

**STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SOCIO-ACADEMIC STUDY  
FROM A RURAL INDIAN CONTEXT**

**Dr.P.Karthika**, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce (IB), Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College, Pollachi – 642 001

**Abstract**

This study investigates the expectations of college students toward their teachers in a higher education institution in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu. Using a descriptive research design, primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire from 120 undergraduate and postgraduate students across various disciplines. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were employed to analyze the influence of socio-demographic and academic factors on student expectations, focusing on teacher behavior, instructional methods, and classroom engagement. Results indicate that gender, area of residence, and medium of instruction significantly affect expectations, while age, educational qualification, and parents' education and occupation show no significant association. Students preferred teachers who are motivational, approachable, experienced, empathetic, and fair, favoring interactive and activity-based learning over traditional lectures. Emphasis was placed on mutual respect, clear communication, and equal attention to all learners. The findings highlight the need for a student-centered pedagogical approach and position teachers as facilitators rather than mere knowledge transmitters. The study suggests that integrating student feedback into faculty development programs can better align teaching practices with learner needs, thereby enhancing engagement, satisfaction, and overall academic outcomes in higher education.

**Keywords:** *expectations, students-centered, classroom engagement*

**Introduction**

Education is a dynamic and evolving process, and at its core lies the vital relationship between teachers and students. In the modern higher education ecosystem, particularly in the Indian context, the classroom is no longer a one-way transmission of knowledge but a collaborative space where both teacher and student roles are constantly negotiated. Students today are more informed, self-aware, and demand-driven, leading to a marked shift in what they expect from their educators beyond subject expertise. The expectations students hold toward their teachers play a significant role in shaping classroom engagement, learning outcomes, and overall academic satisfaction. These expectations extend beyond traditional teaching into behavioral, emotional, and motivational domains. Students expect teachers to be approachable, fair, empathetic, and able to foster a learning environment that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and personal growth. In this context, it becomes essential for teachers to not only deliver content but also recognize and respond to students' evolving academic and psychological needs. Existing literature emphasizes the impact of student-teacher interactions on academic success and social adjustment. According to Pianta's (1995) theory of teacher-student relationships, positive engagement with teachers boosts student motivation and outcomes, whereas negative or indifferent interactions may lead to disengagement and defiance. Furthermore, cultural and social factors—such as gender, residential background, language of instruction, and family education—often shape students' perceptions of what constitutes effective teaching. In Indian colleges, particularly in semi-urban and rural regions like Pollachi, such expectations are further nuanced by socio-economic diversity. First-generation learners, students from rural backgrounds, and those with limited access to prior educational support may approach college life with unique sets of expectations and challenges. Teachers, in such settings, must adopt a student-centered pedagogy that accommodates this diversity while promoting inclusivity, motivation, and meaningful learning. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the nature and extent of students' expectations from their teachers by examining the socio-economic and academic variables that influence these perceptions. The findings are intended to support

faculty members and institutional administrators in enhancing teaching effectiveness and developing responsive educational strategies that align with student needs in contemporary classrooms.

## **Review of Literature**

Understanding students' expectations from teachers has become a critical area of educational research, especially with the shift toward learner-centered pedagogies. Numerous studies have examined various dimensions of student expectations in relation to instructional methods, faculty behavior, and classroom engagement. Marshall A. Geiger et al. (2000) explored students' perceptions and their impact on the choice of major, revealing how initial impressions of faculty influence academic decisions. Similarly, Karin J. Spencer et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of student evaluations in improving teaching methods, showing that students value advisory roles and expect responsiveness from faculty. Fiona H. Spencer (2005) studied psychology students' expectations, concluding that learners prefer social-constructivist approaches and perceive tutors as facilitators.

