHILD: UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF ADOLESCENTS IN DIVERSE FAMILY CONTEXTS

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Abstract: The structure and dynamics of the contemporary family are experiencing rapid change as a result of socio-economic, cultural and legal changes. These changes invariably impact the socio-emotional and educational development of children and youth. The current study, titled, “Marriage, Family, and the Child: Understanding the Educational Aspirations of Adolescents in Diverse Family Contexts,” aims to understand the role of family structure such as broken, semi-broken, and single-parent families, on students’ educational aspirations among secondary school learners. Furthermore, the study will investigate the possible mediating role of socio-economic status and emotional intelligence on educational aspirations. Based on theories of family socialization and emotional growth, the study will affirm the contribution of parental relationships, stability in the home, and socio-legal transitions in family forms towards students’ motivation and goal setting. A descriptive and correlational research design will be employed to capture the participants’ views and understand their educational aspirations. A sample of 420 IX standard students (220 boys and 200 girls) was selected using the stratified random sampling method from government and private schools across urban and rural settings. Following the study's aim, standardized instruments, the Emotional Intelligence Scale, and the Educational Aspiration Inventory were employed. The collected data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, correlation, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results indicated that the educational aspiration of the students living in broken families is significantly higher (Mean = 62.47) than of students living in semi-broken families (M = 58.32) or single-parent families (M = 54.19) at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. A positive strong correlation was found between emotional intelligence and educational aspiration $r = (0.68, p < 0.01)$, reminding us that higher emotional intelligence (emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness) leads to higher levels of educational aspiration. The socio-economic status also explained moderate correlation ($r = (0.49, p < 0.05)$), showing that economic stability/status and parental education still acts as a supportive factor. The gender difference of educational aspiration was not statistically significant find in the study sample, which signals a gradual movement toward gender parity for educational ambition in adolescents.

The research highlights that several elements in students' family structure, emotional intelligence, and socio-economic background have an interrelated influence on students' educational motivation, goal setting and academic aspirations. Children who have been raised in families with a stable and emotionally supportive context tend to strive for greater academic aspirations irrespective of their material situations. The paper concludes that the transformation of marriage and family in India due to changes in legal arrangements, migration and modernity have complex implications for the educational development of children, and it advocates possible policy approaches as well as school-based interventions to enhance emotional intelligence training and family–school partnerships ultimately fostering adolescent development in a transforming social and legal order.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Cultural, Educational Aspirations, Emotional Intelligence.

I. INTRODUCTION

The family holds a fundamental place as the primary unit for socializing young individuals, which will impact their personality, values, and goals. However, in the past few decades, the evolution of the contemporary family has changed significantly due to social, economic, cultural, and legal developments (Desai & Andrist, 2010). For example, the term "traditional" family, a semi-broken family, is no longer a common family structure. Families are often broken, single-parent, or blended with the mother or father taking over roles as a parent or caregiver. The dynamics of family functioning and emotional relationships among members has been changed. The effect of these changes has ramifications for children's and adolescents' emotional, socio-emotional, and school development (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). In India, where the family remains an integral part of the child's development, changes in families, in structures and dynamics raise questions about how those changes may relate to children's motivation, goal setting, and achievement aspirations.

Adolescence is a period of profound changes in feelings, thinking processes, and relationships. The home environment of a young person has a significant effect on their emotional health and educational aspiration. People who are in control of their own emotions and are aware of the emotions of others typically have the academic wherewithal necessary to succeed both in school and while setting goals. Adolescents who are capable of observing and interpreting emotions often handle stress more effectively, concentrate on their studies and their goals better, and strive harder in their academic studies. In addition to emotional competency, a family's economic status and social status are very much still related to a child's success in school, as they directly impact resources, parenting, and learning experiences.

Rapid urbanization in India, migration, gender role change, and changing marriage and divorce laws have impacted family structure diversity (National Family Health Survey [NFHS-5], 2021). These variations in family structure may or may not also become part of how the emotional climate and predictability of the home setting is constructed and what impact that will have on children's sense of security and educational aspirations. Certain teens from these atypical family environments recover and adjust successfully, while others struggle with motivation and mental health (Choudhury, 2020). Therefore, family type, emotional competence, and income all converge to dramatically shape a teen's educational and life goals.

