A Study on Socio-economic status Effects on Private Universities Architecture Students' Educational Motivation

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on the educational motivation, university selection, and career aspirations of architecture students in private universities. Using data from 306 students across 12 universities, the research applies descriptive and inferential statistical methods (Chi-square tests) to examine the relationship between SES—measured through family income and parental education—and students' academic choices and aspirations. Findings indicate that SES significantly influences university type and major selection, with lower SES students more likely to enroll in private universities and choose fields with perceived higher job security. However, no significant relationship was found between SES and educational motivation, suggesting that students' drive to succeed is influenced more by intrinsic ambition than financial background. Additionally, job prospects were perceived similarly across SES groups, indicating a shared optimism about career opportunities. These results challenge traditional assumptions about SES and motivation, emphasizing that financial background primarily affects educational access rather than academic drive. The study highlights the need for policy interventions, including financial aid expansion, mentorship programs, and equitable admission processes, to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities for academic and professional success. Future research should explore long-term employment outcomes and qualitative aspects of motivation to further understand SES-related educational disparities.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Architecture Students, Educational Motivation

Introduction

Scientific research plays a crucial role in the development of modern societies, particularly in advancing education and industry. Higher education is a key driver of social mobility, yet disparities persist in students' access to and experience within universities. One critical factor influencing students' academic performance and motivation is socioeconomic status (SES), which encompasses family income, parental education, and social class. Understanding how SES affects educational motivation is essential for creating equitable learning environments and improving higher education policies.

Previous studies have established that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds face varied educational challenges and opportunities. In particular, motivation—a key determinant of academic success—is often shaped by external conditions such as financial stability, social expectations, and access to resources. However, there is limited research focusing specifically on architecture students in private universities, a group that faces unique demands due to the high cost of education and the technical nature of their field. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing how SES influences educational motivation, career aspirations, and major selection among architecture students in private universities.

Using a mixed-method approach, this research examines the relationship between university type, major choice, and SES, as well as the extent to which financial background and parental education impact motivation. The findings will provide valuable insights for higher education policymakers, university administrators, and educators seeking to develop targeted interventions that support students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

By exploring these dynamics, this study aims to contribute to a more inclusive educational framework, ensuring that students' motivation and academic success are not hindered by socioeconomic barriers.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and the educational motivation of private university architecture students. The results reveal that while university type and major selection are significantly influenced by SES, motivation and job prospects are not. These findings align with broader research on social stratification in education but also introduce nuanced perspectives unique to architecture students.

The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on University Type and Major Selection

One of the most notable findings is the significant relationship between SES and university type. Students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to enroll in private universities, likely due to limited access to public institutions or the perception that private universities offer more flexible admission policies. This finding supports existing research indicating that students from financially constrained backgrounds often seek alternative higher education pathways due to competitive admission processes in public universities (White, 2008).

Similarly, major selection appears to be influenced by SES, with architecture and mathematics being the most common choices among lower-SES students. This suggests that students from lower-income families may prioritize fields perceived as offering higher employability and financial stability, even if personal interest is secondary. This aligns with research by Shafi Abadi (2007), who found that family income directly affects educational choices, often steering students toward careers with higher perceived returns.

No Significant Relationship between SES and Educational Motivation

Contrary to some expectations, this study found no significant relationship between SES and educational motivation. This challenges traditional assumptions that students from higher SES backgrounds have greater motivation due to access to better resources and educational support. Instead, it suggests that motivation may be driven more by intrinsic factors, personal ambition, and career aspirations rather than financial background alone.

This finding is consistent with research by Battle & Michel (2006), who argue that motivation is multifaceted, influenced not just by economic conditions but also by psychological resilience, social environment, and individual drive. It is possible that architecture students, regardless of their SES, possess a strong passion for their field, mitigating the effects of financial constraints. However, future research could explore whether other factors—such as mentorship opportunities, family expectations, or peer support—play a compensatory role in sustaining motivation.

Job Prospects and SES: Equal Perception across All Classes

The study also found no significant correlation between SES and students' job prospects. Approximately half of the students, regardless of their financial background, expressed optimism about their career opportunities. This finding contradicts some earlier studies (Moniri, 2009), which suggested that students from higher SES backgrounds have greater career confidence due to stronger professional networks and access to better internships.

