

**Influence of Parental Socio-Economic Status on Students'
Academic Performance: Experience from Pokhara University,
Nepal**

**Deepak Neupane
Santosh Kumar Gurung**

Abstract

This study focuses on the relationship between parent's socioeconomic status and student's academic performance in different graduate and undergraduate programs offered by constituent colleges of Pokhara University. The total sample of the present study was 301 students who have been pursuing their respective academic degrees. The sampling design was based on a purposive convenient method. Structured questionnaire technique was used to obtain quantitative data related to parental socio – economic status and academic performance of students. The results revealed that parental socio - economic status and parent's level of education does not have a significant relationship with academic performance of students. However, the occupation of parents has a greater impact on academic performance of students. Moreover, the residence of the students has a significant impact on the academic performance of the students. The findings of the study also reveal that family financial status is more important determinant of school level academic grades, however, its influence in college level grades is relatively low. Although, parent's educational status is found to be associated with academic achievement, father's employment nature and family expenditure level were found to be the most significant determinants of academic

achievement of students. However, the relationship is true only up to the school level academic performance.

यो अध्ययनले पोखरा विश्वविद्यालय अर्न्तगतका विभिन्न कलेजहरूले संचलान गरेका स्नातकोत्तर तथा स्नातक कार्यक्रमका अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति र विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धि बीचको सम्बन्धलाई उज्जर गरेको छ । यस अनुसंधानको लागि अहिले पढ्दै गरेका ३०१ विद्यार्थीहरूलाई छनौट गरिएको थियो । यस खोजका नमूना विद्यार्थीहरू परपोशिभ कनभेनियन्ट (उद्देश्यपरक सुविधाजनक) विधिबाट छनौट गरिएको थियो । साथै अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति र विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिसंग समबन्धित गुणात्मक तथ्यांकहरू स्टरचकर कोइशनारहरू (संरचनात्मक प्रश्नावली) विधिको प्रयोग गरेर संकलन गरिएको थियो । यस अध्ययनले अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति तथा अभिभावकहरूको शैक्षिक स्तरले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा खाखै असर नपार्ने देखाँउछ । यदपि अभिभावकहरूका पेशाले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा ठूलो प्रभाव पार्छ । यसबाहेक विद्यार्थीहरूको बसोबासले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा ठूलो प्रभाव पार्छ । यस अनुसंधानले यो पनि देखाँउछ कि परिवारको आर्थिक अवस्थाले विद्यार्थीको कलेज स्तरको शिक्षा भन्दा विद्यालय स्तरको शिक्षामा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्छ । यदपि अभिभावकको शैक्षिक स्थिति विद्यार्थीको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिसंग जोडिएको छ , बुवाको रोजगारी प्रकृति र पारिवारिले खर्च गर्ने क्षमताले विद्यार्थीको विद्यालय स्तरको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा निर्णयक भूमिका खेल्छ ।

Keywords: Socioeconomic status, academic performance, graduate and undergraduate students, parents

Education is an indispensable human right, key to sustainable development, a tool for the advantageous participation in societies which enhances peace and stability amongst countries (Ninomiya, 2003). Melgosa and Posse (2002) found three environments namely family, school and community that must come with the educational process and to realize a successful educational process, there is the necessity of harmonizing the objectives of these three environments.

Education helps individuals and society to acquire knowledge, ability and skills that enables to participate effectively in the development process. For this purpose, practical curriculum is designed, teaching materials are prepared and lessons are disseminated through formal programs. Moreover, students' achievement is not totally realized in a position they are supposed to be, and thus the performance gap is also realized through the studies. In this case, according to Schiefelbein and Simmons (cited in Abera, 1993), a major question of what makes a difference in students' achievement? has been the major problem in the field of educational research which has attracted researchers from various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and economics. Thus, the interest in

enhancing the level of performance leads to identify the factors that promote students achievement either at each subject or in general.