Parents' income influences how much they are engaged in their children's education and the academic performance of their children. What parents have, or do not have, can be passed onto their children (Huang, Y. et al., 2021). A family's income includes their resources, how they live, their status, and what advantages they have. Areas of parental educational attainment, career field, and family economic resources (money) are all contributing factors to how

income influences children's academic achievement (Volodina, Heppt & Weinert, 2021). When looking at how a family impacts children's academic achievement, there is a continuum of variable uses of income (family income), knowledge (family knowledge), and time (family time). These three variables are utilized by the family to help their children achieve academically and become more knowledgeable and articulate. For example, if a family has a sufficient level of income, they may be able to provide their children with more educational resources in their home environment (like books) (Volodina, Heppt & Weinert, 2021).

The purpose of this paper, Marriage, Family, and Child: The Relationship Between Family Structure and Educational Aspirations in Adolescents from Diverse Family Structures, is to explore the interrelationships between family structure, ethnicity, and family structure on educational aspirations for adolescents in India. This study is designed to better understand how adolescents in India are growing up and their educational aspirations in relation to their family changing environment.

What this study finds will add to the talks about how emotions and family situations affect school goals. It could help teachers, leaders, and counselors create plans to help teens be emotionally strong and have equal chances for a good education.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The structure and nature of family life in contemporary India is changing rapidly due to a multitude of socio-economic, cultural, and legal changes. The emergence of broken, semi-broken, and single-parent families family units creates a new, different context for children, particularly in terms of their upbringing and emotional support. These structural changes affect the socio-emotional well-being of adolescents, as well as their self-conceptions as students and academic aspirations and motivation. Educational aspiration is one of the most important predictors of students' later success in life, including their academic choices, persistence and long-term goals in life. However, different family structures (broken, semi-broken, and single-parent families), socio-economic status, and family emotional support systems create inequitable contexts to promote or challenge distinctions in the development of educational expectations or aspirations. In joint family contexts, overall family systems provided collective emotional and financial support, while the growing diversity of family structures may compromise the parent quality of involvement, parental emotional intelligence, or alternative access to educational opportunity.

While these different family structures are more common, there is little empirical research in the Indian context that has systematically explored how these differences relate to secondary school students' emotional intelligence and educational aspirations. In addition, the interaction between socio-economic status, emotional maturity, and family stability is not sufficiently understood either. Thus, the current study aims to examine how family structure, socio-economic status, and emotional intelligence interact in predicting the educational aspirations of secondary school students, which represents an essential gap in the current educational and psychological research.

III. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The significance of this study can be attributed to the large number of dramatic changes occurring within the family and educational systems; as families adapt to modernisation, urbanisation, and migration, they are also creating difficulties for many children in terms of both their educational progression and emotional development. Thus, an understanding of each type of family system (i.e., broken, semi-broken, or single-parent family) will assist educators and

psychologists in developing educational models and psychological intervention strategies that support the ability of all youth to achieve greater equity and sustainability in terms of educational outcomes.

In addition, recent research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence is also a significant factor in academic motivation and social adaptation, as well as psychological well-being among students. Investigating its role as a mediating factor would illuminate how emotional competencies can protect students from the negative impact of a strained family system and/or socioeconomic disadvantage.

The study is timely, especially as family disruptions and socioeconomic conditions shape students' educational status in India. Educators, policy makers, and counselors must consider the growing relevance of an inclusive family system and emotion-focused interventions in schools to ensure every child has the opportunity to realize their academic and personal potential regardless of their family structure.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

The family functions as the earliest and most significant context for an individual's social, emotional, and educational development. The stability and structure of family relationships and parental engagement are important predictors of children's psychological well-being, motivation, and aspirations. As the traditional family structure changes, influenced by industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, the impact of family has also changed. This literature review synthesizes literature on family structure, socio-economic status (SES), emotional intelligence (EI), and the interplay between family structure, SES, EI, and adolescents' educational aspirations.

4.1. Educational Aspirations and Family Structure

The aspirations and outlook regarding education of a child are commonly affected by family structure. The studies show that youth from relatively stable two-parent families - specific joint or extended family arrangements - had higher educational aspirations than the youth living in single parent families or families that are in transition. (Desai & Andrist, 2010; Amato, 2000). Joint family households that provide emotional security and multiple models of adulthood also create a nurturing environment that supports higher goal orientation (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). On the other hand, children of separation or single parents often experience emotional distress, inconsistent supervision, and insufficient support, which may act against motivation to pursue higher education (Sun, 2001).