One possible explanation for this unexpected result is the perceived market demand for architects, which may create a shared sense of job security across different social classes. Additionally, architecture is a skill-driven field, meaning that competence and portfolio strength may outweigh social class advantages in job placement. However, further research is needed to examine whether these students' career expectations align with actual employment outcomes post-graduation.

Implications for Higher Education Policy and Future Research

The findings of this study underscore the need for targeted policy interventions in higher education. Since SES does not significantly affect motivation but does influence access to university types and majors, policymakers should focus on expanding financial aid programs, scholarships, and mentorship opportunities for lower-SES students.

Additionally, universities should:

- Offer career counseling programs to help students from all SES backgrounds realistically navigate job market challenges.

- Develop inclusive admission policies that provide more equitable access to public universities.

- Establish mentorship networks connecting lower-SES students with industry professionals, helping to bridge the gap in professional networking.

Future research should explore longitudinal studies to determine whether the lack of correlation between SES and job prospects remains consistent after graduation. Additionally, qualitative studies—such as interviews or case studies—could offer deeper insights into personal experiences of motivation, financial struggles, and career aspirations among architecture students.

Social Class and Motivation

The following research discusses the individuals' motivations from studying bachelors. It could be said that the motivation for studying in the university is mainly formed in the family and has a direct relation with family circumstances and their socioeconomic status.

In a research conducted on high school female students' motivation in Canada in 1983, researchers associated their professional motivations and academic and career aspirations to the socioeconomic status variable.

Materials and Methods

One of the main elements in the university education system is the status. Hence, recognizing their specifications as a part of the society which has a great role in the society's reconstruction and improvement could be of great significance in higher education planning for the university. Students belong to an equal education system, yet from unequal socioeconomic conditions. Most of these inequalities are expressed in the concept of "class"(Patrick,2006). Based on sociologists studies conducted on children, New sander concludes that all human are born equal but the earliest months, which a child is born, form its primary experiences. An individual is born in a family which belongs to a society structure; that is, an individual may be born in a working class or a middle social class. A family may live in a specific region which is a village or a city. Each of these factors, either familial, economic, class and regional could lead into opportunity inequality in educational improvements. (Bayat,2006)

Values inequalities and their persistence in today's world, could lead into education problems for individuals who don't possess the upper class privileges. Sometimes, comparisons are done between social classes in education (Holukai, 2006). As it is known, human societies are based on categorizations and hierarchies which more or less determine the social classes. According to Emanuel Monneah, such classes are consisted of relatively close classes which are not equal from education and prestige points of view. (Battle &Michel 2006)

Social categorization has an immense role in individuals' education, educational major, professional progression or regression and even university type. Choosing educational major which leads in to the individual's future profession and their condition in social class system, is not a function of social condition alone, but the society educational and political social class system.(vaziri.2006)

Haler and et al (2004) studied the social class effect on profession and education expectations. Based on the research they conducted on 4167male and female high school students, they came to this conclusion that students' profession and education expectations are highly affected by their social class.

According to white (2008) research in France, the chance of entering the university for a worker's son or daughter is ten times lesser than an employers' son or daughter. Studies on students' failure have indicated that there is a correlation between this issue and family's economic situation, and parents' education and occupation. The opposite holds true, as well. As Moniri (2009) states in his research, the most important factors which could direct students' tendencies are the socioeconomic status and its effects.

Social class is a part of the society which are different from the other parts of the same society in their shared values, social status, mass activities, wealth amount and other personal belongings and etiquette. According to another definition, a social class is a set of people or groups that are considered as a social unit in social hierarchy. (Gurvich, 2009)

In various societies, social classes have various forms. For instance, society is divided into various castes, while in most third-world countries the society is divided into upper, middle and lower classes. In industrial counties, society is divided into four classes of lower, working, middle and upper class (McNeal, Ralph.2007).

