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Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement: Discovering Educational Challenges among Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic status (SES) significantly affects both student educational outcomes as well as the likelihood of educational success. SES is typically the biggest determining factor affecting how well a student performs in school academically and how well they will do in the future. This study primarily examined how SES can affect secondary students' academic performance and what barriers to achieving academic success exist for low-income students. Therefore, the quantitative design used to investigate the impact of SES on academic success involved administering a survey sample of 100 students from existing population. Questions were designed to include key socioeconomic indicators (e.g., parent education level, parent occupational status, family income, home learning environment, access to educational resources) as well as the students' academic behaviors and barriers to success. The data from the survey respondents were transferred to statistical analysis tables by using univariate statistics (i.e., frequency counts, percent of sample). There is strong evidence indicating that socioeconomic factors have an impact on students' access to academic resources, such as learning materials, that they have supportive home environments, and that their parents are involved in their education, all of which positively affect the academic behaviors of these students, such as having a completed homework assignment, being engaged in classroom activities, and attempting to achieve academically. On the contrary, candidates with low-income families also faced difficulties when it came to their studies. Financial barriers were listed amongst other limitations such as; lack of tutoring methods, lack of access to academic resources, duties around the house, and then stress due to the financial condition of their family. Overall results of this study showcase how much influence socioeconomic status has on a child's academic performance, which promotes the need for educational programs/policies in order to assist in reducing socioeconomic disparities within education.



Introduction

Socioeconomic status (SES), as a variable, has been recognized as a significant predictor of students' academic achievement in different educational systems around the world. SES as a concept, refers to the social and economic status of a family, which in turn influences students' academic achievement. Various studies have shown that students who come from a relatively higher socioeconomic background tend to perform better academically compared to those who come from a relatively lower socioeconomic background. This is not in relation to their intellectual ability, as both sets of students may have a similar level of intellectual ability, but they tend to perform better or worse depending on their access to educational resources, which ultimately influences their academic achievement (OECD, 2023).

Socioeconomic status, as a concept, refers to a multidimensional construct that includes factors such as parental education, occupation, and income levels, which ultimately determine the number of resources available for students' academic achievement. For example, students who come from a relatively higher socioeconomic background tend to have more resources available for their academic achievement, as their parents tend to provide a more enriched environment for their children, which may not be the case for students who come from a relatively.

Research done in various nations has established that socioeconomic status is significantly related to academic achievement in all of them. International assessments have established that students' socioeconomic status accounts for a substantial portion of differences in educational performance. While the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement differs in various educational systems, its presence is seen worldwide, indicating that socioeconomic differences are a persistent issue in education (OECD, 2023).

The secondary education stage is a critical period in which the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement is seen. This is a period when students are exposed to a higher level of academic demands, expectations, pressures, and stress related to examinations and career decisions. These demands need academic and emotional support, which may not be equally accessible to all students of different socioeconomic status (UNESCO, 2023).

The relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement is seen through various factors, including access to educational resources that enable students' academic success. While students of higher SES are exposed to private resources that enable them to be successful academically, students of lower SES are exposed to school resources that are limited in nature (World Bank, 2018).

The digital divide has increased the gap between socioeconomic classes through less access to computers, internet, and digital resources for students. In many educational contexts, students are expected to access digital technology in order to conduct research, complete homework, and communicate with their instructors. Many students from low-income households do not have access to reliable internet access or appropriate technology to fully participate in digital learning settings and thus will miss out on digital learning opportunities.

Health, nutrition, and psychological health, also serve as pathways by which socioeconomic status impacts academic performance. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience high levels of stress, poor nutrition, and health problems, which will lead to lower levels of concentration, attendance, and academic motivation in the school environment. These conditions will be more pronounced during the late secondary years due to higher levels of academic pressure on students during this time (World Bank, 2018).

In addition to family-level influences, there are school-level influences on student achievement that are important in shaping student performance. Schools with a higher average SES tend to have superior infrastructure, more qualified teachers, and enriched learning environments. Institutional advantages lead to higher levels of academic performance among students independent of family background (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Social factors may foster academic (school) success for certain cultural groups, while other cultural groups may suffer academic failure (OECD, 2023).