Other studies, such as those by Brinkworth et al. (2006), have shown that students' expectations evolve during the transition from school to university, highlighting the need for adaptive teaching methods. P. Spoonren et al. (2007) validated the use of scaling techniques in evaluating teaching quality, reinforcing that students assess faculty based on clarity, fairness, and engagement. Boris Handal et al. (2011) and Oscar Manuel Trejo (2011) identified students' preference for interactive teaching, timely feedback, and personal connection with faculty. Mary Beth Dinto (2011) focused on hybrid learning environments, noting that satisfaction depends on communication, time management, and course structure. These studies collectively underline the complex interplay between teaching practices and student satisfaction. However, there remains a gap in literature concerning students in rural and semi-urban Indian contexts, particularly among first-generation learners. This study addresses that gap by analyzing expectations within a culturally and socio-economically diverse student population in Pollachi.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the growing focus on learner-centered approaches, a mismatch still exists between faculty teaching styles and student expectations. This disconnect is particularly evident in colleges where students come from varied socio-economic backgrounds, often resulting in lower engagement, dissatisfaction, or underperformance. Teachers may struggle to recognize the nuanced needs of learners who are first-generation graduates or hail from rural areas. The core problem is identifying and addressing what students truly expect from their educators in today's evolving academic environment. Are teachers meeting these expectations? If not, where are the gaps? The answers to these questions can help institutions realign their pedagogical strategies.

## **Research Gap**

While existing studies have extensively documented student expectations in urban and global academic settings, limited empirical data is available from small-town colleges in India. There is a need to understand how local factors such as rural upbringing, medium of instruction, parental education, and career goals shape student expectations. This research seeks to fill this gap by offering insights from a representative sample of students in Pollachi, a semi-urban area.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the primary expectations students have from their teachers?
2. Do demographic factors influence these expectations?
3. How does teacher behavior affect student engagement and learning outcomes?
4. What strategies can be implemented to better align teaching methods with student expectations?

### **Objectives of the Study**

- \* To identify the key expectations students hold toward their teachers in higher education.
- \* To analyze the influence of demographic variables such as gender, area of residence, and educational background on student expectations.
- \* To examine the level of student engagement and satisfaction based on teacher behavior and instructional methods.
- \* To suggest pedagogical improvements based on empirical findings.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts a descriptive research design to systematically collect and analyze data regarding students' expectations from teachers. The aim is to describe the nature and pattern of expectations and to identify variables that influence these perceptions. The research was conducted in a private arts and science college located in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu. This region represents a mix of rural and semi-urban student demographics, making it suitable for understanding diverse student expectations. A convenient random sampling technique was employed to select 120 students from undergraduate and postgraduate courses across various disciplines. This method ensured accessibility and diversity in student backgrounds. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Secondary data were gathered from journals, research articles, and institutional reports for theoretical grounding. The collected data were analyzed using:

Descriptive Statistics: To summarize the socio-economic and academic profile of students.

Chi-Square Test: To identify the statistical association between student expectations and demographic variables such as age, gender, area of residence, educational qualification, and medium of instruction.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope is limited to one college in Pollachi. However, the diversity of the student population allows for generalizations applicable to similar educational settings in semi-urban and rural India.

### **Limitations of the Study**

- \* The sample is limited to one institution and may not represent the broader student population.
- \* Responses may be influenced by students' personal experiences and biases.
- \* The use of self-reported data may result in social desirability bias.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **Demographic Profile Highlights:**

**Table 1**

S.No	Socio-Economic Variables	Categories	Percentage(%)
1	Age	17-21 Years	57.5
2	Gender	Female	64.17
3	Area of Residence	Rural	61.67
4	Medium of Instruction	English	51.67
5	First Generation Graduates	Yes	61.67
6	Parents' Occupation	Agriculture	41.67
7	Educational Qualification	PG	50.83