Research Necessity and Importance

Conducting research in any field and especially on higher education problems in order to identify the effective factors and their practical and objective information is inevitable. It could also lead into more clear instruction to address the needs. Since student could have a great role in societies' reconstruction and improvement, through proper education programs, addressing students problems and their access to higher education along with identifying their talents are among the main countries' planners' main duties.(Seyfried, Sherri. 2005)

Due to the changes, improvements and technology developments in today's society, changes in education system seem to be vital. Being aware of scientific proper methods of student selection and creating more facilities for students' welfare is significant, for various social classes children are not similar in accessing higher education especially in university type, either state or private or even their major. The following research studies the students' reasons for entering the university, their relation with their majors and university types, study motivation, job prospects and factors associated with it.

Shafi Abadi(2007) in a research, titled "A Study on the Correlation between Students' Education Progression and Family Income", came to this conclusion that the family income could affect the children majors and educational progression.

In her research, Sharifzade(2008) concluded that the education progression has an ascending style, from the bottom to the up of the social class pyramid. Thus, the upper class children could reach more successful in education comparing to the working class children.

Considering several researches results including presented research, the main question to this research is that if the students' socioeconomic status could affect the students private universities' architecture students educational motivation. In this regard, parents' income and education effects on private universities' architecture students' educational motivation are studied as well.

It seems that certain factors are imposed on the individual and the individual is not able to control them effectively. Socioeconomic status is among such factors which the individual is dependent on them. Some criteria for determining the socioeconomic status are family condition, academic achievement, employment, income and parents' location.

It appears that individuals with higher socioeconomic status obtain more opportunities to enter higher education and especially private ones, for they have less difficulty in paying the tuition costs especially architecture major, which is studied in this research.

In a research on the family effects on children educational aspiration, the writer concludes that, the higher the fathers' job the higher the children aspirations and the children educational progression is relatively higher. It should be mentioned that father's job is not the only factor resulting in all these differences, but other factors should be considered as well. In connection with the point previously mentioned, KULI and other psychologists believe that family has the most effect in forming individuals' social characteristics, aspirations, tendencies and core personality. Parents' behaviors toward each other, education, occupation, social class and family amity are among issues which form an individual's personality.

Research Objectives

Research Major Objectives

A Study on Socioeconomic status Effects on Private Universities Architecture Students' Educational Motivation

This research studies individual's educational aspirations, occupation prospect, family condition and parents' socioeconomic status in private universities architecture students'.

To achieve this, determinants to the socioeconomic, status relative understanding of students' socioeconomic status, the relation between this base and private universities architecture students' aspiration, their motivations in entering private universities and occupation prospect are studied.

Research Minor Objectives

    a- Determining the relation between private universities architecture students' university type and socioeconomic status

    b- Determining the relation between private universities architecture students' university major and socioeconomic status

    c- Determining the relation between private universities architecture students' study motivation and socioeconomic status

    d- Determining the relation between private universities architecture students' occupation prospect and socioeconomic status

Research Hypotheses

    1- There is a relation between private universities architecture students' socioeconomic status and study motivation.

    2- There is a relation between private universities architecture students' socioeconomic status and occupation prospect.

Research Methodology

This research adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey method to explore the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and educational motivation among architecture students enrolled in private universities. The study was designed to collect data on students' background characteristics, university experiences, and future aspirations, with a focus on how SES influences educational choices and motivational levels.

The research population included architecture students from 12 private universities across different regions. A sample of 306 students was selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring a diverse representation across gender, socioeconomic background, and year of study. Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions, covering variables such as family income, parental education, employment status, living arrangements, university entrance year, field of study, educational motivation, and job prospects.

The validity of the questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts in the fields of education, architecture, and sociology. A pilot test was conducted on 30 students, and necessary revisions were made based on feedback to enhance clarity and reliability. The final instrument demonstrated a high level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, indicating good reliability.

For data analysis, both descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, charts) and inferential statistics were applied. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to determine the significance of associations between SES and key dependent variables such as university type, major selection, educational motivation, and job prospect perceptions. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically meaningful.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all students. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the collected data was used exclusively for academic purposes.

By employing a structured and statistically sound methodology, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how socioeconomic factors shape the academic motivations and choices of students in architecture programs at private institutions.

