

Relationship of Different Levels of Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to find the relationship of different levels of socioeconomic status in managing the academic achievement of their children at secondary level. The objectives of the study were; 1) To explore different levels of parental socioeconomic status of students 2) to assess the academic achievement of students at different levels of socioeconomic status 3) to find the relationship of different levels of socioeconomic status with academic achievement of secondary school students. For the achievement of objectives, Data of 1438 students were collected from 84 schools of Abbotabad, Haripur and Mansehra, of Hazara Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan through a pre-framed questionnaire whereas marks obtained in Grade 9 were taken as Students' academic achievement. The data was analyzed by using and percentage, and Pearson Correlation coefficient. The Results indicated that the students belonging to average and above average level of socioeconomic status academically perform better at secondary level. Further, in depth analysis found a significant positive correlation between average and above average levels of socioeconomic status and academic achievement of students.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Levels of Socioeconomic Status, secondary school students

Introduction

Socioeconomic status constitutes the social as well as economic standing of an individual or family among others (Ghazi et al., 2013). Parental level of education, their income and occupation are the decisive factors in managing to live respectfully in society as they are the major indicators of socioeconomic status (Santrock & Arends, 2001; Jeynes (2002). Johnson and Elder (2000) identified socioeconomic status, parental involvement and family size as influential factors for overall development of children (Arends, 2001). Literature review revealed consistent impact of education level of parents in managing the educational performance of their students (Smith, Brooks- Gunn & Klebanov, 1997). So, parental socioeconomic status has a direct impact on those factors having an educational advantage as well as disadvantage (Centre for the Study of Higher Education, 2008).

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Affluent and educated parents try to make sure the future of their children bright through better education, provision of conducive learning environment and prestigious jobs (Becker & Tome, 1979). So significant correlation has been found between educational qualification of parents and students' academic achievement where parental education contribute a lot in enhancing the educational participation and academic success due to availability of financial resources (CSHE, 2008; James, 2002; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Edler, 2004; Ghazi et al, 2013; Tileston, 2005; Majorbanks, 1996; Amato, 1987; Mukherjee, 1995). Socio-economic status (SES) became stronger for individuals at the secondary level (Trusty, 2000) because more family and individual resources are necessary to attain this level. One of the many aspects of family environment is its socioeconomic status.

Low Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

Students belonging to low level of socioeconomic status score low in academics or drop out of schools (Eamon 2005). They tend to face low academic achievement as they get older and remain prone to leave school early (Rumberger, 2004). This may because problems in family or disrupted home environment. Similarly, low level of mother education consistently leads to lower academic achievement (Zill, Collins, West and Hausken 1995). Insufficient resources have a bad effect on decision making regarding the overall development of the children.

The gender of the students affects the educational performance of the students (Horne, 2000). Many reasons are discussed about the gap between the educational performance of male and female students (Buckingham, 1999; 2000b). This may be due to gender bias, teaching, curricula, and assessment as well as socioeconomic status (Buckingham, 1999) The gender gap tend to increase within each socioeconomic level (Teese et al., 1995) As the socioeconomic status decrease, the performance of male students move down (Teese et al., 1995).

Highly educated home ensures the availability of parental role model, educational aspirations and expectations, and level of encouragement that motivate and stimulate children to continue further education (James, 2002). Additionally, Family income and parental education are considered as vital predictors of learning experiences (Klebanov et al. 1994 and Smith et el. (1997). Hence, it implies that educational level of parents is mediated by their financial resources which support academic achievement of their children.

High socioeconomic status is considered as a vital factor in the development of skills (psychological, social, and cognitive) among the children that ultimately help in the school achievement due to provision of environment in relation to socio-economic status (Williams et al., 1980; Williams, 1987; Williams et al., 1993). Children belonging to average and above level of socioeconomic status receive an environment at home where they have absolute liberty of discussing their problems, expressing difference of opinion with parents as well as participating in different activities (Shapiro, 2004; Ghazi et al.,

2013; Marmot, 2004). Whereas children of low SES have no such opportunities and only receive parental dictates. Consequently, their performance remains low as compared to those of average and above average level of SES children (Graetz, 1995).