Cultural beliefs and traditions embedded in the social fabric of a given cultural group will, in nearly all instances, affect the academic performance of students attending schools where the dominant culture or social environment is different than theirs. Cultural groups that place value on education tend to provide a nurturing environment in which their children excel academically, while cultural groups that do not value education typically provide an un-nurturing environment in which their children do not succeed academically. Thus, students who excel under nurturing conditions will succeed whether they attend a school where their culture is the same as the culture of the majority of students or if they attend a school where their culture differs from that of the majority of students (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

Regardless of socioeconomic status (SES), cultural traditions and beliefs that occur in the environment where students attend school also impact how well they perform on standardized tests in school. Burchinal et al. (2004) found that among African-American students who scored at or above the 80th percentile on standardized tests, students had very high (82.1%) educational achievement scores (e.g., grades, GPA) at ages 10 (early), 12 (mid) or at age 14 (late) because of their SES and educational standards of that community and the process of their cultural identity was expressed through their educational success.

Socioeconomic factors are still important to learning environments across Pakistan, especially in the region of AJK, where poverty is prevalent (Government Pakistan, 2018). Many families in Bagh and surrounding areas are reliant on agriculture, small business initiatives, and low-wage employment, which limits their ability to provide educational resources for their children.

Parental education and family income also result in varying levels of resources available for students at the secondary level, as well as almost certainly for other levels of education as well. Given the importance of secondary education on a student's academic and career trajectory; it is essential that we understand the effect socioeconomic status has on student achievement in Bagh AJK. By examining how family income, parental education, and availability of resources are related to academic achievement of students, we can better understand how to increase educational equity and support at-risk youth in Bagh AJK and other similar locations.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Determine which indicators are most pertinent to socioeconomic status for secondary school students.
2. Evaluate students' academic achievement at the secondary school level.
3. Identify types of obstacles faced by students from low socioeconomic status to achieving academic success.

Hypotheses

Following were the study hypotheses:

H1: Students who come from higher socioeconomic status families will have significantly greater academic success than those students who come from lower socioeconomic status families.

Literature Review

Socioeconomic status (SES) is considered one of the most potent factors that affect students' academic performance, especially during secondary education, when academic performance is a major determinant of future academic and professional prospects. Socioeconomic status is generally considered a family's social and economic position, which is commonly determined by various factors, including parents' educational level, occupation, income level, etc. On the other hand, academic performance during secondary education is commonly determined by factors including students' performance in exams, class grades, etc. A large body of literature has proven that students coming from higher socioeconomic families tend to attain higher academic performance compared to their peers coming from disadvantaged families. The first study that examined academic performance was conducted by James S. Coleman (1966), who led a team of researchers that produced a renowned report, commonly referred to as the Coleman Report, which established that family background is a more potent determinant of academic performance than other factors, including resources provided in schools.

The relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance is greatly supported by empirical evidence. A comprehensive study that involved a thorough meta-analysis was carried out by Sirin, S. R (2005). The study revealed a strong and positive correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. The study revealed that students from high socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to perform better than students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Another study carried out by Karl R. White (1982) revealed that socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of cognitive development and academic performance. Students from high socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to benefit from a conducive learning environment that offers access to learning resources such as books and learning technology. On the other hand, students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to face challenges in accessing learning resources and tend to be at a disadvantage.