A- Descriptive Findings

Table 1- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Gender

Percent	Frequency	Gender
26.1	80	Male
73.9	226	Female
100	306	Total

**Diagram 1- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Gender**
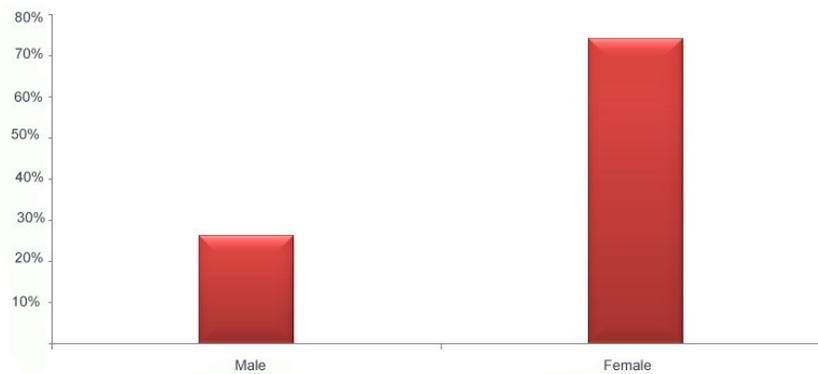
Considering the results presented in the above table, of 306students, 226students (73.9percent) were females and 80students (26.1percent) were males.

Table 2- Studied Individuals Distribution based on University Entrance Year

Percent	Frequency	University Entrance Year
18.8	57	2006 and Before
20.8	63	2007
32.0	97	2008
27.7	84	2009
0.7	2	2010
100	303	Total

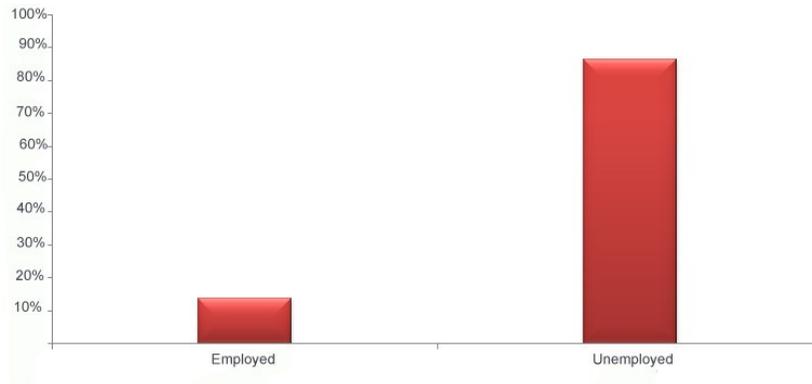**Diagram 2- Studied Individuals Distribution based on University Entrance Year**
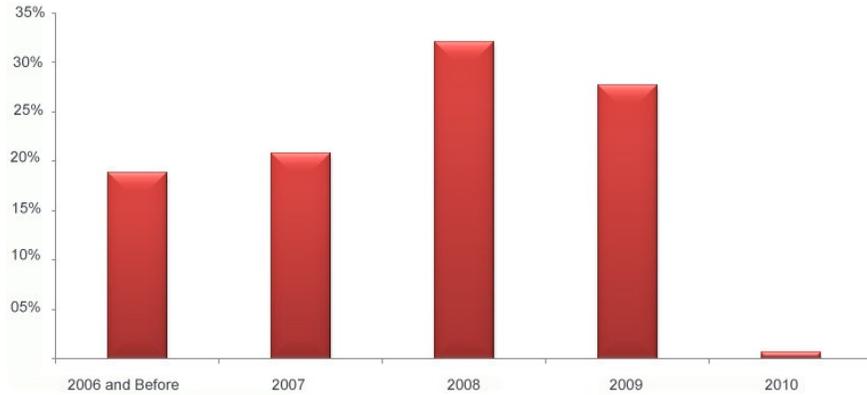
Considering the results presented in the above table, of 303students who participated in the test, 181students (59.7percent) had entered the university in 2008 and 2009. The least university entries was in year 2010 with 0.7percent.