According to Kurdek and Sinclair (2000), Tavani and Losh (2003), Admasu (2004), expectation of the parents, influence of the group, socio-economic status, structure of the family, involvement of the parents in their children's schooling, behavior of the children, academic self-concept, and environment of the school are some of the major factors which can affect the achievement and learning activities of the students. Ford and Harris (1997) made a research on parental influences on African-American students' school achievements and emphasized mainly on parents' level of education, marital status and family income as the major determinants and came to conclude that children from the parents of high and middle socio-economic families realize a better learning environment at home. Ngorosho (2010) made a study in the rural area of eastern Tanzania and came up with four major variables namely, father's and mother's education, source of light, household materials and the academic materials such as books as significant indicators essential for learning. The conclusion revealed that the parent's socio-economic status, involvement of the parents in their children's learning activities and the educational achievement are greatly associated.

The study regarding the influence of the family financial status, parents' level of education, parents' occupation, parents' expenditure on education and residence on the students' academic performance has not yet been studied simultaneously, so the comparative obvious results regarding the major determinants were not extracted regarding the dominant one in the actual practice. Thus, the goal of this study is to examine and make the comparative analysis regarding the most influencing factor amongst the variables under consideration. Moreover, most of the studies are based on the primary and secondary level education, which has guided and motivated students to conduct research on the students of university level and even from the various disciplines.

Literature Review

This study is based upon the theoretical concept of social capital theory. Accordingly, this theory was first introduced by French Philosopher Pieere Bourdieu, also regarded as Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (1977). According to this theory, the academic achievement of the student depends upon the cultural capital inherited

from the family rather than the individual talent. Accordingly, the ability of an individual is socially constructed and is the outcome of the individual's access to cultural capital. In this respect, Bourdieu's theory states that, the differences in the family background leads to the differences in the academic achievements of the students. This is due to the easy accessibility of the educational materials of the children from parents of high socio-economic status than that of the children from the parents of low socio-economic status.

Moreover, the several studies considering various factors influencing the academic performance of the students came up with different outcomes. Accordingly, what matters most in the upliftment of the academic performance of the children is the parents' involvement in children's school activities then the parents' financial status (Machebe et al., 2017). Etikan et al., (2017) concluded that there is no significant difference regarding the academic performance of the students residing within or outside the school environment. However, gender and age have been the influencing factors on the choice of the students' accommodation preference.

Students from the parents with higher educational qualification have higher academic performance than those from parents with lower educational qualification (Bakar et al., 2017). The study from Ghana found that though the parental socio-economic status and parental educational background has no significant effect on the academic performance of the students, the parental educational qualification and health status of the students were found to have significant effect on the academic performance of the students (Yelkpieri, 2016). A study in Thimpu Bhutan, among the government high school students came with the conclusion that there exists the positive association between the parent's literacy and the academic performance of the children (Dekar, 2016). Education of the parents, their occupation and family income have distinct effects on their spending behavior. However, the education of the parents seems to be the most influential determinant in the academic performance of their children (Hao & Yeung, 2015). Rana (2015) on his study in South Punjab Pakistan regarding the relationship between parent's level of education and academic performance of their children came up with the outcome that there exists a significant positive relationship between the parent's level of education and the performance of their children.

Children from parents with good economic status are able to get better performance than that of the children from the parents with low economic status (Shah & Anwar, 2014). Machebe (2014) in his study among the students of selected secondary schools in Enugu State came to specify that the parental educational qualification and health status of the students have a statistically significant relationship with the academic performance of the students.

Sean (2013) in a study in the United States of America found that the students from high income families have better performance than those from low-income families. Similarly, Zhang (2012) on his study in China among the students of secondary schools concluded that the children from low income families exhibit lower levels of cognitive-linguistic skills, lower verbal interactions, lower phonological awareness and lower academic performance as compared to their counterparts from high and middle income families. It also showed that children from high income families are comparatively more proficient in reading skills than that of low-income families. The academic achievement of the secondary school students is affected by the education, occupation and income level of the parents (Suleman et al., 2012). Pant (2020) in a study conducted considering the qualitative case study research design in Kailali Nepal, came to conclude that the majority of students from the parents with low socio-economic status have poor academic achievement since the parents with low socio-economic status are less interested in the education of their children as they emphasize more on the employment of their children rather than their further studies. Besides, the illiterate and poorly educated parents are unable to support their children in their educational activities.