Numerous studies have been conducted in Pakistan and abroad to explore the influence of socio-economic status of parents on educational achievement of students. For example, Ahmar and Anwar (2013) examined the influence of gender and socioeconomic status on academic achievement of secondary school students of Lucknow city, India and concluded that better social and economic status results in enhancement of educational performance of students. Similarly, Azhar et al, (2013) studied the impact of parental socioeconomic status and educational level on academic achievement of university students and found that students belonging to high socioeconomic status performed better as compared to low socioeconomic status., Shaheen and Gul (2014) explored the relationship of gender and socioeconomic status with academic achievement of students selected from four Government schools of Lahore city, Pakistan. They found significant correlation between socioeconomic status and scholastic success of students.

The present study is attempted to explore the impact of Parental Socioeconomic Status viz. Parental Education, Monthly Income, and availability of Resources at home as well as levels of socioeconomic status on educational success of students at secondary level at Hazara Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted for the achievement of following objectives.

- 1) To explore different levels of parental socioeconomic status of students
- 2) To assess the academic achievement of students at different levels of socioeconomic status
- 3) To find the relationship of different levels of socioeconomic status with academic achievement of secondary school students.

Hypothesis of the Study

This study tested the following hypothesis.

- 1) Majority of the students at secondary level, belong to families of average level of socioeconomic status.
- 2) Above average level of socioeconomic status has strong relationship with academic achievement.
- 3) Above average level of socioeconomic status leads to higher academic achievement at secondary level.

Methodology

The current study was descriptive in nature. Checklist was used to collect information regarding the different aspects of socioeconomic status of students while data regarding academic achievement was collected from the Gazette book of ninth grade marks of students who appeared in annual examination held under the BISE (Board of

Intermediate and Secondary Education) Abbotabad, Hazara Division, Khyber Pkhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The collected data was analyzed through Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage, Student t- test, and Pearson Correlation coefficient, in order to achieve the objectives and ultimately test the hypotheses.

Population

The population of the study included 53289 students of Grade 10 of Hazara Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who appeared in the Annual Examination 2013 under Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Abbottabad and promoted to Grade 10. Whereas population of schools comprised of 825 Schools from Secondary and Higher Secondary level (Public and Private) (District EMIS, 2012-13).

Sample

A total of eighty four (84) schools were randomly selected. Following prior permission of school principals to conduct the study during school hours, 20 students each were randomly selected from grade 10. Simple random technique was used to select a total of 1438 grade 10 students from three districts (Abbotabad, Haripur and District Mansehra) of Hazara Division, Pakistan. 50.4% of the total survey consisted of public sector students whereas the remaining 49.6% were private sector students. Gender ratio comprised of 50.4% female students and 49.6% were male students. 74% of the students were from Science Group and the rest of 26% were from Arts group. While the Rural and urban area students were in ratio of fifty-fifty.

Procedure

The procedure to conduct this study is discussed under the following headings.

Research instrument

A questionnaire was developed as a result of thorough review of related literature. Additionally, it was validated through expert opinion. This tool comprised of the detailed information for the students to respond. It encompassed two broad categories. Part 1st consisted of information like father's education and mother's education, and their monthly income while part 2nd focused on availability of facilities with the assumption to facilitate in academic achievement. The second part consisted of information about electronic appliances, books, internet, telephone, personal vehicle.

The researcher personally visited the selected schools for the purpose of data collection. After permission from the school principal, 20 students were randomly selected from the grade 10 students. The selected students were explained the purpose of the study. They were assured that the information they provide will be used only for research purpose.

Description of Data

The collected data regarding the two broad categories is described in the following tables.