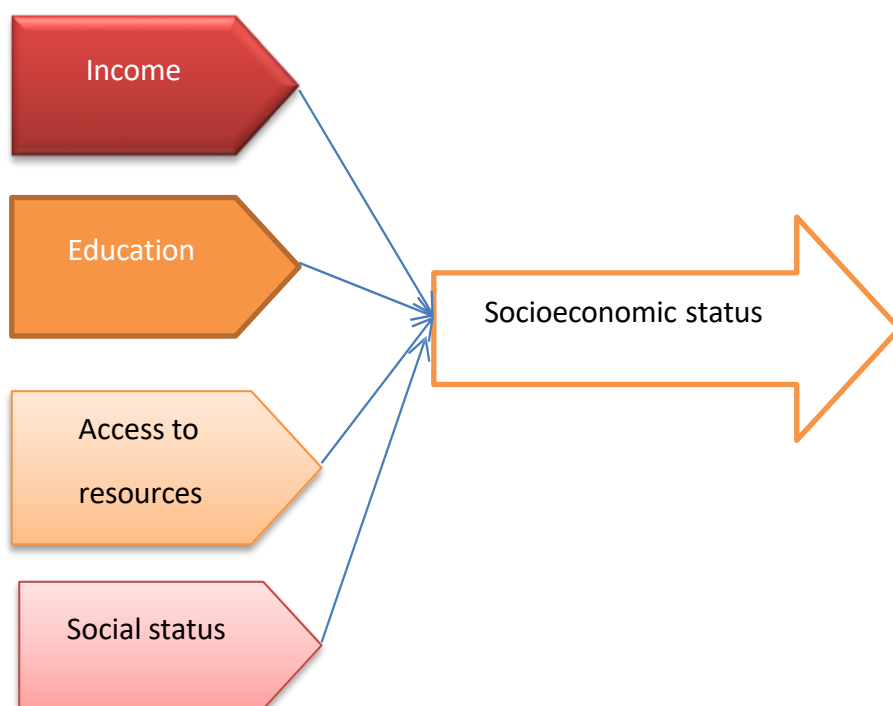
The level of education and involvement of parents can be regarded as a key process through which the SES affects the academic performance of students. Studies have shown that parents who have a high level of education can offer academic support to their children and communicate effectively with schools. Furthermore, such parents can set high academic goals for their children and help them develop good study habits and academic motivation. On the other hand, parents who have a low level of education can face challenges in supporting their children's academic performance. Such parents lack knowledge and awareness about how to support their children's academic performance. Consequently, students from low SES backgrounds can receive less academic support from their parents and hence perform poorly in school (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

The income level in households and educational resources is yet another factor that contributes to the existing disparities in academic achievement among children. This is in the sense that families that have higher income levels are in a position to provide their children with the resources that they need for their education, such as textbooks, computers, internet, quiet place for reading, among others, that are necessary for effective learning. This gives the children an advantage in terms of their involvement in academic activities and other related activities outside the classroom. On the other hand, children from families with lower income levels lack such resources, and their problems may even be worse, such as lack of a house, food, or even a job, that prevents them from being involved in academic activities, hence affecting their education. The school environment, peer group, and social conditions are also related to socioeconomic status (World Bank, 2018).

Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be in a school environment with well-resourced facilities, qualified teachers, and an academic climate conducive to learning. These factors are likely to enhance academic aspirations and opportunities for intellectual development. In contrast, a school environment with a low socioeconomic community may be plagued by inadequate facilities, large class sizes, and limited extracurricular activities. Peer environment can also affect learning behaviors. Students with peers who are highly academically motivated are more likely to develop positive learning behaviors. Students from a disadvantaged peer environment may develop a negative academic aspiration (OECD, 2023).

Other psychological, health-related, and cultural factors may also be seen as explanations of the impact of SES on academic performance. For example, it is argued that students from low SES backgrounds are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, nutritional deficiencies, and health-related problems, which may affect their academic performance. Furthermore, the cultural capital theory, as advanced by Pierre Bourdieu, may also be seen as an explanation of the impact of SES on academic performance. The theory argues that culture is passed down from one generation to the next in the family and is related to the expectations of the education sector. Students from high SES backgrounds may have more cultural capital than those from low SES backgrounds, which may enable them to perform better in the education sector. Although there is a large body of research carried out in different parts of the world regarding the impact of SES on academic performance, few researchers have tried to investigate the impact of SES on academic performance in regional settings such as Bagh in AJK. Therefore, the current research aims to investigate the impact of SES on the academic performance of secondary school students in Bagh, AJK.

Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

Research design of the study

Quantitative method of research was used for the purpose of the study. Descriptive survey method of research was used to find the “Effect of socioeconomic status on student achievement at secondary

level”.

Population of the study:

The population of the study included all the secondary students studying in city Bagh Azad Jammu and Kashmir

Sample of study:

The convenient sampling technique was used to select 132 students from five selected schools in city Bagh Azad Jammu & Kashmir, but only 100 students responded properly.

Research instrument of study:

The researcher used Structured Questionnaires as research instrument in the study. The questionnaire had 18 items, and Five-points Likert scale were used in the questionnaire.

Data collection:

The researcher personally visited the schools in order to collect data from five selected schools.

Data analysis:

In order to analyze data statistically, the researcher organized the raw scores of the questionnaires and tabulated it. The statistical tool, i.e., frequency percentage, was used to draw the result.