Table 3- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Employment

Percent	Frequency	Employment Status
13.6	41	Employed
86.4	261	Unemployed
100	302	Total

**Diagram 3- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Employment**

Considering the results presented in the above table, of 302students who specified their employment status, 261students (86.4percent) were unemployed and 41students (13.6percent) were employed.

Table 4- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Location

Percent	Frequency	Location
21.2	31	Dormitories
60.3	88	Rented House
4.1	6	Relatives' Place
14.4	21	Others
100	146	Total

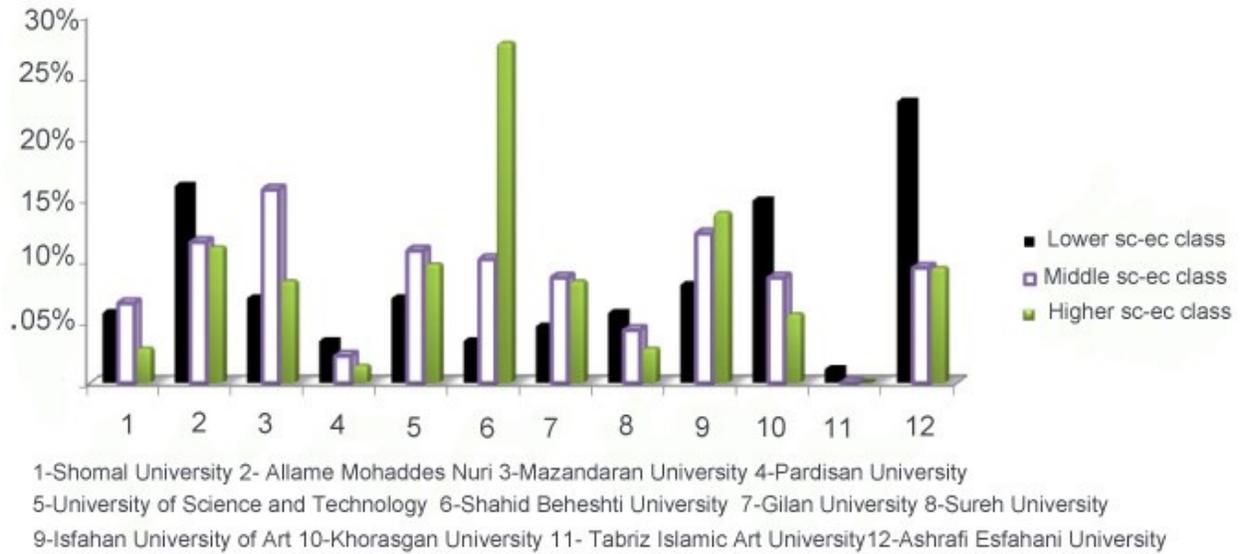**Diagram 4- Studied Individuals Distribution based on Employment**
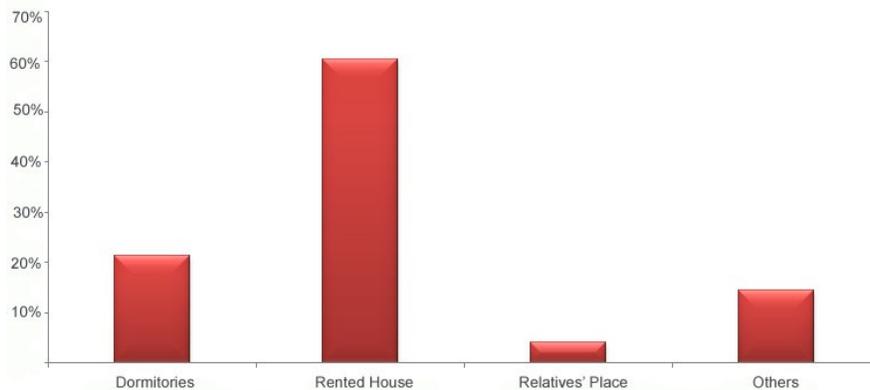
Considering the results presented in the above table, of 146students who participated in the test, 88students (60.3percent) had rented house. The least students' accommodation was related to the relatives' house which was 4.1percent.