This study is a descriptive survey that empirically examines the influence of parental socio-economic status on the academic performance of the students' of Pokhara University. This study has incorporated the simultaneous effects of the major determinants such as parents' financial status, level of education, occupation, expenditure on education, residential status on the academic performance of the students which were not addressed by most of the scholars conducting research in this subject matter.

Methodology

Cross-sectional survey design has been employed to conduct the study with the assumption that it helps to identify the socio-economic

factors that influence students' academic performance. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been adopted for this study. The population of this study is the entire graduate and undergraduate students of constituent college of Pokhara University who are pursuing different programs. The sample population consists of 1,981 students (1089 males and 892 females) according to an annual report published by Pokhara University (2074/75). Moreover, in order to get a relatively better opportunity of selecting the students from the parents of different socioeconomic status, with the assumption that the students in the constituent colleges comprise the parents of high socio-economic diversification, the constituent colleges were selected for the study. A total of 322 samples were selected with confidence level of 95% out of which 301 samples of graduate and undergraduate level of constituent college were analyzed. The samples were chosen on researcher's convenience using purposive sampling technique. Moreover, for the reference purpose, Mendeley and crossref software were used.

The structured questionnaires were developed on the basis of the conceptual framework of the study and were pre-tested for the reliability before drafting the final questionnaire. The data collected in this study were coded and tested for completeness and then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Pearson correlation coefficient has been computed among parents' income level, educational level, occupational status and residential status on academic performance of students to see whether there exists the relationship or not. Similarly, multiple regression analysis has been conducted to see the overall relationships of academic performance with the independent variables and to investigate the relative contribution of parents' income level, educational level, parents' occupational status and residential status to the variance in the academic performance of students.

For the assessment of the reliability of the data collected from Likert scale, Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha for the scales used is 0.72 which represents an acceptable level of validity of the constructs used for the survey. Moreover, the questionnaires and scales were extracted from standard survey instrument used by higher education institutions measuring academic achievement of students. Furthermore, pre-testing of the survey instrument was done in a small scale of 50 samples before finalizing the survey instrument. The drawbacks of the questionnaire are

incorporated to minimize the errors in the instrument. Besides, consultation with several experts from higher education institutions of Nepal is also done to finalize the questionnaire and constructs used in the study.

Results and Discussion

Data was collected to ascertain whether socio – demographic characteristics of the students that had a direct influence on academic performance of the students. Accordingly, this section comprises the data analysis and discussion of the results obtained. Responses gathered are analyzed in the table below:

Table 1: *Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Socio – Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	123	40.9
	Female	178	59.1
Age	18-23	258	85.7
	23 and Above	43	14.3
Marital Status	Unmarried	274	91
	Married	26	8.6
Number of Siblings	0	53	17.6
	1	97	32.2
	2	69	22.9
	3	54	17.9
	4 and Above	28	9.3
School/Program	SoB/ Management	111	36.9
	SHAS/ Health	82	27.2
	SoE/Engineering	91	30.2
	SoSE/ Social Engineering	17	5.6

Qualifications	Under-Graduate	262	87
	Post-Graduate	39	13

According to table 1, the number of respondents for the study were 301 among which 40.9 % were male and 59.1 % were female. The age range of the respondents were divided into two groups. The respondents that fall within the age range of 18-23 years were 85.7 % whereas the age range of 23 and above were 14.3 %. Moreover, 91 % respondents were found to be unmarried and 8.6 % married. Besides, the 17.6 % respondents were without siblings, 32.2 % with 1 sibling, 22.9 % with 2 siblings, 17.9 % with 3 siblings and 9.3 % of the respondents had 4 and above siblings.

