

Navigating New Horizons: Problems Faced By First-Generation Students in India and Their Road to Success

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research focuses on the often-overlooked demographic of first-generation students (fgs) in Indian higher education, aligning with the goals of the new national education policy (nep). With an estimated 121 million fgs facing unique challenges, the study delves into the lack of awareness about fgs in India and the impact of intrinsic/extrinsic factors on their academic performance.

The research employed purposive sampling for fgs, with 108 participants aged 18 to 21, utilizing close-ended questions in the questionnaire. Continued generational students (cgs) were sampled using convenience sampling, with a similar age range and sample size. Parents of fgs, the third target audience, were selected through purposive sampling, with 80 participants interviewed using a combination of open and close-format questions.

The study explores the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, categorizing them into internal motivations and external influences. Despite constituting a significant portion of the student population, fgs lack official recognition, emphasizing the need for nep-driven interventions.

Acknowledging limitations, including data authenticity and a restricted sample size for fgs parent interviews, the research recommends addressing the lack of awareness, parental support, and economic instability. Proposals include officially recognizing fgs in the education system, conducting further research, and implementing supportive schemes.

In conclusion, the research anticipates heightened awareness leading to improved support for fgs. Aligned with nep and United Nations' sustainable development goals 4 and 10, this paper provides actionable recommendations for policymakers and institutions, aiming to empower fgs and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable education landscape.

Keywords: First Generation Students, Continued Generational Students, Indian Education System, Intrinsic/Extrinsic Factors, Fgs Parents.

INTRODUCTION

First-generation students, often abbreviated as FGS, represent a distinct and resilient group within the realm of higher education. The designation "first-generation" implies the possibility that a student may lack the critical cultural capital necessary for college success because their parents did not attend college. (The Center, 2017) Cultural capital refers to non-monetary resources like education, training, and experience that are frequently thought to be beneficial for academic achievement.

First-generation students (FGS) often grapple with a myriad of challenges, including financial constraints, limited access to information, academic preparedness disparities, lack of family support and the absence of familial role models, etc. First-generation students may have fewer recognized landmarks when they go out on this trip, needing to pave their way because their parents did not experience college life.

With an estimated 121 million First-Generation Students (FGSs) in India, the New National Education Policy (NEP) approved in July 2020 holds paramount importance. Aligned with the NEP's pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability, addressing the educational needs of FGLs is crucial for realizing the policy's goal of a holistic, multidisciplinary, and flexible education system. This convergence emphasizes the

NEP's pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and contributing to India's vision of becoming a 'global knowledge superpower.'

The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Agenda 2030 aims to establish a future that is more equitable, sustainable and prosperous.

Among these goals the two which we think will be affected positively by this study on First Generation Students are -

1. GOAL 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education
2. GOAL 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

NEED FOR THE STUDY

A lot of research and development has been done on the various cohorts existing in the education domains but this area of the research has not yet been touched upon. Thus, we are conducting our research to address two important questions:

1) Lack of Awareness in India of the Existence, Challenges and Unique Needs of FGS

We conducted this research to investigate and verify whether there is a lack of recognition and awareness about FGS in the education domain.

In India alone there exists an estimated population of 121 million FGS. Yet, there is no official recognition of them in the education domain. While there are separate quota provisions and facilities in academic institutions for admission and support of OBC (other backward classes), ST/SC (Scheduled Tribes/Castes) and EWS (Economically weaker sections), there are none specifically for the FGS. Till date, government reports, including the 2023 Ministry of Education report, have overlooked FGS despite them constituting over 40 % to 60% of the student population. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that the long-awaited and indispensable requirements of first-generation students be brought into the limelight. The advent of the New National Education Policy in 2020 should assuredly serve as the foundational cornerstone to ameliorate the circumstances of FGS. India's education policy must treat FGLs as a separate demographic that requires additional support; FGLs need –more than other students — a safe space where they can ask questions and get answers –not dismissals(Arunima Joshi, 2019)

2) Trade-off between Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivational Factors and Academic Performance.

We conducted this research to understand how the intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting FGS impact their academic performance.

