



# Impact of Parents' Status on Interest of Secondary School Students with Learning Disabilities: An Investigation

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## Abstract:

Introduction: Interests are man's mental dispositions that motivate attention and influence our performances. Interests are the preconditions of academic achievements. It is one of the principal subjective sources of attention process of the learners. In spite of their clear effect on students' achievements in various scholastic and life skills matters, interests are sometimes paid less attention and even overlooked. The attributes and sources of students' interests are of important concern of teachers, academicians and policy makers. In this paper, we attempt to investigate the impact of parents' educational and occupational status on general interest level of secondary students suffering from learning disabilities through descriptive survey method of research.

Keywords: Interest, Interest level, Parents' status, Learning disabilities, Secondary Students

## Introduction:

Individuals vary mostly in their interests, which motivates attention. There are variations in interest among different people on the same object. In schools, there are students with variations in natural tendencies and capacities and acquired capabilities. Parents' socio-economic status and activities influence the career development processes of the children. The foundation of children's career is built by parents at home. Parents can shape, sustain and develop various personality domains of the children. How much the parents are interested, creative, tolerate, careful for children and way of their involvement in the learning process and academic activities of the wards are important factors of psychological development of the children. Occupation, educational status, socio-economic conditions of parents have direct impact on the interest, attitude, will-power and spirit of work of the children (Al-matalaka, M.2014). Family environment is important for variations in many behavioral traits of students. Interest is one of such traits of personality which is get affected by many responsible conditions and it reduces the fatigue considerably and helps to sustain attention. A real interest cannot be created, it has to be generated with in the person (Bhattacharya, S. 2003). A section of students is there in school who are not physically or psychologically defective but they may have some learning disabilities or difficulties in

scholastic skills such as reading, writing, spelling, calculation, understanding, communication etc. Therefore, this section of school going students unable learn things like the students of their age. Studies show that specific learning disabilities create problem in social and emotional matter as well as in academic success of the students (Kloomok, S. and Cosden, M. 1994). It is important to explore whether parents' academic and occupational status act as effective factors in the generation of interest in children with learning disabilities. Interest is that trait of personality which reduces fatigue considerably and helps to sustain attention among students. Interest is the term that can narrate a person's short-term experiences fascinated by a stimulus and more lasting feeling that the thing is pleasurable and valuable for further investigation. It is interest that refers a psychological disposition which empowers the process of concentration, trials and impact, it is felt in a particular situation and it is an enduring predisposition for re-engaging with a certain thing or subject over a time. So, interest can be of situational as well as individual (Hid & Renningger, 2006).

Srinivas Bhattacharya (2003) has cited in 'Foundation of Education' that occupation of the people has immense effect on the interest of the people. He has also mentioned that for focusing and sustaining attention and overcoming the problem distraction, interest supplies necessary source energy. Interests, as regarded by Bhattacharya, are not totally inborn, they can be acquired through social interactions.

Interests are defined by Rounds, J. and Su, Rong (2014) as the trait like preferences for activities, contexts in which activities occur or outcomes associated with preferred activities that motivate goal-oriented behaviors and orient individuals toward certain environments.

Strong (1943) was of the opine that interests do not depend upon consciousness or thought; further he said "remind me of tropisms. We go towards liked activities, go away from disliked activities." Interests are the essential ingredient of one's personality. Some interests are unlearned which are basically associated with natural urges of people while some interests are acquired in nature which are fostered in the form of experience, habit, concern, liking or disliking by living in environment. In a meta-analysis that cover all the investigations of the last three decades (Schiefele, Krapp, and Winteler, 1992) reviewed by Andreas Krapp, 1999, reveals that across all school types, grade levels, and subjects, the correlation between interest and achievement positive with an average of approximately 0.30. It also showed that interest has a greater effect on the grades of male students than on those of female students. Besides, it found that there is closer relationship between interest and academic achievement at higher grade levels. So far as this study is concerned, interest refers to the general feelings, attraction, contiguity, emotions or experiences pleasurable or painful developed in secondary school students who have specific learning disabilities and whose parents have different educational and occupational status.

