



Impact of Socio-Economic Status on Students' Achievement Among Public Sector Secondary Schools of Taluka Ratodero, District Larkana, Sindh

Maria Umrani¹, Saeed Ahmed² & Dr. Ahmed Saeed³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Hamdard University, Karachi, Email: usmanmaria098xrt@gmail.com

²Research Scholar, Department of Education, Hamdard University, Karachi, Email: siyalsaeed7@gmail.com

³Professor, Department of Education, Hamdard University, Karachi, Email: ahmad.saeed@hamdard.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>This study is designed to investigate the impact of socio-economic status on students' achievement among public sector secondary schools of Taluka Ratodero District Larkana, Sindh. On the basis of objectives, two major hypotheses were formulated and two major research questions were raised. Moreover, the scope of study was limited to students of all public secondary school students. In depth analysis of the literature was done. Survey research design was adopted. The mixed method research design was used. Two samples of 60 students and 4 teachers were drawn. Data was collected through a questionnaire and structured interview. It was analyzed statistically. It was discovered that socioeconomic position had an impact on academic attainment, with those from higher and intermediate socioeconomic groups performing better. Specific recommendations were made in light of the results.</i>
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Corresponding Author:			
Saeed Ahmed			
Email:			
siyalsaeed7@gmail.com			



Introduction

A person's education is closely linked to their life chances, income, and wellbeing (Battle and Lewis 2002). Education and Economy are two sides of a single coin. Best Education system and institutions contribute in producing skilled and technical workforce. On the other hand, skilled and technical population earns a handsome income and invests back in the Education of new generation. This is a cyclic process which is revolving all the time. Pakistan is dealing with significant socio-economic challenges that affecting the education sector, particularly at the secondary level. Students from poor socio-economic backgrounds are facing substantial barriers and challenges in achieving academic success.

Pakistan's socio-economic conditions are complex due to various factors, including economic instability, poverty, education, healthcare, political instability and climate change. According to World Bank, Over one-third of school-age children are out of school, and nearly two-thirds of those in school are learning deprived. However, poverty has increased slightly, with an estimated 42.3% of the population living below the poverty line in FY24. It is widely accepted that children from households with higher and intermediate socioeconomic class perform better academically due to the availability and provision of learning resources. Becker & Tomes (1979) corroborate this notion. Contrary to popular opinion, children from low-income homes may not have access to additional learning resources, therefore it may be difficult for them to receive a high-quality education and excel academically. Family socioeconomic level has a clear relationship with the quality of achievement of students (Jeynes, 2002). According to Heyneman (2005), studies have shown for years that students from institutions with poor family socioeconomic position did not perform well. In summary, secondary school students' performance and accomplishments are influenced by their socioeconomic backgrounds. It would be essential to conduct an empirical analysis of these factors by focusing on a particular field of study. For a variety of reasons, secondary school education is a major concern in many nations. Lower secondary (Grades 6–8) and upper secondary (Grades 9–12) are the two stages of secondary education, according to ISCED97. Middle school (grades 6–8) in Pakistan is equivalent to the former, whereas matriculation (grades 9–10) is regarded as secondary. Thus the secondary education is really an important level of education that if it is done accordingly, then the young generation will definitely play a vital role in country's prosperity successfully and will become a positive contribution in human resource development.

This study aims to investigate the impact of socio-economic status on students' achievement among public sector secondary schools at Taluka Ratodero, District Larkana, Sindh, with a special focus on highlighting the challenges and difficulties that lower academic performance. By exploring the relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement, this research aims to inform policy makers and to engage teachers, educators and parents to address these challenges that can help mitigate the effects of poverty on students' achievement. This study was conducted in Larkana which is a rural area of Sindh. This will help policy makers, researchers and Educators to apply the findings and recommendations of this study to other rural areas of Sindh and Pakistan.

Objectives

General objective of the study was to examine the relationship between socio-economic status and students' achievement at secondary level at Taluka Ratodero District larkana. The study specifically focused on the following:

1. To investigate the relationship between socio-economic status and students' achievement among secondary school students.
2. To identify the challenges faced by students from low-income backgrounds in achieving academic success.
3. To examine the impact of socio-economic status on students' access to educational resources and opportunities.

The current study is based on the following hypotheses and research questions:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement of secondary school students.

2. Students from high socio-economic backgrounds tend to have better academic achievement compared to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
3. What are the specific challenges and barriers faced by students from low-income backgrounds in accessing educational resources and opportunities?
4. How do these challenges impact their academic achievement in secondary schools?