The data related to School, Program and Qualification reveals that most of the respondents were of management school/ program and undergraduates. Accordingly, out of the 301 respondents, 36.9 % were from the School of Business related to management studies. 27.2 % were from the School of Health and Allied Sciences, 30.2 % were from the School of Engineering and 5.6 % people were from the School of Social Engineering. Besides that, 87 % respondents were Under-Graduates and 13 % were Post Graduates.

Table 2 exhibits correlation matrix of the variables of the study. The correlation coefficients of interest are the bivariate correlation of factors influencing academic achievement with recent SGPA of college students. The results show that all the correlation coefficients except for the nature of employment of the father are statistically insignificant. It reveals that only the variable nature of employment of the father is associated with college level grade. Other variables are not found to correlate with college grade. Family financial status is found to affect school level grade but it is found to have minimal effect on the college level grade.

Table 2: *Correlation Coefficient*

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9
V1	1.00 0								
V2	-.182 **	1.00 0							

V3	.036	-.399**	1.000						
V4	-.178**	.487**	-.258**	1.000					
V5	-.025	-.145*	.132*	-.256**	1.000				
V6	.129*	-.275**	.379**	-.166**	.027	1.000			
V7	.075	-.289**	.480**	-.221**	.071	.592**	1.000		
V8	.042	-.159**	.235**	-.168**	.047	.194**	.172**	1.000	
V9	-.204**	.189**	-.017	.139*	-.154**	-.074	.026	.009	1.000

Where, V1 = Academic achievement, V2 = Father's Education, V3 = Father's employment status, V4 = Mother's Education, V5 = Mother's employment status, V6 = Father's nature of employment, V7 = Family income source, V8 = Nature of house, V9 = Monthly expenditure

Table 3 presents the output of multiple regression model with the student's academic achievement as dependent variable and family's socio-economic status as independent variables. The independent variables are father's education, employment, family income source, nature of house and family expenditure.

Table 3
Output of Regression Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
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	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.069	.296		13.761	.000
Father Education	-.120	.067	-.108	-1.775	.077
Father Nature of Employment	.044	.045	.074	.992	.322
Family Source of Income	.026	.056	.035	.467	.641
Nature of House you Live	-.025	.092	-.016	-.269	.788
Monthly Personal Expenditure	-.198	.058	-.199	-3.419	.001

Dependent Variable: Grade of Plus Two

Regression Results from the table

- ❖ DV = Academic Achievement IV = 5 Variables
- ❖ Significant Variables (Variables having relationship with DV) = Father education (10% level of sig., Family monthly expenditure (1% level of significance)
- ❖ Both variables have positive relationship with academic achievement
- ❖ Monthly family expenditure has higher relationship with academic achievement as compared to father's education (as shown by the beta coefficient)
- ❖ Four variables are associated with DV (correlation result), however 2 variables are found to be significant determinants of academic performance (regression result)

The fitted regression equation of the model becomes:

$$Y = 4.069 - 0.120X_1 + 0.44X_2 + 0.026X_3 - 0.025X_4 - 0.198X_5$$

The table 3 and the fitted model shows that one unit increase in the parent's education, would result in the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.120 units.

The findings of the parent's nature of employment concluded that the increase in the parent's nature of employment by one unit would result in the increase in the academic performance of the students by 0.44

units. Similarly, an increase in the family source of income by one unit results in the increase in the students' academic performance by 0.026 units. Moreover, the increase in the nature of the house lived and monthly family expenditure results in the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.25 and negative 0.198 respectively.

Research Findings

The first objective was to determine the influence of the financial status of the family on students' academic performance. The study revealed that the parent's income did not have a significant coefficient with $p\text{-value}=0.345$. The finding further stated that one unit increase in parent's income leads to the increase in academic performance by 0.026 units. The correlation coefficient between the parent's level of income and the academic performance of the students is 0.075 which shows the weak positive correlation between the parents' level of income and academic performance of the student's which is not supported by the Bourdieu's capital theory with the essence that the children from the parents of high social status have advantage on the availability of the educational materials.