Table 1 **Levels of socioeconomic status**

	f	%
SES (Below average)	261	18.2
SES (Average)	822	57.2
SES (Above average)	355	24.7
Grand Total	1438	100.0

Table 1 shows that 261 (18.2 %) of the total students belonged to below socioeconomic status, 822 (57.2 %) average socioeconomic status and 355 (24.7 %) to high average socioeconomic status. The results indicate that (18.2 %) below average level of socioeconomic status. These results are almost in conformity with the report of World Bank titled "World Development Indicators (WDI) 2015" regarding below average socioeconomic status which maintains that the international poverty line is two dollars a day or an income of about Rs 205 per day in local currency" of Pakistan. This report identifies that 12.7 percent of population of Pakistan lives below poverty line (World Bank, 2015). Furthermore, majority (57.2%) of the families belong to average level of socioeconomic status.

Results and Discussion

The collected data was analyzed by using percentile, Pearson correlation coefficient and Multiple Regression model. As a result of data analysis, the following results were found.

In order to determine the levels of socioeconomic status, the following results were obtained through the use of percentile.

Table 2 **Description of students' academic achievement in low, average, and above average level of socioeconomic status**

Students achievement	Above Average	Average level	Below average level
First Division	326 (89%)	523 (63.6 %)	45 (17 %)
Second	27 (07 %)	326 (39.7 %)	114 (44 %)
Third/ failed**	12 (03 %)	73 (0.09%)	102 (39 %)

** Failed means that student is failed in one or more papers.

Table 2 shows that 39 % of the students got third division, 44 % got of the students got second division while only 17 % of the students from low socioeconomic status got first division. This table further shows that 63.6 % of the students got first division, 39.7 % got of the students got second division while only 0.09 % of the students from average level of socioeconomic status were only either failed or got third division.

The above table shows that 89 % of the students got first division, 07 % got of the students got second division while only 03 % of the students from above average level of socioeconomic status were only either failed or got third division. These results are

consistent with the results of Bergeson, (2006) who concluded that students belonging to low income families perform below average regardless of their race and ethnicity.

Table 3 Relationship of levels of socioeconomic status and academic achievement

	Correlation	Significance level	Sample
Below average	-0.010	0.874	261
Average	0.164	0.000	822
Above average	0.221	0.000	355

Table 3 indicates that lower level of socioeconomic status has negative and insignificant relationship ($r=-0.010$, $\alpha=0.874$) with academic achievement of students. This result looks more convincing because the parents, who are more economically disadvantaged, can not sufficiently meet the educational needs (both material and psychological) of their children. Consequently these students cannot perform to their full potential (Rouse & Barrow, 2006). Academic achievement of students is badly affected by the low socioeconomic status of their parents and dragging it to a lower level (Sander, 2001) which is becomes more evident at secondary and post secondary level (Trusty, 2000). On the other hand, there exists a positive and significant relationship of average level of socioeconomic status ($r= 0.164$, $\alpha=0.000$) with academic achievement of students followed by a positive and significant relationship of academic success of students and above average level of socioeconomic status ($r= 0.221$, $\alpha=0.000$). It is evident that students belonging to higher socioeconomic status and whose parents have higher education are expected to be more concerned about their children's' learning, may have positive thinking about the abilities of their children, more hard work oriented, and use more useful strategies for their children as compared to those children who belong to low socioeconomic status and whose parents are less educated (Joan & Smrekar, 2009). These results are in line with the results of (Garzon, 2006; Kahlenberg, 2006; Kirkup, 2008; Ahmar & Anwar, 2013; Hanes, 2008) who found that students from above average, and average level of socioeconomic status perform better as compared to students belonging to low socioeconomic status. Hence academic performance of students has a significant relationship with average and above average levels of socioeconomic status of their parents while low socioeconomic status hinders their academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of the study concludes that the academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic background remains well below average while the students from average and above average socioeconomic status score well above average. It indicates that parents of high socioeconomic status are assumed to be highly educated, receive better income and are able to establish and maintain conducive learning environment for their children. Therefore, it is essential that the socioeconomic status of the people may be raised by providing more employment opportunities at the Govt. level. Further, parents should be motivated to apply self regulated strategies to raise their income level and meet the academic requirements of the students at secondary level.

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