B- Results Findings

Table 5- University Type Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class

Significancy Level	$\chi^2_{(22)}$	Higher Socioeconomic Class		Middle Socioeconomic Class		Lower Socioeconomic Class		University
		Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
		2.8	2	6	9	5.7	5	Shomal University
		11.1	8	11.5	16	16.1	14	Allame Vahdat Nuri
		8.3	6	15.8	22	6.9	6	University of Mazandaran
		1.4	1	2.2	3	3.4	3	University of Pardisan
		9.7	7	10.8	15	6.9	6	University of Science and Technology
		27.8	20	10.1	14	3.4	3	Shahid Beheshti
0.001	47.39	8.3	6	8.6	12	4.6	4	University of Gilan
		2.8	2	4.3	6	5.7	5	University of Sure
		13.9	10	12.2	17	8.0	7	Isfahan University of Art
		5.6	4	8.6	12	14.9	13	University of Khorasgan IAU
		0	0	0	0	1.1	1	Tabriz Islamic Art University
		9.4	6	9.4	13	23.0	20	Ashrafi Esfahani University

Diagram 5- University Type Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class

1-Shomal University 2- Allame Mohaddes Nuri 3-Mazandaran University 4-Pardisan University
5-University of Science and Technology 6-Shahid Beheshti University 7-Gilan University 8-Sureh University
9-Isfahan University of Art 10-Khorasgan University 11- Tabriz Islamic Art University12-Ashrafi Esfahani University

Based on X^2 test results in the above table, there is a significant relation between university type and students' socioeconomic class (p>0.01, df=22, X^2= 47.39) and university type depends on the students' socioeconomic class, so that the students who belonged to the lower socioeconomic class entering private universities are higher than the students who belonged to the middle or higher socioeconomic classes.

Table 6- University Majors Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class

Significancy Level	$\chi^2{}_{(6)}$	Higher Socioeconomic Class		Middle Socioeconomic Class		Lower Socioeconomic Class		Majors
		Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
		80.8	59	82.0	114	59.9	52	Mathematics
0.006	18.15	17.8	13	16.5	23	37.9	33	Architecture
		0	0	0	0	1.1	1	Vocational
		1.4	1	1.5	2	1.1	1	Experimental Sciences