Prior studies have predominantly examined either extrinsic or intrinsic factors in isolation to discern their influence on the academic performance of first-generation students (FGS). Notably, there is a dearth of research that comprehensively considers both sets of factors simultaneously. By concurrently evaluating intrinsic and extrinsic factors, a more holistic framework emerges, offering a comprehensive understanding of their combined impact on the academic outcomes of FGS.

These factors can be classified in 2 types:

a) Intrinsic Factors:

Intrinsic factors affecting FGS involve aspects within the individual such as motivation, academic preparedness, time management skills, coping mechanisms, mindset, and career aspirations. These internal elements can significantly influence FGS' academic performance and overall success in navigating the college environment.

b) Extrinsic Factors:

Extrinsic factors for FGS are external influences affecting their academic performance. These include financial considerations, academic support services, family expectations, campus resources, peer influence, institutional policies, diversity initiatives, faculty relationships, work-study opportunities, technology access, residential life, and networking. Addressing these external elements is essential for creating a supportive environment for the success of FGS in higher education.

Understanding the interplay between these intrinsic and extrinsic factors is pivotal in deciphering how they contribute to or hinder the academic journey of first-generation students. Our research aims to shed light on this intricate relationship and provide insights that can inform interventions and support mechanisms for this student population.

Our research will result in the following outcomes

Our research will help increase awareness of the existence, challenges and unique needs of FGS among universities in India leading to improved support mechanisms. This research will also urge educational institutions to understand how extrinsic and intrinsic factors affect the academic journey of their child and the pivotal role it plays in determining their academic success or failure. Another possible outcome would be the enhanced success ratios for FGS due to the evidence-based strategies colleges will implement fostering efforts which align with broader goals for inclusive and equitable education on both national and global scales.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pelco et al (2014) compared the service-learning benefits on student growth of 321 first-generation students and 782 non-first-generation undergraduates. The majority, particularly the females, claimed notable progress; however, the growth of male pupils differed according to issues related to money, race, and generation. The greatest development was shown in first-generation males from low-income and minority backgrounds, highlighting the significance of varied samples in these kinds of research.

M. S. Thirumalai (2014) lists down the characteristics of First Generational Learners and the soft skills required in modern offices.

Garriott et al (2015) tested Lent's model on 414 college students, and the results showed that academic satisfaction, outcome expectations, and self-efficacy were all predicted by environmental supports. Variations in life satisfaction (28%) and academic development (44%), as well as satisfaction (56%), were explained by the model. The methodology can be used to improve happiness for both first-generation and non-first-generation students, according to the results.

Verdin Dina & Godwin Allison (2015) mention that First-generation college students differ from their peers in terms of family histories, STEM interests, and career expectations. It implies that matching the aspirations of engineering careers with students' interests is crucial for retention. The importance of parental participation cannot be overstated, and future studies will explore the college-going experiences, engineering major decisions, and identity development of first-generation students.

Jury et al (2015) highlight how social class and academic performance in a psychology university predict performance-avoidance goals among first-generation students, revealing an association between the pursuit of upward mobility, particularly among high achievers, and increased endorsement of these goals.

Pandey & Singh (2015) conducted a study in 16 East Delhi/NCR schools where the academic achievements and study habits of first-generation learners from rural and urban areas to those of later generations are compared. Notable differences were discovered, highlighting the necessity for educators, learners, and guardians to tackle these differences to enhance learning results.

Palbusa & Gauvain (2017) examines parent–student communication during the college transition for first-year students. Online surveys assess communication frequency, perceived support, and its impact on academic success. Non–first-generation students are expected to report more beneficial pre-college discussions, with an anticipated positive correlation between parent-student communication and academic achievement

Rubio et al (2017) analysed the resources that 200 first-generation students at four-year US universities face. Key findings show that the biggest barriers are the cost of tuition (63%) and the lack of knowledge about colleges (34.5%). The study sheds light on the preferences and difficulties faced by first-generation students while attempting to acquire resources.