The second objective was to examine the extent to which parents' level of education influences students' academic performance. The study found that the parents' level of education has no influence on the academic performance of the students since $p\text{-value}=0.663$. The finding further stated that the one unit increase in parent's level of education leads to the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.120 units. The correlation coefficient between the parent's level of education and the academic performance of the students with father (-0.182) and with mother (-0.178) shows the negative correlation between the parents education level and the academic performance of the student. This outcome too is not supported by Bourdieu's theory which is based upon the fact that differences in the family background leads to the differences in the academic performance of the pupils.

The third objective was to analyze the level to which parents' occupation influences students' academic performance. The findings of the parent's nature of employment concluded that the increase in the parent's nature of employment by one unit would result in the increase in the academic performance by 0.44 units. Accordingly, the correlation coefficient between the parent's occupation and academic

performance of the student's is 0.129 which establishes the positive relationship between the two. This result is supported by the base of Bourdieu's theory which states that the children from the parents of high social status is determined by the sources and nature of employment and have advantage on the availability of the materials and thus is the influencing factor on the academic performance of students.

The fourth objective was to assess the impact of expenditure of the parents on the children's education on their academic performance. Accordingly, one unit increase in the monthly family expenditure results in the increase in the academic performance by negative 0.198 units. The correlation coefficient between the expenditure of the parent's on the children's education and their academic performance is -0.204 which shows the negative correlation between the two. This outcome is not supported by Bourdieu's theory that a family with a sound economic background leads to the higher academic performance of the students.

The fifth objective of the study was to determine the impact of the residence of the students on the academic performance of the students. The coefficient of the residence shows that one unit increase in the nature of the residence leads to the decrease in the academic performance by 0.025 units. The correlation coefficient between the residence and academic performance is 0.042 which shows the positive correlation between the two. The positive relationship is supported by Bourdieu's theory as well that children from the parents of high social status have advantage on the availability of the educational materials.

Thus, the findings of this research came up with the similar results as that of (Etikan et.al., 2017) and (Yelkpiri, 2016) that a parent's level of income and educational qualification does not have a significant impact on the academic performance of the students. On the contrary, the outcome of this study varies to that of the results of the (Pant, 2020), (Barker et.al, 2017), (Dekar, 2016), (Hao & Yeung, 2015), (Rana, 2015), (Shah & Anwar, 2014), (Machebe, 2014), (Sean 2013), (Zang 2012) and (Suleman et. al, 2012) who came to conclude that the parents' socio-economic status, nature of employment i.e. occupation and residence has a significant impact on the academic performance of the students.

Conclusions

Parental socio-economic status is considered to be one of the major factors that influence the academic performance of the students. Accordingly, out of the several factors considered to measure the academic performance of the students, family financial status was found to be a more important determinant of school level academic grades, however, its influence in college level grade was relatively low. Although, parent's educational status was also found to be associated with academic achievement of the students, father's nature of employment and family expenditure level were found to be the most significant determinants of academic achievement of students. However, the relationship is true only up to the school level academic performance. The expenditure level of family is the important determinant of school level academic achievement. Financial status of family affects school level grades but not college level grades. Family financial status is found to have significant influence over the school level grade but minimal influence over the college level grade. This study has implications for the educational practice and policy formulation. Academic administrators should provide the parents with the opportunities to be involved in the decision making process of the academic institutions. Accordingly, our study reveals that though the family income level, parent's occupation, parent's nature of employment and parent's educational qualification do not have significant relationship with the academic performance of the students. However, the residential status comparatively has influence over the academic performance of the students. To conclude, the formulation of the social policies that would contribute to the upliftment of the social and economic condition of the certain groups of the society would narrow down the academic achievement gap and ensure the quality education for all the students.