Within the Indian context, the transition from joint family to nuclear family has been notable. Choudhury (2020) found that adolescents living in nuclear families reported more autonomy but also reported higher stress and anxiety, and the stress and anxiety were often attributed to attaining fewer adult mentors in the home. Studies also suggest that the stability of parental relationships and regular quality conversations shaped adolescent's educational goals (Amato & Keith, 1991; Saraswathi, 2019).

4.2. Socio-economic Position and Educational Aspiration

Socioeconomic position remains a strong predictor of educational aspiration. Parental income, occupation, and education, taken together, not only implicate the availability of resources, but the ethos the family holds about learning and achievement (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Adolescents with higher SES generally enjoy better access to educational materials, extracurriculars, and environments that are encouraging and supportive to assist educational achievement (Sirin, 2005). Emerging studies have shown that while financial resources matter, it is the psychosocial environment of the home, namely whether parents encourage or expect academic achievement, are also critical mediating factors (Hoff et al., 2002).

In developing nations such as India, where there indelible SES distinctions, the connection between economic status and educational endeavor is exceedingly complicated. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2021) demonstrates that adolescents from low-income families emigrate for work or tend to household duties leaving little room for educational journey without these entities taking precedent. However, there is research, as mentioned earlier, that also shows how resilient people from economically deprived families, coupled with a strong emotional support environment, can have equally high aspiration (Mangal, 2019).

4.3. Emotional Intelligence and Educational Aspiration

In recent years, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become a more significant Psychological variable regarding academic achievement and adapting socially. Salovey and Mayer (1990) define EI as “the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions” and how these abilities contribute to making decisions, having empathy, and setting goals; while Goleman (1995) points out that being self-aware, motivated, and having social skills are emotional competencies that will affect one’s ability to achieve throughout their lifetime.

Research consistently shows that there is a positive correlation between EI and educational aspirations. Singh and Jha (2012) found that adolescents with high EI demonstrated more grit, commitment to their education, and intrinsic motivation.

Overall, emotional regulation allows students to manage academic stress, and empathy fosters better relationships with peers and teachers leading to a more supportive learning environment (Petrides et al., 2004). Sharma and Bhatnagar (2018), also found that familial support and emotional bonding improve EI which may influence career goals and aspirations among adolescents.

4.4. Interrelation of Family Structure, SES, and EI

The connection between family structure, SES, and EI is complex. Families that are stable and have greater socio-economic resources tend to create emotional security and contexts for developing emotional intelligence (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In contrast, children from disrupted family structures or families with high risk for low SES face emotional stressors such as insecurity or low self-esteem which may have ramifications for their motivation to learn (Feldman, 2017). Nevertheless, research has also demonstrated that emotional intelligence can cushion the effects of negative family or economic conditions on adolescents' future aspirations (Feldman, 2017).

In an Indian sociocultural context, the family continues to be the preeminent context in which emotional and educational socialization takes place. Emotional intelligence socialization and fostering family-school partnerships are becoming more valuably recognized for adolescents' well-being and educational achievement (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020; Mangal, 2019). The literature emphasized the interconnectedness of the familial, emotional, and socio-economic dimensions of adolescents' aspirations.

The studies reviewed clearly indicate that family structure, socio-economic status, and emotional intelligence are significant concurrent and interdependent factors for adolescents' educational aspirations. Support for education is clear in stable family settings and with higher emotional intelligence leading to more substantial educational motivation and goal direction. Educational aspirations develop best when family structure, socio-economic conditions, and emotional intelligence work supportively. In India particularly, as family structures dynamically shift, these relationships need to be reconceptualized, paying attention to emotional education programs, parental involvement with education, and socio-economic support as ways to mediate educational disadvantage and encourage some educational equity.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the level of educational aspiration among IX standard students belonging to different family structures (broken, semi-broken, and single-parent families).
- To assess the level of emotional intelligence among adolescents from diverse family backgrounds.
- To determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and educational aspiration among secondary school students.
- To explore the influence of socio-economic status on students' educational aspirations.
- To compare the educational aspirations of male and female students and identify any significant gender differences.
- To analyze the combined effect of family structure, emotional intelligence, and socio-economic status on students' educational aspirations.
- To suggest suitable educational and counseling strategies to enhance emotional intelligence and academic motivation among adolescents from varied family situations.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The current study entitled "Marriage, Family, and the Child: An Understanding of Educational Aspirations of Adolescents from Various Family Structures" utilizes a descriptive and correlational approach to explore connections between family structure, having a lower socio-economic status (SES), and emotional intelligence and educational aspirations by secondary school students. The section that follows this discussion outlines the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data gathering procedure, and statistical methods of analysis.