Kumaran (2018) highlights that compared to 39–43% of non-first-gen students, over 69% of first-generation college students in Bangalore want to make a difference in their families' lives. First-generation students are becoming more and more important for economic growth, according to the Sodexo University Trends Report, which also highlights issues like information accessibility and school expenses.

Wadhwa (2018) emphasizes the impact of educational disparity on first-generation students and highlights how critical it is to comprehend it, particularly considering caste-based dynamics. Results from 400 participants in Jammu and Kashmir show that first-generation students had lower levels of influence from family influence and self-efficacy when it comes to pursuing higher education than their non-first-generation peers.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess the recognition of existence of FGS in the Indian education domain
- 2) To understand whether intrinsic & extrinsic factors affect FGS/CGS together or apart.
- 3) To identify whether intrinsic factors affect the FGS/CGS students more or less
- 4) To identify whether extrinsic factors affect the FGS/CGS students more or less

HYPOTHESES

H₀: There is no awareness in India of the existence, challenges and unique needs of FGS

H₁: There is awareness in India of the existence, challenges and unique needs of FGS.

H₀: Extrinsic factors & intrinsic factors together do not affect academic performance of FGS/CGS

H₁: Extrinsic factors & intrinsic factors together affect academic performance of FGS/CGS

H₀: Intrinsic factors do not significantly affect the FGS/CGS students.

H₁: Intrinsic factors significantly affect the FGS/CGS students.

H₀: Extrinsic factors do not significantly affect the FGS/CGS students.

H₁: Extrinsic factors significantly affect the FGS/CGS students.

H₀: FGS recognition has no significant impact over the Indian education sphere.

H₁: FGS recognition has a significant impact over the Indian education sphere.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Calculation of Two-Tailed t-test

N=108

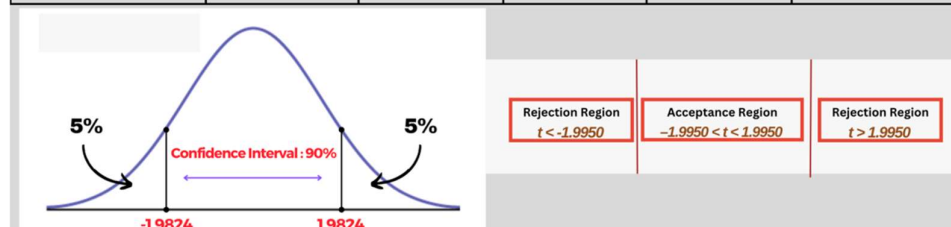
Degrees of freedom(df): $n-1 = 108-1 = 107$

Level of Significance (α): $(1-0.90)/2 = 0.10/2 = 0.05$

One Tail	0.05	0.025	0.01	0.005	0.0025	0.001	0.0005
Two Tails	0.1	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.005	0.002	0.001
df							
104	1.6596	1.9830	2.3627	2.6240	2.8682	3.1704	3.3866
105	1.6595	1.9828	2.3624	2.6235	2.8675	3.1697	3.3856
106	1.6593	1.9826	2.3620	2.6230	2.8670	3.1689	3.3847
107	1.6592	1.9824	2.3617	2.6225	2.8664	3.1681	3.3838

Critical Value (z value): 1.9824

Parameters	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3	Hypothesis 4	Hypothesis 5
Test Statistic Value (T-Value)	0.7650	2.8561	2.3212	2.0023	1.9983
Critical Value (Z-Value)	1.9824	1.9824	1.9824	1.9824	1.9824
Result :	H ₀ Accepted	H ₁ Accepted	H ₁ Accepted	H ₁ Accepted	H ₁ Accepted



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is Exploratory.

There were three target audiences selected as samples:

- 1) First Generational Students (FGS)
- 2) Continued Generational Students (CGS)

3) Parents of FGS

For First Generational Students (FGS)

The sampling method used was purposive sampling. The respondents were of the age group of 18 to 21 years. The sample size obtained through the questionnaire was of **108** participants. The sampling frames consisted of close-ended questions.