The term 'learning disability' first applied by Samuel Kirk (1963) to indicate all the behavioural symptoms of children due to the dysfunction of the central processing mechanism. A section of students with no corporal, intellectual and psychological imparity, demonstrate poor educational performance: reading, writing, copying, remembering, listening, comprehending, doing sum etc. Learning disability refers to difficulties learning areas. Some students with learning disabilities write 'deb' for 'bed', 'was' for 'saw', 'top' for 'pot' and unable to pay concentration if there is background noise. Difficulties faced by students in reading, writing, doing sum, communicating and comprehending depict the presence of learning disabilities in them.

National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (1985) restated the concept of learning disabilities in the following lines:

“Learning Disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities or of social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions or socio-environmental influences and especially with attention deficit disorders, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.” The above-mentioned definition depicts that learning disabilities are learning disorders that hinder learnings. Learning disabilities are not learning problems. Learning disorders are manifested by different types of difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, arguing, mathematical abilities or social skills. Learning disabilities and handicapping conditions may occur together in the person. However, a learning disability is not the direct outcome of those handicapping conditions or influences.

The vital factor of this study is the impact of parents’ status. Studies show that the career building process, academic progress, individuality development and many other personality aspects of the pupil influenced by parents’ status. It is beyond doubt that interest is the key factor of personality development. Parents are the initial nurturers, teachers, motivators and guides for children. Like personal characteristic, parents’ status or parents’ socio-economic status or family socio-economic status influences academic achievement and individuality development of the students (Espin and Deno, 1993; Herbers et al.,2012; Reed et al.,2017). Studies of Sirin (2005), Stanovich (2009), Law (2011), Chiu and Chaw (2015) have shown that personal characteristics, family socio-economic status and academic achievement are intimately related. Socio-economic status (SES) is one of such common factors of academic achievement of children which is most discussed. A meta-analysis performed by White (1982) of about 200 studies reveal a positive correlation between SES and academic achievement, with an average of 0.35 and a median Of 0.25. Parental socio-economic status is a multidimensional concept of special importance for growth, development, health outcomes and education of children. The concept generally refers to the amount of parents’ income, their employment status and level of education. Parents’ status, in this study, refers to socio-economic status, level of education and occupation of the parents of the high school students having learning disorders. Secondary Stage of education is sub-divided as lower secondary stage or high school stage and higher secondary stage. So far as this study is concerned, the secondary students cover both male and female students of high schools of Karbi Anglong District of Assam who have specific learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities may exhibit disorder in one or more fundamental psychological processes such as reading, writing, arithmetic, thinking, talking, listening, understanding, communication and spelling.

### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To identify secondary students with learning disabilities.
2. To explore the impact of parents’ status on the interest of secondary students with learning disabilities.

### **Research Questions:**

1. Is learning disability an alarming problem of secondary education?
2. Is there any impact of parents’ status on the interest of secondary students with learning disabilities?

### Methods and Procedures:

We applied purposive and random method of sampling to select both schools and students for this study. Two provincialized secondary schools of Langsomepi Development Block of Karbi Anglong District in Assam were selected purposively on the ground of convenience of road communication and comfortability of distance. Having permission for data collection from the heads, randomly two or three both male and female students from each bench of 9<sup>th</sup> grade of the sampled schools were selected for collecting required information. This study was based primarily on primary data as well as secondary data. At first, the Learning Disabilities Battery (LDB) of National Psychological Corporation, Agra was conducted on the randomly selected students to identify the existence of learning disabilities among them. The battery has three parts to measure three types of learning disorders: a) Dyscalculia (learning disorder in basic mathematical skills, b) Dysgraphia (learning disorder in writing, spelling and written expression skills) and c) Dyslexia (the problem with reading ability. Further, Part II and Part III of the battery have seven and three subtests respectively. The GGT Intelligence test was applied to measure general intelligence level of the students. On the basis of LDB and GGT Intelligence test, 33 (Boys-17 and Girls-16) students of two high schools were identified who have learning disabilities or disorders either in one or in more cases and whose IQ was average or above average. Finally, the Self-made Interest Inventory, meant for secondary students, was conducted on the 33 sample students with learning disabilities (LD) to study their interest level as well as to gather information regarding their parents' status of occupation and education. The Interest Inventory contains 60 (sixty) statements associated with career building objects, activities, values, habits, abilities, qualities etc. Subjects need to score each statement ranging from 1 to 4 in the space provided against each statement. A subject could score minimum a total of 60 and maximum a total of 240 in this inventory. On the basis of students' score of interest inventory, students were brought into three groups such as High Interest level (80 to 100 per cent scorer), Moderate Interest level (60 to 70 per cent scorer) and Low Interest Level (below 60 per cent scorer). The structure of sample for the present paper was formed by parents' occupational and educational status. Parents are divided into four areas in accordance with occupation like farming, business, government job and other professions like contractor, masonry, carpenter etc. No parent was found of having government job. Similarly, parents were grouped into higher, secondary, primary and illiterate according to their educational qualification. Details of the structure of sample of parents' share is depicted by table 1.