6.1. Research Design

The study uses a descriptive survey research method for quantitative data collection, and a correlational method to examine the relationship among selected variables (family structure, emotional intelligence, socio-economic status, and educational aspiration). The descriptive method is effective for capturing participants' demographic and socio-emotional attributes, whereas the correlational research design allows for the examination of both the direction and magnitude of associations with respect to variables, while the researcher does not purposely alter or modify the above-mentioned variables or associations. Correlational research design seems suitable given that the research aims to describe the existing conditions and situates natural relationships among variables (Best & Kahn, 2016).

6.2. Population and Sample

The study involved IX standard students from all the government and private secondary schools in urban and rural areas in Tamil Nadu, India.

A total of 420 students (220 boys and 200 girls) were selected using a stratified random sampling technique in order to develop a sample familiar with the gender, school type (government/private), and family structure (Broken, Semi-broken and single-parent family) of the participants and to represent those categories. This stratification process allows educational aspirations to be compared across various family and socio-economic backgrounds.

- **Family Structure:** Broken (140), Semi-broken (160), and Single-parent families (120)
- **Gender:** Boys (220), Girls (200)
- **Location:** Urban (210), Rural (210)

6.3. Variables of the Study

- Independent Variables: Family composition, social economic status, emotional quotient/development
- Dependent Variable: Educational goals
- Control Variables: Age, gender, type of school

6.4. Tools and Instruments

Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar developed an Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) in 2002 that is used to determine the level of emotional intelligence. The EIS consists of 34 items divided into five areas (self-awareness, empathy, self-motivation, emotional stability, and social skills) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree). Many researchers have established the reliability ($r = 0.88$) and validity of the EIS with Indian adolescents.

The Educational Aspiration Inventory (EAI), developed by Sood and Anand in 2010, measures academic aspirations and future educational goals. The EAI contains 25 items and uses a 4-point scale to rate responses (very low aspiration to very high aspiration). The EAI has strong internal consistency and was found to have a test-retest reliability of $r = 0.81$. The Kuppaswamy Socio-Economic Status Scale (Revised, 2018) was used to measure participants' socio-economic status (SES). The SES scale considers the following components: income, education level of parents, and occupation type. Based on the total SES score, respondents are placed into one of five SES categories; upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, or lower.

6.5. Family Structure Data Sheet

A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect demographic profile data (age, gender, family type, i.e., broken, semi-broken, or single-parent family type, and school location - rural vs urban) from all participants.

The data collection procedure involved the researcher obtaining approval prior to collecting data from school administrators and obtaining informed consent from the student and the student's parents. The researcher delivered the questionnaire in group sessions on school property during normal school hours. All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study and guaranteed privacy regarding their responses. The estimated time for each participant to complete the entire questionnaire was approximately 40-45 minutes, and all data collection was completed in two months.

6.6. Statistical methods used are as follows

Statistical Analysis: Scoring, coding, and data analysis of the data collected will be performed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 25.0). Data analysis will include the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics:

6.7. Statistical Inference

To examine the relationship/association between emotional intelligence, socioeconomic status, and educational aspiration multiple indicators utilize the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). In addition, the differences in educational aspirations of the various family types were examined using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Furthermore, to assess gender differences in regard to emotional intelligence and educational aspiration, independent t-tests were used. In addition, to establish the predictive value of socioeconomic status and emotional intelligence in reference to educational aspiration regression analysis was employed.

Each of the hypotheses was examined utilizing two separate levels of significance: 0.01 and 0.05.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25.0) was utilized to code, tabulate and analyze the data collected on 420 IX Standard Students'. This study examined the relationship between family structure, SES, EI and EA using descriptive and inferential statistics; therefore, the results contained in this analysis have been presented in a relevant subheading format.