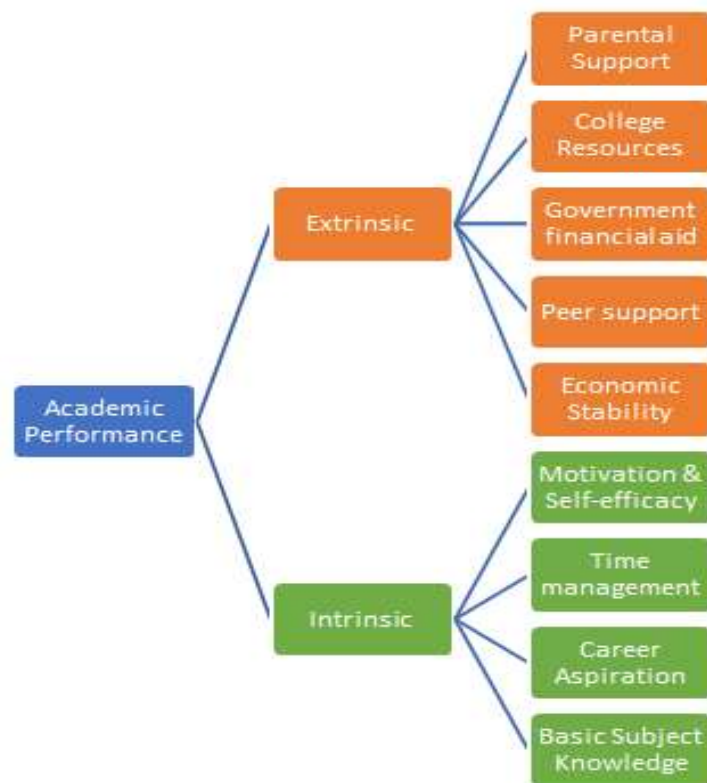
For Continued Generational Students (CGS):

The sampling method used was convenience sampling. The responders ranged in age from 18 to 21. With the use of the questionnaire, a sample size of **108** people was obtained. The sampling frames consisted of close-ended questions.

For Parents of First Generational Students:

The sampling method used was purposive sampling. The respondents were specifically the parents of FGS. The sample size obtained through the questionnaire was of **80** participants. The method of data collection was the interview method. Open and close-format questions were asked in the sampling frames.

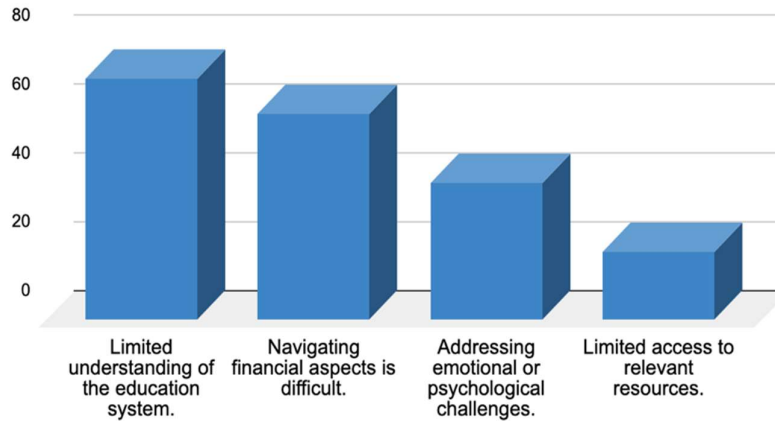
Model developed - Extrinsic and Intrinsic factors contributing/affecting the Academic Performance of First Generational Students (FGS) and Continued Generational Students (CGS)



DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Individual Questions

What difficulties do you face in actively supporting your child?