Literature Review

The relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement has been a prominent concern in education and educational research. Many studies have investigated the impact of SES on students' achievement, highlighting the relationship between socio-economic factors and academic outcomes. This study has been conducted in a rural area of Sindh. SES is divided into three groups/categories i.e; high income, middle income and low income. Research has many times shown a positive and significant correlation between SES and academic achievement (Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). Students with higher socio-economic backgrounds always perform better academically, with higher grades and examination scores, compared to their peers from lower socio-economic backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This relationship can be attributed to various factors, including access to educational resources, parental involvement, and school quality (Coleman, 1966). Students from low-income backgrounds always face many obstacles that impact their academic achievement. These challenges include many things i.e; limited access to educational resources, such as textbooks, technology, and internet connectivity (Warschauer, 2003). Financial constraints can also lead to low motivation, stress, and anxiety which resultantly affect academic performance (Jensen, 2013). Furthermore, low-income families may also face barriers to involvement in their children's education, such as work schedules, and limited education themselves (Henderson & Berla, 1994). SES significantly impacts students' access to educational resources and opportunities. Higher SES students tend to have more access to educational resources and opportunities like quality education, extracurricular activities, and private tutoring and other support services (Lareau, 2011). This unequal access to resources and opportunities can create achievement gaps between students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain the relationship between SES and academic achievement. The cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) highlights that higher SES students possess cultural capital, such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes, that is valued in educational settings. The social reproduction theory (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) posits that education systems perpetuate social inequalities by reproducing existing power structures.

In addition to income, socioeconomic status also includes financial stability, educational background, and personal opinions about social class and rank. Due to their access to resources like career offices, guidance counselors, better resources, better schools, and family experience with higher education, people from higher socioeconomic class backgrounds typically have greater success in life (Diemer & Ali, 2009). According to the Sindh-Model study's findings, a child's age, gender, and parental characteristics such as the mother and father's educational backgrounds, the child's residence, household size, and income are statistically significant factors in determining the child's level of education (Jafri & Hassan, 2024).

Methodology

Mix-method research design was adopted. It was a blend of quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The population was comprised of all students of public secondary schools of Taluka

Ratodero. A sample of 30 male students 30 female students was drawn through stratified random sampling out of 6373 student; sample of 4 teachers was, selected on the basis of their experience, professional qualification and pedagogical skills, drawn through purposive sampling design. Data was collected through questionnaire and structured interviews. Data was analyzed by Kruskal-Wallis H Test through SPSS. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. In this regard, all ethical guidelines were ensured.

Data Analysis

A total of 60 students participated in the study. The study employed a mix method design both quantitative and quantitative to examine the relationship between Socio-economic status and students' achievement at secondary school level in public secondary schools. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS. Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed non-normally distributed data. Due to this violation of parametric assumptions and unequal group sizes, the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test was selected for hypothesis testing. Mean ranks of three groups of SES i.e; high income, middle income and low income were calculated.

A detailed description of data analysis is as under:

Table 1: Mean rank and chi-square on score of students' achievement of three categories of SES i.e high income, middle income and low income

SES	N	Mean rank	H	p-value
High Income	9	5.00	47.841	.000
Middle Income	17	18.00		
Low Income	34	43.50		

As the p-value of Kruskal Wallis H Test is 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance so we reject null hypothesis which means that SES groups medians are not equal. As the mean rank of high income is 5.00, middle income is 18.00 and low income is 43.50. The mean ranks suggest that students from low-income backgrounds tend to have lower achievement levels (higher mean rank indicates lower achievement), while students from high-income backgrounds tend to have higher achievement levels.

Table 2: Mean rank and chi-square on score of challenges faced of three categories of SES i.e high income, middle income and low income

SES	N	Mean rank	H	p-value
High Income	9	25.89	42.281	.000
Middle Income	17	9.35		
Low Income	34	42.29		

As the p-value of Kruskal Wallis H Test is 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance so we reject null hypothesis which means that SES groups medians are not equal. As the mean rank of high income is 25.89, middle income is 9.35 and low income is 42.29. The mean ranks suggest that students from low-income backgrounds tend to have more challenges in their studies while students from high-income backgrounds tend to have 0 or little challenges in their studies.