Table 1: Sample design of the study as per Occupational status and Educational level of parents:

Occupation & Education of Parents	Percentage of Share in sample
Farming	64%
Business	21%
Salaried	00
Others	15%
Higher Education	09%
Secondary Education	27%
Primary Education	55%
Illiterate	09%

## Analysis and Discussion:

### 1. Identification of secondary students with learning disabilities:

Present study covered about 230 ninth grade students of two government secondary schools of which 33 were identified of having learning disabilities either in arithmetic (Dyscalculia) or in writing (Dysgraphia) or in reading (Dyslexia) or in all these three areas of learning. Table 2 reveals that 67 per cent of students with learning disabilities had severe dyscalculia and 30 percent of students with learning disabilities had mild dyscalculia problem. Only 3 per cent of students with learning disabilities were without dyscalculia. It found that 33 per cent of students with learning disabilities had severe and mild writing disorder. Similarly, this study revealed that 9 per cent and 36 per cent of students with learning disabilities were with mild dysgraphia and 34 per cent students with learning disabilities were without dysgraphia. About dyslexia this study revealed 9 percent had severe dyslexia, 36 percent had mild dyslexia and 55 per cent of students with learning disabilities were without dyslexia.

The incidence of learning disabilities, presently specific learning disabilities, is a global issue. The Disabilities in England (2011) reported the presence of 286,000 children with learning disabilities (180,000 boys and 106,000 girls) aged 0-17 in U.K. According to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report to Congress, U.S. (2001) the number of children with learning disabilities was 4.5 percent of the total school population. The study carried by Psychological Testing and Counselling Centre, Agra (2014) found that 89 per cent children with moderate learning disabilities, 24 per cent children with severe learning disorder and 18 per cent of children with profound multiple disabilities were receiving their education in main stream schools. Forgoing discussion on findings of identifying secondary students with learning disabilities e.g. dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyslexia, leads to acceptance of the first research question i.e. learning disability is an alarming problem of secondary education.

Table 2: Learning Disabilities among sample students:

Dyscalculia			Dysgraphia			Dyslexia		
Severe	Mild	Without Dyscalculia	Severe	Mild	Without Dysgraphia	Severe	Mild	Without Dyslexia
67%	30%	03%	33%	33%	34%	09%	36%	55%

### 2. Exploring the impact of parents' status on interest:

This section of the study depicts the impact of parents' socio-economic status and education on the general interest of their children studying in secondary schools who suffer from learning disabilities. Table 3, developed out of individual scores of 33 sample students with learning disabilities, reflects that 19 per cent students of parental farming occupation had high interest level where as 81 per cent students of same occupation had moderate interest level. On the other hand, 57 per cent students of parental business occupation had high interest level where as 43 per cent students of the similar occupation, had moderate interest level and 20 per cent students of other parental occupation like masonry, carpentry wage earner etc. had high interest level where as 80 per cent children of the similar parental occupation had moderate interest level. It is important to note here that no parent (either father or mother) of the final sample students was salaried or government employee. Similarly, the impact of parents' education on the interest of students with LD is presented by table-3. As per the reading of table-3, 33 per cent students of parental under graduate education level showed high interest level and 67 per cent students of the same parental education level, had moderate interest level. Students of parental

higher secondary education level showed similar interest level as showed by students of parental undergraduate education level i.e. 33 percent high and 67 per cent moderate. On the other hand, students, whose parental education level was primary, 28 percent had high and 72 percent had moderate interest level. But, 100 per cent children of illiterate parents showed only moderate interest level.