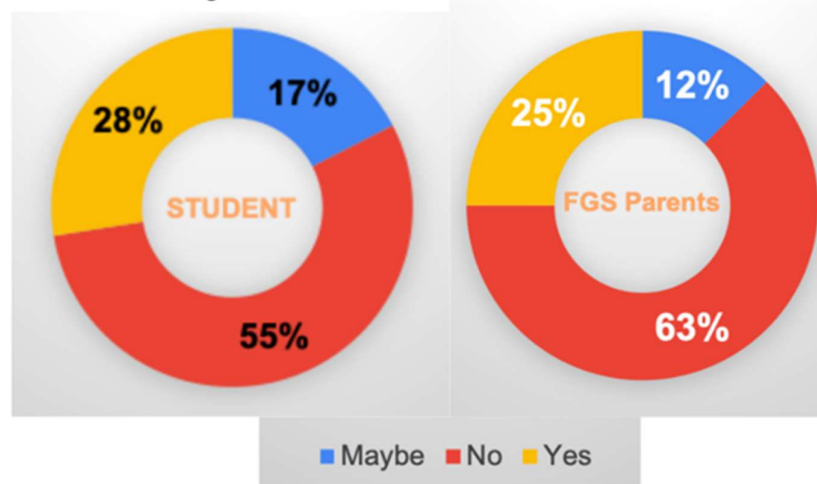


Inference: 70 parents (88%) felt that they lacked understanding of the Indian Education System and 60 parents faced difficult navigating education finances. The remaining responses were split between difficulty addressing emotional challenges of their children and having limited access to relevant resources.

Combined Questions:

1) Between Students and FGS Parents

Have you heard about the term FGS?

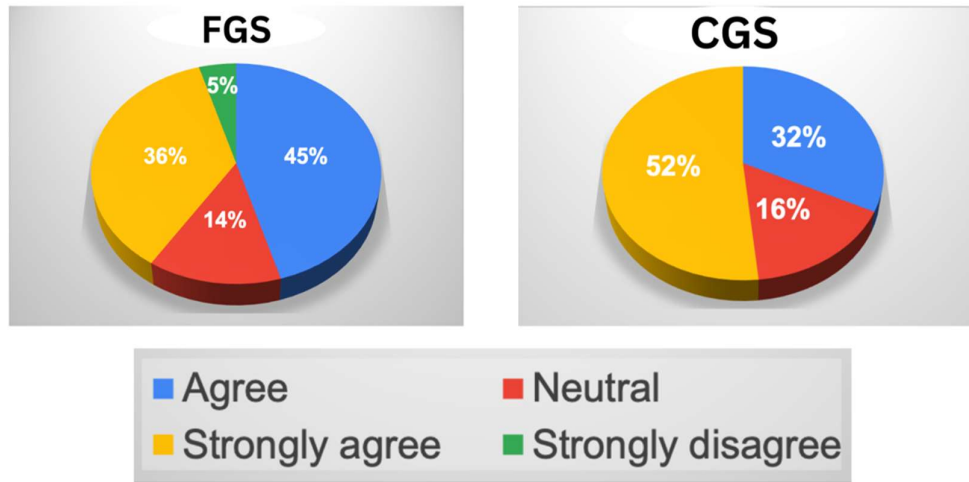


Inference: Students: 60 students (55%) lack awareness while 28% are unsure of it & 17% have heard it.

FGS Parents: 50 parents (63%) showed unawareness of the term FGS, 25% are unsure & 12% have heard it.

2) Between FGS & CGS Students

Do you agree that both intrinsic/extrinsic factors affect your academic performance?



Inference: FGS Students: 36% of students Strongly Agree, 45% only Agree while 14% are neutral and only 5% Strongly disagree