Results

The current study aims to present the findings of the study on the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) on student academic achievement at the secondary level and challenges faced by students coming from low-income backgrounds. The data were collected from 132 students using a structured questionnaire, and only 100 students give Agreement level.

Section A: Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Table 4.1: My parents are well educated.

Agreement level	Frequency	%age
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	20	20%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	32	32%
Total	100	100%

The results are presented in Table 4.1, which shows the perceptions of the students based on the following statement: “My parents are well educated.” The results indicated that the majority of the respondents had a positive perception regarding their parents’ educational level. Specifically, 67% of the respondents agreed with the statement, where 35% corresponded to A and 32% to SA. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents had a negative perception. Specifically, 20% disagreed with the statement, while 10% strongly disagreed with the statement (20% D and 10% SD). The results indicated that only 3% of the respondents had a neutral perception, suggesting that the majority had a clear perception regarding their parents’ educational background.

Table 4.2: My family income is sufficient to support my education

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	25	25%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	30	30%
Strongly Agree (SA)	33	33%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.2 shows the perceptions of the students based on the following statement: “My family income is sufficient to support my education.” The results revealed that a majority of the respondents had a positive perception of their family income, which was enough to support their educational needs. In particular, 63% of the respondents had a positive perception since 30% chose A and 33% chose SA. Conversely, 35% of the respondents had a negative perception of their family income since 25% chose D and 10% chose SD. Only 2% of the respondents chose the neutral option, which shows that the respondents had a clear perception regarding their family income.

Table 4.3: my parents’ occupation provides financial stability

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	20	20%
Neutral (N)	4	4%
Agree (A)	33	33%
Strongly Agree (SA)	33	33%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.3 shows the Agreement levels of the students concerning the statement, “My parents’ occupation provides financial stability.” The results showed that the majority of the respondents had the perception that the occupation of their parents provided financial stability. Specifically, the results showed that 66% of the respondents agreed with the statement (33% A + 33% SA). On the other hand, the results showed that 30% of the respondents disagreed with the statement (20% D + 10% SD), indicating that almost one-third of the respondents had the perception that the occupation of their parents was not financially stable. The results showed that only 4% of the respondents had a neutral response, indicating that most of the respondents had a clear opinion concerning the financial stability provided by the occupation of their parents.

Table 4.4: I have access to necessary learning materials at home

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	15	15%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	38	38%
Strongly Agree (SA)	39	39%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.4 shows the results based on the Agreement levels obtained from the students on the statement, “I have access to necessary learning materials at home.” The results revealed that a

large number of the respondents had access to learning materials. Out of a total of 100 respondents, 77% agreed with the statement (38% A + 39% SA). Conversely, 20% disagreed with the statement (15% D + 5% SD), which shows that one-fifth of the respondents lacked learning materials. This shows that access to learning materials at home for these students might be a contributing factor to their academic achievement in secondary school. Only 3% of the respondents chose the neutral option on this statement, which shows that the students had a clear perception regarding this issue.

Table 4.5: I have a quiet and suitable environment at home for studying

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	20	20%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	36	36%
Strongly Agree (SA)	37	37%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.5 shows the students' views regarding the following statement: "I have a quiet and suitable environment at home for studying." The results showed that the majority of the students believed that their home environment is conducive for studying. In this regard, 73% of the students agreed with the statement above, where 36% chose A and 37% chose SA. In contrast, 25% of the students chose the disagree option, where 20% chose D and 5% chose SD. These results indicate that one-fourth of the students did not have a quiet and suitable environment at home for their studies. In addition, only 2% of the students chose the neutral option. These results imply that the role of the home study environment is significant in facilitating the students' academic achievement at the secondary level.

Table 4.6: My parents actively support and encourage my education

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	10	10%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	40	40%
Strongly Agree (SA)	43	43%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.6 depicts the students' perceptions regarding the statement "My parents actively support and encourage my education." As depicted from the table, the majority of the students showed a high level of parental support. In this regard, 83% of the students showed their agreement with the statement, as 40% chose A and 43% chose SA. In addition, only 15% of the students showed their dissent with the statement, as 10% chose D and 5% chose SD. Moreover, only 2% of the students chose the neutral option. Thus, the results showed that parental support and encouragement play a significant role in improving the students' academic performance at the secondary level.