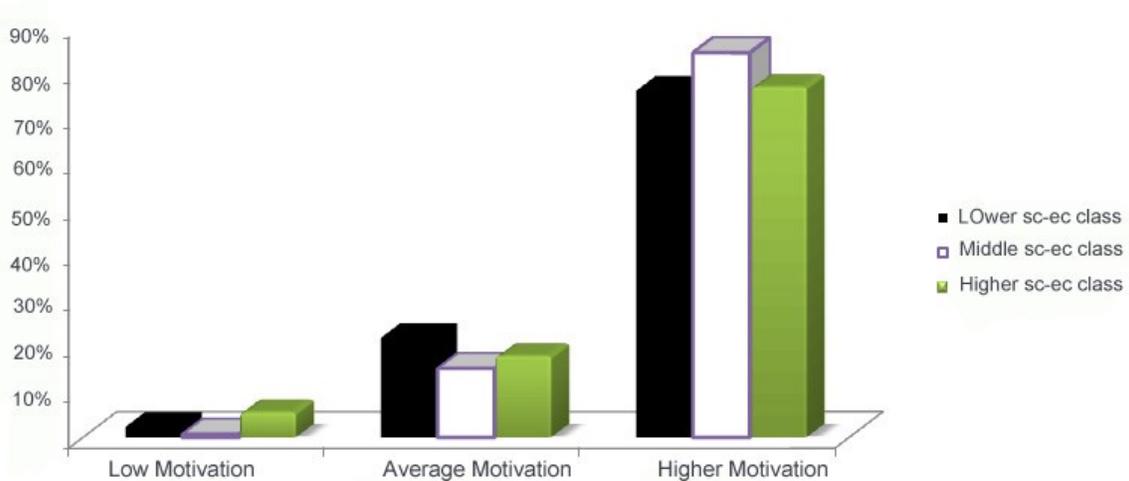**Diagram 6- University Majors Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class**
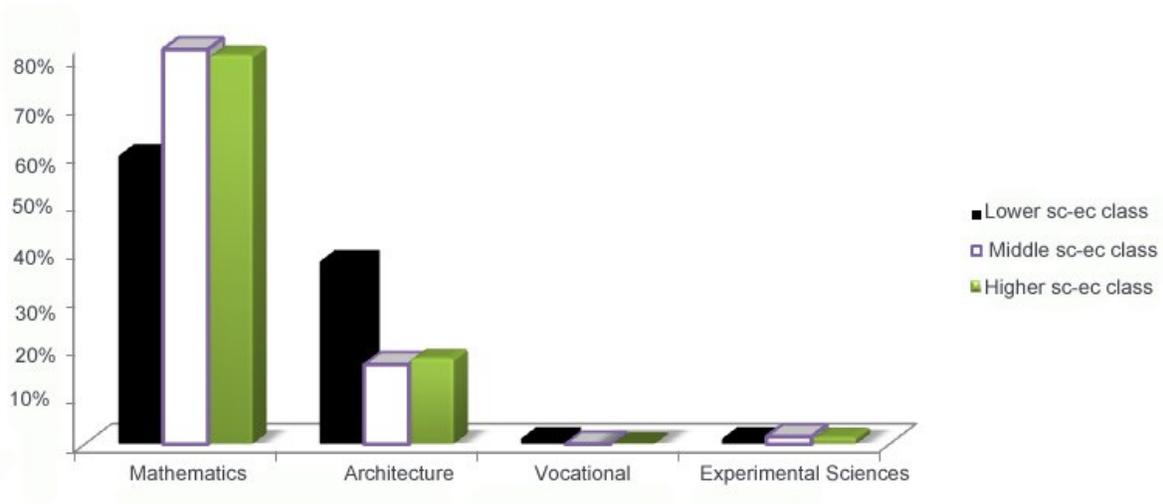
Based on X^2 test results in the above table, there is a significant relation between university majors and students' socioeconomic class (p>0.01, df=6, X^2= 18.15) and university majors depend on the students' socioeconomic class, so that the students who belonged to the lower socioeconomic class that have studied mathematics are higher than the students who belonged to the middle or higher socioeconomic classes.

Table 7- Educational Motivation Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class

Significancy Level	$\chi^2_{(4)}$	Higher Socioeconomic Class		Middle Socioeconomic Class		Lower Socioeconomic Class		
		Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Motivation level
		5.5	4	0.7	1	2.3	2	Low
0.159	6.59	17.8	13	15.1	21	21.8	19	Average
		76.7	56	84.2	117	75.9	66	High

**Diagram 7- Educational Motivation Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class**

Results indicate that most students have a high motivation. Also, based on X^2 test results presented in the above table, there is no significant relation between motivation level and students' socioeconomic class (p<0.05, df=4, X^2= 6.59) and educational motivation is similar in all socioeconomic classes.

Table 8- Job Prospect Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class

Significancy Level	$\chi^2_{(2)}$	Higher Socioeconomic Class		Middle Socioeconomic Class		Lower Socioeconomic Class		Job Prospect
		Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
0.754	0.56	45.2	33	43.2	60	48.3	42	Doesn't
		54.8	40	56.8	79	51.7	45	Does