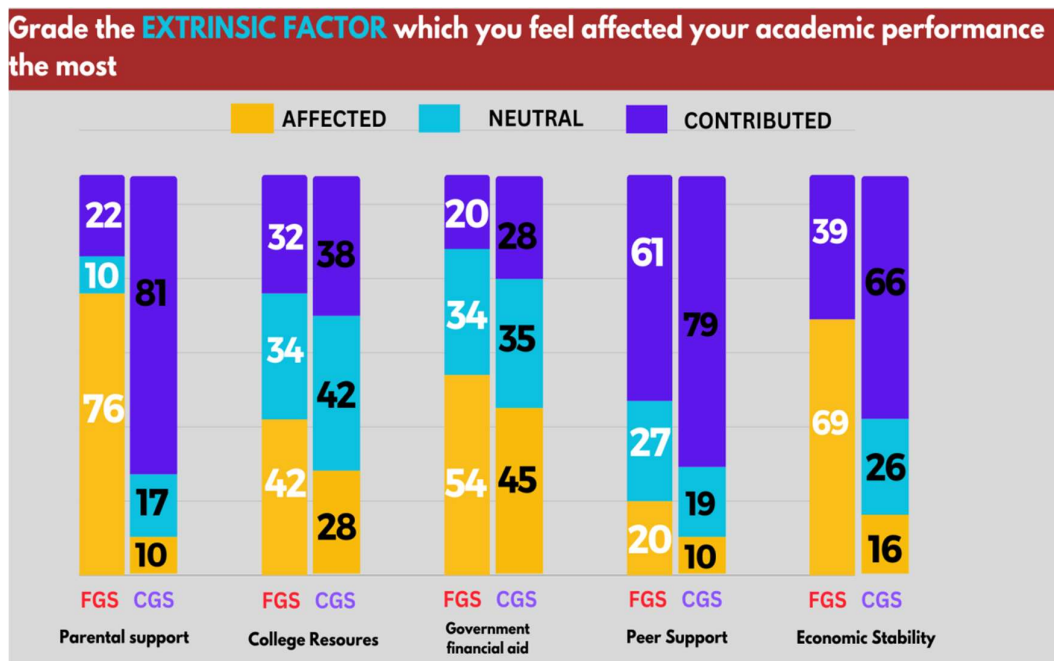
CGS Students: 52% of students Strongly Agree, 32% only Agree while 16% are neutral and none Strongly disagree

3) Between FGS & CGS Students

Grade the **extrinsic/intrinsic** factor which you feel affected your academic performance the most from

3 options - *Most affected*, *Neutral*, *Most Contributed respectively*

FGS/CGS (E) – Extrinsic factors



Inference:

1) Parental Support:

FGS - 76 students reported it affected them, 10 students were neutral whereas 22 students felt it contributed.
CGS - Contrary , 10 students reported it affected them, 17 students were neutral whereas a large proportion of 81 students felt it contributed.

2) College Resources:

FGS - 42 students reported it affected them, 34 students were neutral whereas 32 students felt it contributed.
CGS - 28 students reported it affected them, 42 students were neutral whereas 38 students felt it contributed.

3) Government and Financial Aid:

FGS - 54 students reported it affected them, 34 students were neutral whereas 20 students felt it contributed.
CGS- 45 students reported it affected them, 35 students were neutral whereas 28 students felt it contributed.

4) Peer Support:

FGS - 20 students reported it affected them, 27 students were neutral whereas 61 students felt it contributed.
CGS - 10 students reported it affected them, 19 students were neutral whereas 79 students felt it contributed.

5) Economic Stability:

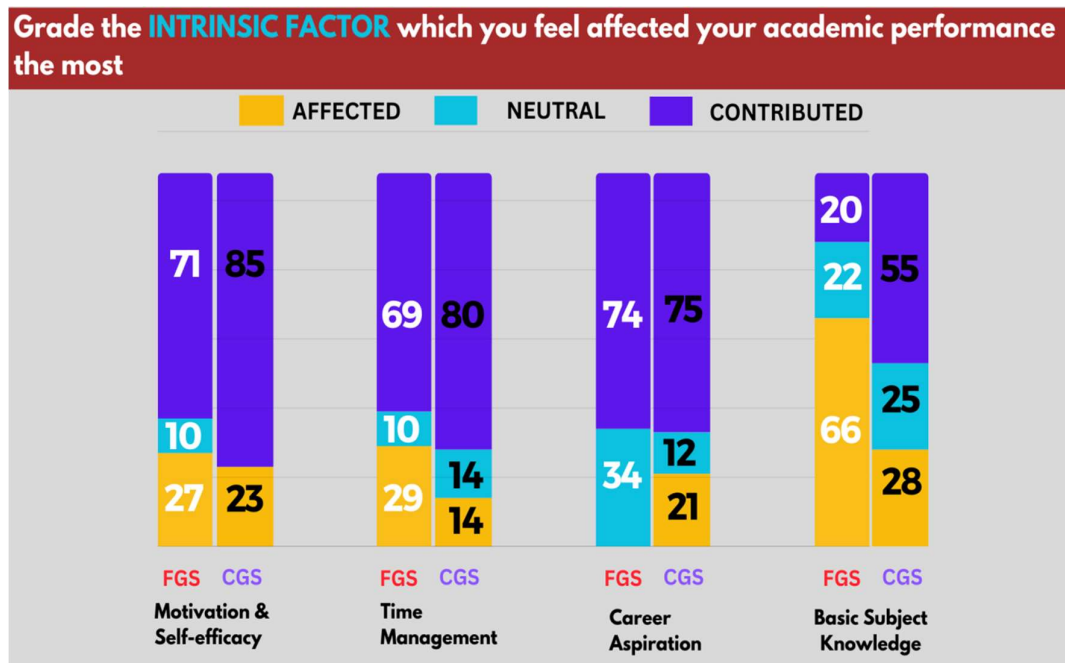
FGS- 69 students reported it affected them whereas 39 students felt it contributed.