Student Academic Achievement

Table 4.7: I complete my homework regularly and on time

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	10	10%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	37	37%
Strongly Agree (SA)	45	45%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.7 presents the students' opinions regarding the following statement: "I complete my homework regularly and on time." The results reveal that the majority of the students showed regularity in completing their homework. In more detail, 82% of the students were found to agree with the statement, as 37% chose option A and 45% chose option SA. On the contrary, only 15% of the students were found to disagree with the statement, as 10% chose option D and 5% chose option SD. Furthermore, only 3% of the students chose the neutral option, which reveals that the majority of the students had a strong opinion regarding the regularity of their homework completion. In general, the majority of the students showed regularity in homework completion, which may have a positive impact on their academic achievement at the secondary level.

Table 4.8: I perform well in examinations and class tests

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	10	10%
Neutral (N)	4	4%
Agree (A)	38	38%
Strongly Agree (SA)	43	43%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.8 shows the students' opinions about the statement: "I perform well in examinations and class tests." From the findings, it can be seen that the majority of the students were positive about their performance. In this study, 81% of the students agreed with the statement (38% A + 43% SA). On the contrary, 15% of the students were negative about their performance (10% D + 5% SD). It can also be seen that only 4% of the students chose the neutral option, which means that most students were clear about their perception. The findings suggest that most students think they are performing well in examinations and class tests. It can also be said that most students have achieved well in their secondary education.

Table 4.9: I actively participate in classroom learning activities

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	10	10%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	37	37%
Strongly Agree (SA)	45	45%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.9 shows the results of the Agreement levels from the students on the statement, “I actively participate in classroom learning activities.” From the results, it is clear that the respondents showed a high level of engagement in classroom activities. In particular, 82% of the respondents agreed with the statement, where 37% chose A, and 45% chose SA. On the other hand, 15% disagreed with the statement, where 10% chose D, and 5% chose SD. This implies that a small percentage of the respondents showed a low level of engagement in classroom activities. Moreover, 3% of the respondents chose the neutral option, implying that the respondents had an opinion on the level of engagement in classroom activities. From the results, it is clear that active engagement in classroom activities is common among the majority of the students, which may positively affect their academic achievement at the secondary level.

Table 4.10: I am motivated to achieve good academic results

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	5	5%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	38	38%
Strongly Agree (SA)	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.10 shows the opinions of the students concerning the statement “I am motivated to achieve good academic results.” The results show that the level of academic motivation among the respondents is very high. In particular, 88% of the students agreed with the statement (38% A + 50% SA). On the other hand, only 10% of the respondents disagreed with the statement (5% D + 5% SD), implying that only a very small percentage of the respondents were not motivated to achieve good academic results. Furthermore, 2% of the respondents did not choose either of the two opinions, implying that most of the respondents had a clear perception of their academic motivation. The results show that academic motivation is highly present in the minds of secondary school students, and this could positively impact their academic performance.

Table 4.11: My academic performance has improved over time

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	5	5%
Disagree (D)	10	10%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	37	37%
Strongly Agree (SA)	45	45%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.11 shows the results of the Agreement levels from the students based on the statement, “My academic performance has improved over time.” From the results, it is clear that the respondents perceived an improvement in academic performance. Specifically, 82% of the respondents agreed with the statement, as 37% chose A, and 45% chose SA. On the other hand, 15% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, as 10% chose D, and 5% chose SD. This implies that a small percentage of the respondents did not perceive an improvement in academic performance. Moreover, 3% of the respondents chose the neutral option, implying that the respondents had an opinion about an improvement in academic performance. The results show that the students experienced an improvement in academic performance, implying that there was

academic development at the secondary school level.

Table 4.12: My family's socioeconomic condition influences my academic performance

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	15	15%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	37	37%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.12 shows the findings from the students' Agreement levels to the statement: "My family's socioeconomic condition affects my academic performance." The results revealed that the majority of the students were aware of the impact of socioeconomic status on their academic performance. To be more precise, 72% of the total students agreed with the statement (35% A + 37% SA). On the contrary, 25% of the total students disagreed with the statement (15% D + 10% SD). It means that only a quarter of the total students were not aware that socioeconomic conditions affect their academic performance. Only 3% of the total students chose the neutral option, which means that the majority of the students were clear about their perception of the impact of socioeconomic status on their academic performance. The results supported the aim of this study to investigate the impact of socioeconomic status on the students' academic achievement at the secondary level.