The study of Dev (2016) reported that the persistent academic achievement of elementary school students may be the result of good home environment and interest of students in studies. Moreover, the study claimed that general mental ability, home environment, interest and academic achievement are significantly and positively correlated. Pant, R. (2020) claims parents of high socio-economic class take more care in the academic activities of their wards and they support their children for successful learning, they have more concentration on the academic progress of own children, besides they maintain regular attachment with their teachers, manage the children's absence and other inconveniences. Pant, R. (2020) found that parental income is an influential factor in the academic achievement of students. Students of poor economic background showed low academic performance as compared to students of high economic background. Poor economic background engages parents in agriculture as well as other skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled works. The involvement of parents in their children's education is an essential mediator of the influences of family socio-economic system on the achievement of children (Li and Qiu, 2018). Research findings reveals that parents' education helps the academic performances of the children (Colmen, 1988; Sewell and Hauser, 1993; Nichols, 2010; and Ahmed, 2016). Colman (1988) considered parental education and involvement of educational activities as the social capacity of children.

Socio-economic conditions of the families having farming and other occupations is not good enough to provide adequate facilities of education like books, papers, cloth, sports articles, devices, tutorial teachers etc. to children and the parents of farming and other occupations cannot spare more time to involve with educational activities of children. Contrary to this, parents of business occupation provide adequate educational facilities and opportunities to their children. Occupational differences may work as a cause of variation in the interest level of students. In this study it has been observed that 57 per cent students, whose parents were from business occupation, showed high interest level but the students, from the families run by farming and other occupation, achieving high interest level is comparatively less i.e. 19 and 20 per cent respectively.

Table 3: Parents' occupational and educational level wise interest level of the students:

Parents' Occupational and Educational level	Interest Level		
	High 80-----100 Per cent	Moderate 60-----79 Per cent	Low Below 60 Per cent
Farming	19%	81%	00
Business	57%	43%	00
Salaried	00	00	00
Other	20%	80%	00
Higher Education	33%	67%	00
Secondary Education	33%	67%	00
Primary Education	28%	72%	00
Illiterate	00	100%	00

Averages of scores obtained by students (with LD) of different parental status of occupation and education and conversion of averages into percentages as shown in table-4 depict following points:

1. Students (with LD) of different parental occupations and educations have moderate or above moderate interest level.
2. Business couples' children (with LD), irrespective of status of education, scored high in the inventory; their percentage of average score obtained in interest inventory is 80. It indicates that they have high positive interest in academic as well as non-academic matters.
3. Children (with LD) of couples having higher education, either father or mother, irrespective of occupation scored approximately high in the inventory; their percentage of average score obtained in interest inventory is 78. It indicates that they are moderate but more positive about scholastic and non-scholastic matters in comparison to illiterate and farming couples' children whose percentage of average score is 75.

Table 4: Parents' Occupation and Education status wise percentage of average scores:

Parents' Occupation and level of Education	Average of scores obtained by students	Percentage of average Scores	Interest Level
Farming	181	75%	Moderate
Business	191	80%	High
Salaried	00	00	Nil
Other	182	76%	Moderate
Higher Education	187	78%	Moderate
Secondary Education	183	76%	Moderate
Primary	181	75%	Moderate
Illiterate	180	75%	Moderate

### Findings:

1. Learning disabilities in reading, writing and arithmetic do exist among secondary students irrespective of caste, creed, sex, rural, urban, education, occupation etc.
2. Secondary students have specific learning disabilities or difficulties in arithmetic, reading, and writing but they have positive interest in scholastic and non-scholastic matters and
3. Socio-economic status, not the learning disabilities, exerts more influence on the interest of secondary students.

### Conclusion:

The population of this study was constituted mainly of scheduled tribes with backward socio-economic status and age-old tradition based social system. This study was carried on secondary students of two government secondary schools of rural areas to know the impact of socio-economic status on the interest of secondary students who have learning disabilities. Data for this study was collected through standardized as well as self-made tools. Data analysis and discussion of result leads to a conclusion that dyscalculia is the most common learning disorder presents among the students with learning disabilities and learning disabilities do not affect interest. Socio-economic status of family is important to develop and maintain young students' interest. Socio-

economic condition of family and parents' educational status act as determining factors of general interest of young students. A vivid variation in general interest level among secondary students was seen due to the variation of socio-economic status and level of education of parents. Investigations of Pants, R. (2020), Li and Qiu (2018) brought to light the similar findings that high socio-economic status is an influential factor in the academic performance of students. Students of high socio- economic class showed high academic performance and students of low socio-economic status showed low academic performance.

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