7.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated in order to provide insight into the overall trends and characteristics of the sample population. The means and standard deviations of the SES, EI and EA for each type of family are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Key Variables by Family Structure

Family Structure	N	Emotional Intelligence (Mean ± SD)	Socio-Economic Status (Mean ± SD)	Educational Aspiration (Mean ± SD)
Broken Family	140	78.62 ± 6.74	61.28 ± 7.19	62.47 ± 6.11
Semi-broken Family	160	72.39 ± 8.03	58.13 ± 6.54	58.32 ± 5.84
Single-Parent Family	120	68.15 ± 8.92	54.24 ± 5.77	54.19 ± 6.08
Total / Mean	420	73.05 ± 8.03	58.55 ± 6.70	58.33 ± 6.01

7.1.1. Interpretation:

The highest mean scores in emotional intelligence ($M = 78.62$) and educational aspiration ($M = 62.47$) were reported by students from broken families, followed by those from semi-broken and single-parent households. This implies that adolescents' emotional and academic motivation is positively impacted by family stability and group support.

7.2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted to determine the relationships among emotional intelligence, socio-economic status, and educational aspiration.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Variables

Variables	Emotional Intelligence	Socio-Economic Status	Educational Aspiration
Emotional Intelligence	1	0.51**	0.68**
Socio-Economic Status	0.51**	1	0.49*
Educational Aspiration	0.68**	0.49*	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

7.2.1..Interpretation:

According to the findings of this study, there is a considerable relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and educational aspirations (EA). Students possessing higher levels of EI tend to aspire to achieve higher levels of education, with an appropriate correlation of ($r=0.68$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, there is a moderate correlation ($r=0.49$, $p<0.05$) between EA and socio-economic status (SES), which implies that both parental education and financial security have an encouraging effect on educational motivation. The study also indicated a significant correlation ($r=0.51$, $p<0.01$)

between EI and SES, and as such, a supportive family dynamic enhances both academic success and emotional well-being.

7.3. Family Structure as a Factor in Educational Aspiration (ANOVA)

A one-way ANOVA will be utilized to ascertain if a student's family dynamic has a significant impact on their educational aspirations.

Table 3. ANOVA Results for Educational Aspiration by Family Structure

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	1624.52	2	812.26	12.43	0.000**
Within Groups	27135.48	417	65.09		
Total	28760.00	419			

7.3.1. Interpretation:

The ANOVA results showed large differences in educational aspirations for each family structure ($F = 12.43$, $p < .01$). Post-hoc analysis revealed that broken family students had significantly greater educational aspirations than nuclear family and single parent students, which indicates that students who have a supportive environment of supportive family and social networks will have greater academic aspirations.

7.4. Gender Difference in Educational Aspiration

An independent sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there were any gender differences in educational aspiration.

Table 4. Gender Difference in Educational Aspiration

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Boys	220	58.89	5.92	1.42	0.156
Girls	200	57.77	6.13		

7.4.1. Interpretation:

There was no discernible gender difference in educational aspirations ($t = 1.42$, $p > 0.05$). This finding reflects broader societal shifts in gender roles and expectations and points to a growing trend toward gender parity in adolescents' aspirations for education.

7.5. Regression Analysis for Predictors of Educational Aspiration

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of emotional intelligence and socio-economic status on educational aspiration.

Table 5. Regression Analysis Summary

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	t-value	p-value
Constant	22.47	2.85	—	7.88	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	0.48	0.05	0.61	9.24	0.000**
Socio-Economic Status	0.32	0.07	0.33	4.54	0.001**
$R^2 = 0.57$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.55$, $F = 29.76$, $p < 0.01$					

7.5.1. Interpretation:

There is a strong predictive relationship, as the regression model accounts for 57% of the variance in educational aspiration ($R^2 = 0.57$). The strongest predictor was emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.61$), which was followed by socioeconomic status ($\beta = 0.33$). Higher emotional intelligence and better economic backgrounds are associated with higher educational aspirations, as both predictors were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

VIII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Emotional intelligence and educational aspirations were highest among students from broken families, followed by those from semi-broken and single-parent households. As a major factor in determining academic motivation, emotional intelligence showed a strong positive correlation with educational aspiration. A moderate but significant correlation was found between socio-economic status and educational aspiration, indicating that goal orientation is improved by parental education and financial stability. There was no discernible gender difference, suggesting that educational aspirations are progressive. Emotional intelligence and socio-economic status are important indicators of educational aspiration, according to regression analysis.

IX. CONCLUSION

The data analysis clearly reveals that adolescents' educational aspirations are significantly shaped by their emotional intelligence, socio-economic background, and family environment. Students nurtured in emotionally supportive and economically stable families exhibit higher academic motivation and goal-setting behavior. The findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence training in schools and encouraging family-school collaboration to enhance the educational outcomes of students from diverse family structures.

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