Challenges Faced by Students from Low-Income Backgrounds

Table 4.13: I sometimes miss school or classes due to financial constraints

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	15	15%
Disagree (D)	40	40%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Based on the findings in Table 4.13, it can be noted that the majority of the students (55%) with an SD of 15% + D = 40% agreed that they do not often miss school or classes due to financial constraints, while 43% of the students (A = 35% + SA = 8%) agreed that they sometimes face problems due to financial constraints. It can be noted that only 2% of the students were neutral. It can be noted that although a significant number of students are attending school regularly, financial constraints affect nearly half of the students.

Table 4.14: I face difficulty in accessing private tutoring or extra academic support

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	15	15%
Disagree (D)	30	30%
Neutral (N)	2	2%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	18	18%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.14 indicates that 45% of the students ($SD = 15\% + D = 30\%$) said they did not face any significant difficulties in accessing private tutoring or extra academic support, while 53% of the students ($A = 35\% + SA = 18\%$) said they did face difficulties in acquiring extra academic support. Only 2% of the students were neutral in their responses. The table indicates that access to extra academic support is a significant challenge for over half of the students, and this could be due to the effects of socioeconomic factors on educational opportunities.

Table 4.15: I have to balance household or work responsibilities with my studies

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	25	25%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	27	27%
Total	100	100%

The findings in Table 4.15 show that 35% of the students ($SD = 10\% + D = 25\%$) agreed that they did not face significant difficulties in balancing their household or work responsibilities and studies. On the other hand, 62% of the students ($A = 35\% + SA = 27\%$) agreed that they face difficulties in balancing their academic and household/work responsibilities, while 3% of the students were neutral. The findings show that a significant number of the students are required to balance their responsibilities, and this could influence their academic performance and time management.

Table 4.16: Financial limitations prevent me from participating in educational trips or extracurricular activities

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	25	25%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	27	27%
Total	100	100%

As indicated in Table 4.16, 35% of the students ($SD = 10\% + D = 25\%$) stated that they were not prevented by financial limitations from participating in educational trips or in extracurricular activities. Conversely, 62% of the students ($A = 35\% + SA = 27\%$) stated that they were prevented by financial limitations from participating in these activities, with 3% stating that they were neutral. It can be deduced that financial limitations are a major barrier to the full participation of students in extracurricular activities.

Table 4.17: I feel stressed or anxious about my studies because of my family's financial situation

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	25	25%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	27	27%
Total	100	100%

Based on the table above, it is clear that the majority of the students, i.e., 35%, ($SD = 10\% + D = 25\%$) do not experience significant stress or anxiety as a result of the financial condition of their family. Contrary to this, the majority of the students, i.e., 62%, ($A = 35\% + SA = 27\%$) experience stress or anxiety as a result of the financial condition of their family. A small percentage of the students, i.e., 3%, remained neutral in their answers. It is quite clear that the financial condition of the family is a significant cause of stress or anxiety for the majority of the students.

Table 4.18: Limited access to resources at home affects my ability to complete assignments effectively

Agreement level	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (SD)	10	10%
Disagree (D)	20	20%
Neutral (N)	3	3%
Agree (A)	35	35%
Strongly Agree (SA)	32	32%
Total	100	100%

Table 4.18 indicates that 30% of the students ($SD = 10\% + D = 20\%$) stated that they were not significantly affected by the limited access to resources at home, whereas 67% of the students ($A = 35\% + SA = 32\%$) stated that they were affected by the limited access to resources. Only 3% of the students were neutral. This indicates that the limited access to educational materials at home is a significant factor affecting the academic performance of the students.

Discussion

Socioeconomic status (SES) was another factor that emerged as an important variable affecting the academic achievement of the students at the secondary level. The results indicated that parental education, occupation, and income had a considerable effect on the academic achievement of the students. A large number of students had responded that their parents were educated and had a high income level, which created an environment for academic development. Educated parents are more likely to influence their children's academic lives and promote effective learning behaviors. This result supports the previous study that parental education plays an important role in motivating children's academic performance (Sirin, 2005). When parents are educated to a higher level, they are more aware of the academic demands and are more likely to provide intellectual stimulation to their children for academic achievement.