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Annex I: Item-wise Mean Scores and Standard Deviation

SN	Items	Mean	SD
1	Parents Financial Status determines the type of school their children attend	3.6146	1.26925
2	Parents' ability to support students' education influences their confidence level and attitudes towards learning.	3.7409	1.19413

3	Parents' financial status determines the ease with which students' fees and other levies are paid.	3.9169	1.04071
4	Parents' financial status determines the level of provisions made for learning and writing materials.	3.5216	1.06005
5	Parents' financial status determines how regular a student is given money for school.	3.7375	2.01847
6	Parents' financial status influences how regular students attend school.	2.7076	1.30163
7	Parent's financial status determines the payment of school fee//installments on time.	3.8405	1.00390
8	Parent's financial status affects the field visit and outdoor teaching learning activities.	3.5947	1.14390
9	Parents' educational qualifications influence students' educational achievements in school.	3.0000	1.19443
10	Parents' educational qualifications determine the kind of assistance children receive at home in respect of their studies.	3.5980	.95979
11	Parents' educational attainments enhance the home environment for children's learning activities.	3.8073	.99469
12	Parents' educational attainments encourage students to work hard.	3.6246	1.03695
13	Parents' educational qualifications determine the kind of supervision given to students learning at home.	3.6047	1.01973
14	Parents' educational qualifications influence the interest they attach to their children's education.	3.3787	1.06899
15	Parents' educational qualifications provide the guidance for their further education.	3.8140	1.06393
16	Parents' educational qualifications help them to take the right decision at the right time.	3.5581	1.06807

17	Parents' educational qualification helps to create a good economic environment as well.	3.6678	1.03405
18	Parents' educational qualifications help to shape the sound academic performance.	3.3555	1.06609
19	Parent's occupation influences the students' academic performance in the colleges.	2.6844	1.14749
20	Parent's occupation determines the kind of assistance students receive at home.	3.3322	.93946
21	Parent's occupation determines the academic environment of the students.	3.1661	1.04514
22	Parent's occupation affects the students' hobbies and field of interest.	3.2458	1.17730
23	Parent's occupation determines the confidence of the students in learning.	3.1993	1.19169
24	Parent's occupation influences the interest they attach to their children's education.	3.2359	1.13762
25	Parent's expenditure on the education of students helps them to be equipped with the materials they need.	3.5017	1.15072
26	Parent's expenditure on education determines the grade/percent the student attains.	2.3887	1.18817
27	Parent's expenditure on education influences the creativity of the students.	2.8439	2.65560
28	Parent's expenditure on education enhances the willingness of the students to get engaged in academic activities.	3.1395	1.04266
29	Parent's expenditure on education makes the students more determined to increase their academic performance.	3.0930	1.13929
30	Parent's expenditure on education helps to participate in outdoor academic activities.	3.3522	1.11456
31	The distance of the residence from the college/school affects the academic performance of the students.	2.9468	1.19603
32	The academic performance of the students is influenced by the comforts of the residence.	3.1794	1.07752
33	The residence with individual and separate rooms enhances the academic performance of the students.	3.4286	1.04517

34	Living with the parents and siblings increases the academic performance of the students.	3.4651	1.05021
35	The nature, location, shapes and size of the residence affects the academic performance of the students.	3.3289	1.17536
36	The residence near the colleges/school enhances the regularity and punctuality in the class.	3.3223	1.19407
37	The distance of the college/school from the residence affects the duration of studies at home.	3.5714	1.05785
38	Living and the environment in the sophisticated residence enhances the academic performance of the student.	3.2458	1.09515

Author Bios

DEEPAK NEUPANE is a Lecturer at School of Business, Pokhara University. Is pursuing MPhil leading to PhD degree at the Central Department of Economics, Kirtipur, Kathmandu. He is interested in conducting research on social and economic issues.

Email: deepakneupane@pu.edu.np , neupanedepak02@gmail.com

SANTOSH KUMAR GURUNG is currently working in the capacity of assistant professor of Sociology at School of Business, Pokhara University, Nepal. He is also the Doctoral Candidate at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India. His research is focused on gender and empowerment, marriage and family, tourism, sociology of education and migration.

Email: santoshgrg@pu.edu.np