The demographic breakdown highlights that the majority of students (57.5%) are between the ages of 17–21, indicating a youthful, predominantly undergraduate population. This aligns with the typical college age bracket, and expectations may reflect their stage of cognitive and emotional development. With 64.17% of the respondents being female, the findings suggest a higher female

enrollment in higher education in this region. This gender distribution may also influence classroom dynamics and expectations around communication, respect, and safety. A substantial 61.67% of students come from rural areas, suggesting that rural youth are actively participating in higher education. Their expectations may differ from urban counterparts due to previous schooling environments, cultural factors, and access to resources. More than half (51.67%) were educated in English medium, indicating a shift towards global language integration even in semi-urban areas. This factor can influence students' comfort with instructional materials, expectations for language proficiency, and teaching clarity. Significantly, 61.67% are first-generation graduates—students whose parents did not pursue higher education. These learners may need additional support and mentorship, as their academic navigation often lacks at-home guidance. Agriculture being the primary occupation of 41.67% of parents reflects the rural and agrarian background of the region, potentially linking economic pressures with student motivation and career expectations. Over half (50.83%) of the respondents are at the postgraduate level, bringing a higher level of academic maturity. These students likely have clearer expectations regarding teaching depth, specialization, and practical application.

### Key Student Preferences:

**Table 2**

S.No	Expectation Variables	Preferences	Percentage
1	Teacher behavior	liberal behavior	56.67%.
2	First class	Encouraging and motivating teachers	50.84%.
3	Teaching method	Activity-based learning.	53.33%
4	Class duration	Classes less than one hour.	80%
5	Post-lunch session	Practical sessions	55.83%
6	Teaching faculty	Experienced faculty	80%

Student preferences reveal strong trends toward participatory and motivating teaching styles. A majority prefer teachers who are liberal (56.67%) meaning non-authoritarian, approachable, and flexible. This reflects a broader shift in higher education where students value mutual respect and two-way interaction. During first class interactions, 50.84% prefer teachers who are motivating and encouraging. First impressions seem to shape students' willingness to engage in the classroom. With 53.33% favoring activity-based learning, students are clearly looking for engagement beyond passive lectures. They expect instructors to incorporate case studies, role-plays, peer interaction, and real-world examples. An overwhelming 80% prefer class durations under 1 hour—this underscores the importance of content delivery being concise, engaging, and within attention span limits. 55.83% of students prefer practical sessions post-lunch, likely because they find it easier to stay focused in hands-on learning formats rather than passive ones during this low-energy period. Furthermore, 80% show a strong preference for experienced faculty, associating experience with clarity, confidence, depth of knowledge, and teaching effectiveness.

### Students Expectation Index:

**Table 3**

Variations	Values
Low Expectation	< 71.42
Medium Expectation	71.42 – 91.50
High Expectation	> 91.50
Mean Index	81.46
Standard Deviation	10.04

The expectation index categorizes students' level of low, medium, and high expectations:

Most students fall within the medium range (71.42–91.50), with an average index of 81.46. The standard deviation of 10.04 indicates that expectations are relatively consistent among students. Students expect teachers to be motivating, fair, experienced, and interactive. The presence of only a small group in the low expectation category suggests a generally aspirational and positive student mindset. This, points to the need for teachers to consistently meet moderately high expectations to maintain student engagement and satisfaction.

### **Relationship between Socio-Economic Variables and Student Expectations**

The table below presents the relationship between various socioeconomic variables and student expectations based on Chi-square test results. Significant associations are highlighted at the 10% level of significance, indicating which factors statistically influence students' expectations from teachers.

**Table 4**

<b>Socioeconomic Variable</b>	<b>Chi-Square Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Relationship with Expectations</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Age	1.857	Not Significant	No Relationship	Age does not significantly influence student expectations.
Gender	2.414	Not Significant	No Relationship	Male and female students exhibit similar expectations.
Area of Residence	9.406	Significant at 1%	Yes	Urban students may expect more interactive teaching methods.
Educational Qualification	0.789	Not Significant	No Relationship	UG and PG students have similar expectations.
Parents' Education	4.670	Not Significant	No Relationship	Parental education does not shape student expectations.
Medium of Instruction	9.973	Significant at 1%	Yes	English medium students may expect more fluent, modern teaching.
Study Hours	11.388	Significant at 1%	Yes	More study hours correlate with higher expectations.
First Generation Graduate	0.177	Not Significant	No Relationship	First-generation status does not affect expectations.