CGS- 16 students reported it affected them, 26 students were neutral whereas 66 students felt it contributed.
It ,therefore, can be inferred that CGS students receive more parental support than FGS Students.

CGS students are also more economically stable than FGS students.

2 external factors namely Lack of Parental Support & Lack of Government Financial Aid & Economic instability seems to affect FGS students more than CGS students.

FGS/CGS (E) – Intrinsic factors



Inference:

1) Motivation & Self-efficacy:

FGS - 27 students reported it affected them, 10 students were neutral whereas 71 students felt it contributed.
CGS - Contrary , 23 students reported it affected them whereas a large proportion of 85 students felt it contributed.

2) Time Management:

FGS - 29 students reported it affected them, 10 students were neutral whereas 69 students felt it contributed.
CGS - Contrary, 14 students reported it affected them, 14 students were neutral whereas a large proportion of 80 students felt it contributed.

3) Career Aspiration:

FGS - 34 students felt indifferent whereas 74 students felt it contributed.
CGS - Contrary, 21 students reported it affected them, 12 students were neutral whereas a large proportion of 75 students felt it contributed.

4) Basic Subject Knowledge:

FGS - 66 students reported it affected them, 22 students were neutral whereas 20 students felt it contributed.
CGS - Contrary, 28 students reported it affected them, 25 students were neutral whereas a large proportion of 55 students felt it contributed.

It, therefore, can be inferred that Basic Subject knowledge is a factor which FGS students lack more than their CGS counterparts. Remaining factors do not show much variation.

LIMITATIONS

- 1) The accuracy of the secondary data in our research paper is largely dependent on the authenticity of data in the primary research conducted by the researchers of the referenced papers.
- 2) Interviews held with FGS Parents were restricted to only 80 in Mumbai as many parents showed resistance to voluntarily participating in the survey.
- 3) Responses obtained through survey suffered from a lack of awareness about FGS. Therefore there is a scope of in-depth questions to be asked by future researchers when there is more awareness about the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends on 3 major constraints noticed, i.e. lack of awareness of FGS students, lack of Parental support and economic instability at home which are adversely seen to be impacting the FGS children's academic progress.

The Indian Government should firstly start by recognising the existence of FGS in the Indian Education System, conduct further research on them and then work towards coming up with schemes and incentives for these FGS students which assists them in their academic journey and reduce the impact of economic instability.

The Government can also work together with higher education colleges under the NEP (New Education Policy) to create programs where FGS Parents are urged to be more involved in their child's education, thus delivering a stable support mechanism for the child to rely on.

CONCLUSION

This paper anticipates that educational institutions will recognize the intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting the academic journey of FGS, thereby enhancing success ratios through evidence-based strategies aligned with global and national goals.

In essence, this paper's research not only contributes to the understanding of the challenges faced by FGS but also provides concrete recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions to foster a more inclusive and equitable education system in alignment with the goals set by the NEP and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10. Through these efforts, this paper aims to empower FGS and pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future in education.

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