Table 3: Mean rank and chi-square on score of access to educational resources and opportunities of three categories of SES i.e high income, middle income and low income

SES	N	Mean rank	H	p-value
High Income	9	5.00	48.881	.000
Middle Income	17	18.00		
Low Income	34	43.50		

As the p-value of Kruskal Wallis H Test is 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance so we reject null hypothesis which means that SES groups medians are not equal. As the mean rank of high income is 5.00, middle income is 18.00 and low income is 43.50. The mean ranks suggest that students from low-income backgrounds tend to have 0 or little access to educational resources and opportunities while students from high-income backgrounds tend to have huge access to educational resources and opportunities.

Based on the responses from 04 teachers, the analysis is, tabulated below:

Table 4: Relationship between socio-economic background and academic performance

Response	Frequency (No of Responses)	Percentage	Comments/Details
Socioeconomic background affects academic performance	4	100%	Teachers expressed that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds usually perform better during their studies.
Individual circumstances and motivation matter	2	50%	There was a strong stance of teachers that students from higher income backgrounds are self-motivated.

Table 5: Challenges faced by students from low-income backgrounds

Response	Frequency (No of Responses)	Percentage	Comments/Details
Limited access to resources	4	100%	Teachers emphasized the students from low income backgrounds struggle to access basic necessities and lack access to resources.
Non-academic challenges	1	25%	A significant number of teachers highlighted that except from academic performance, students from low income backgrounds face issues like food insecurities, transportation and family responsibilities..

Table 6: Impact on access to resources

Response	Frequency (No. of Responses)	Percentage	Comments/Details
Limited access to educational resources	4	100%	Teachers explained that students from low income families could not afford textbooks and other materials, may not have access to internet and unable take part in extracurricular activities..
Unequal opportunities	1	25%	Teachers said that students from high socio-economic backgrounds have access to private tutors, online and offline educational resources.

Table 7: Engagement with classroom activities

Response	Frequency (No. of Responses)	Percentage	Comments/Details
Varied engagement and motivation	4	100%	Teachers highlighted that students from low income families and high income families vary in level of engagement and motivation. They engage differently with class room activities.
Challenges and support	2	50%	Teachers described that students from low income backgrounds face challenges that impact their engagement, with the right support and accommodations, they can thrive.

Discussion

Kruskal Wallis H test p-values was .000 which suggests that there is significant different among three categories of SES i.e; high income, middle income and low income. Mean ranks of SES groups are also significantly different. It shows that students from high-income backgrounds have greater access to educational resources and opportunities, fewer challenges, and better academic achievement in comparison to their low-income counterparts. Students from low income families have lack of motivation, lack of transportation facilities, can't afford educational resources like textbooks and modern devices.

Recommendations

For Policymakers

1. Equitable Resource Allocation: Ensure equal distribution of educational resources; give importance to schools those are serving low-income students.
2. Targeted Funding: Fund to support programs which are addressing to specific needs of low-income students.
3. Policy Reforms: Formulate policies that promote educational equity and consider socio-economic disparities.

4. Scholarships: The students from low socioeconomic status should be provided financial assistance and scholarships should be given to them.

For Educators

1. Inclusive Teaching Strategies: Teachers should be given trainings to address diverse socio-economic needs and develop tailored support systems.
2. Mentorship Programs and Extra Coaching: Establish mentorship programs for low-income students and facilities them to attend summer coaching classes free of cost during the summer vacations to supplement regular programs of the schools.
3. Resource Accessibility: Ensure equal access to educational resources, technology, and opportunities.

For Future Research

1. Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track long-term impacts of socio-economic status on academic achievement.
2. Intervention Studies: Explore the effectiveness of specific interventions supporting low-income students.
3. Large scale research: This study has been conducted in a small rural area of Sindh, specifically Taluka Ratodero. Based on these findings, researchers should consider conducting this research on a larger scale in other parts of Sindh or Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study throws light on the significant impact of socio-economic status on students' achievement, access to resources, and challenges faced. There was a notable distinction between the groups with high and low socioeconomic level. However, there was a marginally significant difference in academic achievement between the intermediate and high socioeconomic class groups. The findings suggest that students from high-income backgrounds have greater access to educational resources and opportunities, fewer challenges, and better academic achievement in comparison to their low-income counterparts. Students from low income families have lack of motivation, lack of transportation facilities, can't afford educational resources like textbooks and modern devices. On the basis of the due analysis and interpretation of the objectives and hypothesis of the study, the researcher arrives at the following conclusion that if educators and policymakers address these disparities and work together to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment then, ultimately, it will enhance the academic achievement for all students regardless of socio-economic background. The findings also underline to promote educational equity by targeted interventions and policy reforms.

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