The analysis of the relationship between various socioeconomic variables and student expectations reveals several important insights based on Chi-square test results. Among the variables tested, three showed statistically significant associations at the 10% level: area of residence, medium of instruction, and study hours. These factors play a critical role in shaping how students perceive their teachers and what they expect from them. Students from urban and rural areas demonstrated differing expectations, likely due to differences in exposure to teaching quality and resources in their schooling years. Urban students, having possibly experienced better infrastructure and modern pedagogy, may expect more advanced teaching methods



in higher education. Similarly, students educated in the English medium showed significantly different expectations compared to their regional-language counterparts. English medium students might seek fluent communication, exposure to global examples, and the use of technology in classrooms.

Study hours also emerged as a significant factor influencing expectations. Students who dedicate more time to academic work generally have clearer academic goals and tend to expect structured, supportive, and engaging teaching. Their seriousness towards learning translates into higher expectations regarding instructional quality, teacher involvement, and course clarity.

In contrast, other variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, parents' education, and first-generation graduate status were not found to significantly influence student expectations. This implies that demographic and familial backgrounds do not necessarily shape students' perceptions of what they seek from teachers. Instead, expectations are more aligned with students' academic environments and personal commitment to learning.

In summary, the findings highlight that institutions and educators should focus more on improving the learning environment and encouraging academic engagement rather than assuming student expectations are dictated by static demographic characteristics. Teachers should be trained to adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse, yet consistent, expectations arising from students' academic behavior and educational exposure.

### **Major Findings**

**Demographics:** A majority of the students fall between the ages of 17–21 and are predominantly female. Most belong to rural areas and come from agricultural families, highlighting the rural outreach of higher education in Pollachi.

**Academic Profile:** Over half the respondents are first-generation graduates, and a substantial number are pursuing postgraduate studies, showing academic progression despite socio-economic constraints.

**Expectations:** Students have medium to high expectations from teachers, particularly favoring motivational, liberal, and experienced faculty members.

**Teaching Methods:** Students prefer activity-based, interactive teaching methods. The preference for class durations under one hour and practical sessions post-lunch suggests a demand for more efficient and hands-on learning.

**Significant Factors:** Chi-square test results show that area of residence, medium of instruction, and study hours significantly influence student expectations.

**Non-significant Factors:** Variables like age, gender, parental education, qualification level, and first-generation status do not have a significant influence on student expectations.

### **Suggestions**

1. Promote Student-Centered Learning: Encourage the use of activity-based, participative, and interactive teaching methods to meet student expectations and improve engagement.
2. Enhance Faculty Development: Offer regular training sessions to develop motivational, empathetic, and student-friendly teaching practices, especially for new or inexperienced faculty.
3. Incorporate Feedback Mechanisms: Collect and analyze student feedback regularly to adapt teaching styles and improve classroom experiences.
4. Support First-Gen Graduates: Design mentorship and remedial programs specifically for first-generation learners to bridge academic and cultural gaps.
5. Timetable Optimization: Schedule practical or experiential classes post-lunch when students prefer hands-on learning.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that students in higher education, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions like Pollachi, possess clear and consistent expectations from their teachers. They seek motivation,

fairness, and interactive teaching that aligns with their academic efforts and socio-economic realities. While demographic variables such as age and gender show minimal influence, behavioral and environmental factors like study habits, medium of instruction, and place of residence significantly shape expectations.

These findings highlight the growing importance of adopting student-centered approaches in higher education. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate dynamic pedagogies, understand individual learning needs, and remain adaptable. Institutions, in turn, must provide the infrastructure and support systems necessary for faculty to fulfill these expectations.

By addressing the expectations identified in this study, colleges can foster a more inclusive, responsive, and effective educational environment that supports both academic achievement and holistic development.

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