Diagram 8- Job Prospect Distribution based on Students' Socioeconomic Class
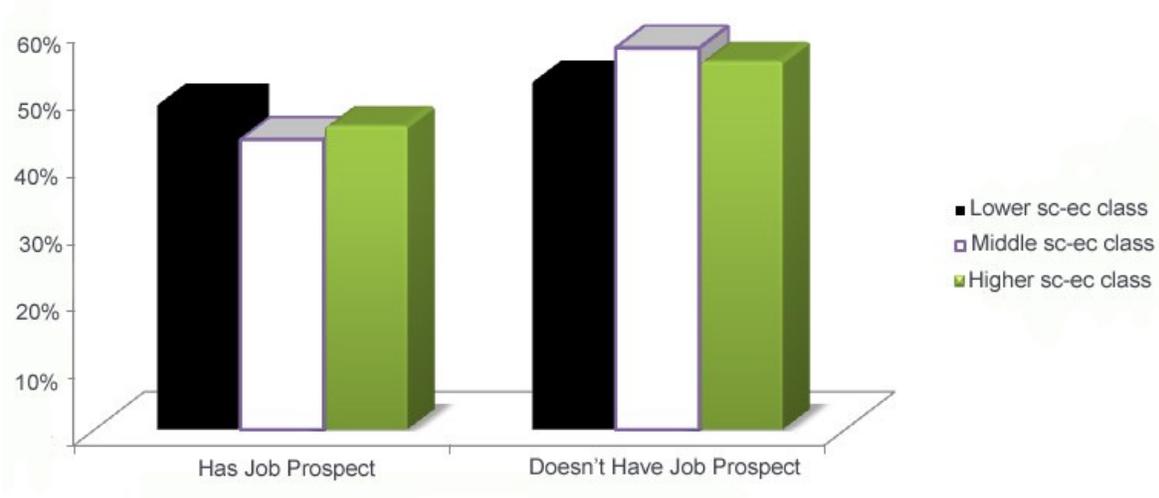
Results suggest half of the students have job prospect while the other half does not. Also, based on X^2 test results presented in the above table, there is no significant relation between job prospect and students' socioeconomic class (p<0.05, df=2, X^2= 0.56) and job prospect is similar in all socioeconomic classes.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and educational motivation among architecture students in private universities. The findings reveal that while SES significantly influences university type and major selection, it does not have a direct impact on students' motivation or job prospects. These results challenge traditional assumptions that economic privilege directly correlates with greater academic drive or career confidence. Instead, they suggest that architecture students, regardless of their financial background, exhibit similar levels of self-motivation and professional aspirations, possibly due to their inherent interest in the field.

One of the most significant findings is that students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to enroll in private universities, highlighting potential barriers to accessing public institutions. This raises important questions about the accessibility and equity of higher education systems, particularly in competitive fields like architecture. Furthermore, while students from different SES backgrounds may choose different majors, their overall motivation and career optimism remain relatively uniform, suggesting that factors such as passion, self-efficacy, and personal ambition play a more dominant role in academic persistence than financial background alone. Despite the overall positive outlook on job prospects, this study does not measure the actual employment outcomes of these students after graduation. While students may perceive architecture as a promising field, further research is needed to determine whether this optimism translates into real-world job opportunities, financial stability, and

career progression. Future longitudinal studies could track employment rates, salary levels, and career satisfaction to provide a more comprehensive understanding of SES and professional success in architecture.

Practical Recommendations

Given the findings, several policy recommendations can be made to improve educational access and career outcomes for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds:

1. **Increase Access to Financial Aid**
   - Governments and universities should expand scholarship programs and tuition assistance to support students from lower SES backgrounds in both public and private institutions.
   - Universities should offer subsidized student loans and flexible payment options to reduce financial stress and allow students to focus on academic success.
2. **Enhance Career Support Services**
   - Universities should implement structured mentorship programs, connecting students with experienced professionals in the field of architecture.
   - Career development initiatives, such as internship placement services, networking events, and industry partnerships, should be expanded to ensure students from all SES backgrounds have equal opportunities for career advancement.
3. **Improve Equity in University Admissions**
   - Public universities should consider alternative admission criteria beyond standardized test scores, such as portfolio-based evaluations, to ensure talented students from lower-income families are not excluded.
   - Universities should introduce outreach programs that guide high school students from underprivileged backgrounds in preparing for architectural studies.
4. **Encourage Further Research on Educational Motivation**
   - More qualitative studies, including student interviews and focus groups, should be conducted to gain deeper insights into the psychological and social factors influencing motivation.
   - Future research should investigate how post-graduation career trajectories differ based on SES and what interventions can help bridge potential employment gaps.

Final Thoughts

This study reinforces the idea that educational motivation is not solely dictated by economic privilege but rather influenced by a range of internal and external factors. While financial background can determine access to higher education and choice of major, it does not necessarily limit a student's ambition, drive, or professional aspirations.

By implementing targeted policies that improve financial accessibility, career support, and educational equity, universities and policymakers can ensure that all students—regardless of socioeconomic background—have the opportunity to pursue successful careers in architecture.

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