Another important factor that influenced the academic experiences of the students was the income level of their families and the availability of educational resources. Most of the students reported that their families were able to provide the basic needs for their studies and a conducive environment for studying at home. This enables the students to effectively undertake their assignments and prepare adequately for their examinations. However, the lack of these materials and facilities for studies presented a challenge for the students. This evidence confirms the previous studies that financial stability enables the family to provide the necessary learning materials and a conducive environment for effective learning, thus enhancing the academic experiences of the students (Coleman et al., 1966; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). Therefore, the availability of material and financial resources enables the students to engage effectively in their academic activities.

Parental involvement and encouragement were also seen as factors that contributed to academic success. The majority of the students indicated that they received active encouragement and

motivation from their parents, which had a positive effect on their academic engagement. Parental encouragement builds up the confidence of the students, increases their motivation to be successful, and promotes positive academic behaviors. Students who receive parental encouragement are more likely to show higher levels of academic engagement. Academic engagement includes completing homework assignments on a daily basis, actively participating in class activities, and having high motivation to be successful in examinations. These findings are supported by other researchers' findings that parental involvement is strongly related to academic performance and motivation (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Furthermore, the study revealed that students who were subjected to positive socioeconomic conditions were likely to portray positive academic habits such as completing homework, actively participating in class, and having high motivation to achieve good grades. The majority of the students were found to portray positive academic habits, which were also reflected in their improved performance over time. This implies that students who are exposed to enough resources and guidance from their parents are likely to portray positive learning habits, which will result in improved academic performance. This observation can be supported by previous studies that emphasized the relationship between socioeconomic status and improved academic performance due to increased access to support systems (White, 1982; Sirin, 2005).

However, despite these positive trends, the research also identified some of the challenges that students from low-income backgrounds face. For instance, it was identified that financial factors influenced students' attendance at school as well as access to other forms of academic support such as private tuition. The students indicated that they were unable to access other educational activities beyond those offered in class due to financial limitations. This is in agreement with other research that indicated that students from low-income families are unable to realize their academic potential because they are denied educational opportunities and academic support (Jeynes, 2002).

Furthermore, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds indicated that they had difficulties balancing their household or work responsibilities with their academic demands. Such a balancing act may result in a decrease in the amount of time spent on academic work or an increase in stress levels, which may consequently influence academic performance. Financial constraints may also result in psychological stress or anxiety, which may influence academic performance. These results are supported by previous research indicating that socioeconomic disadvantage places an additional burden on students, which may influence academic engagement and psychological well-being (Reardon, 2011; Lareau, 2003). Overall, the results suggest that although socioeconomic status plays a critical role in supporting academic performance, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are confronted with a multitude of structural barriers that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study indicates that socioeconomic factors play an essential role in influencing the academic performance of students in their secondary education. The study asserts that children whose parents have high socioeconomic backgrounds are in a position to enjoy the advantage of being brought up in an environment where they are positively influenced by their parents, thus improving their academic performance. On the other hand, children whose parents are poor are faced with several challenges, such as limited access to learning resources, financial difficulties, and the need to assist their parents in their daily activities, as well as stress, which acts as an obstacle to their academic performance and educational development.

Limitations

Despite the fact that the study gives valuable insights into the relationship that exists between socioeconomic status and academic achievement, there are various limitations of the study that need to be considered. First of all, the fact that the research was based on only 100 students may be considered a limitation of the study. Secondly, the fact that the research was based on self-reported questionnaire data may be considered a limitation of the study. Finally, the fact that the research was mainly based on quantitative descriptive analysis may be considered a limitation of the study, as the research could have been based on various psychological factors that may affect academic achievement. It is recommended that in the future, the research should be based on a larger sample size and various other factors such as the psychological well-being of the students.

Recommendations

It is recommended that schools and educational institutions establish support programs that include after-school tutoring, mentoring programs, and resource centers to assist students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents should be encouraged to remain actively engaged in their children's educational lives and play a significant role in their lives. Government authorities and policymakers should establish financial assistance programs, scholarships, and subsidies to eliminate economic barriers that hinder students from participating in educational opportunities and activities. Furthermore, teachers should use inclusive teaching approaches and offer individualized academic support to students who face socioeconomic challenges to establish equitable learning environments.

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