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SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND ACHIEVEMENT: A SURVEY STUDY OF STUDENTS AT SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to determine the effect of gender and socioeconomic status (SES) on the achievement of the students at secondary level. Multi stage sampling technique was used to draw the sample of 200 SSC students (101 males and 99 females) from randomly selected four government schools of Lahore. SES scale and score of previous class of students were used to conduct this study. A self- developed socioeconomic status measuring questionnaire was used as instrument of the study. It was comprised of ten factors of socioeconomic status. The factors included parental education, monthly income, parents' occupation, residence, facilities, transportation and property. Data were analyzed through t-test and ANOVA. The differences among achievement scores on the basis of SES were analyzed by applying ANOVA, while t-test was used to calculate the difference between achievement scores of male and female students. Findings showed that there was significant difference in achievement scores of students on the basis of SES, and no difference was identified in achievement scores on the basis of gender. It is recommended that by improving the school environment the poor masses (including male and female students) can be given with scholarships and bias free education..

Keywords: Socioeconomic Status, Achievement, Gender, Secondary Education.

INTRODUCTION

Long ago socio-economic status was not considered as impacting factor on students' academic performance, however as the time passed, it became apparent that social as well as economic status of child has a great impact on performance leading to the notion that the poor children are found poor in academic performance as well. It did not only attract the attention of researchers from different fields like sociology, psychology and education, who worked hard to find its relevance with performance of students particularly in terms of academic achievement (Coleman, 1990) but also has been found a frequently debated social issue. This can also be relevant to the debate on nature versus nurture, as the society and economic status are direct part of nurture in that the students are behaved in light of their socio-economic place in society, while gender can be taken as nature, where individual has nothing to do with some of the

innate abilities that are likely more proficient or less proficient if grown potentially by the virtue of being male or female. Keeping this in view and relating it to current and prevailing socio-economic conditions of indigenous society, it is very important to explore the effect of both of these factors on performance of students. Pakistani society is turning into very obviously segmented society that are divided on the bases of economy thus having a very profound effect on choices of education systems, schools and performance level of students. On the other hand, performance in terms of academic achievement is getting beacon for all students who enrol in any institution thus competition is getting tough. The students who belong to high socio-economic segment of the society are privileged to get more facilities regarding education thus showing better performance.

The dilemma of many developing countries to address the lack of uniformity in system of education has not been a direct concern here in this study but the contribution of gender biases and SES has somehow auxiliary effect to understand the problem. One other

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glooming side of the society is the discrimination between the availability of educational facilities for male and female, where more boys are sent to school than females. Following study is an effort to explore role of this phenomenon in aboriginal society and its effect on academic performance on the bases of gender as well.

The way there are less chances of having similar achievement scores of several students studying in same classes, likewise it is an agreed fact that each individual possesses varied facilities and opportunities throughout life. Additionally each individual has distinguished availability of living facilities those are necessary for life (Ogunshola, 2012). Although due to certain limitations prevailing in the present educational system, it is not possible for government to eliminate and eradicate social and economic differences; however the concern of the government officials is visible by understanding and admitting effect of both of these factors. Some steps have been taken forward to reduce inequality by introducing different projects; one of them is working like Danish school. Major aim to these efforts is to provide all the students with similar educational facilities irrespective of the differences based upon their socio-economic level and gender (www.moe.gov.pk).

Socioeconomic status has been defined differently in different context and by different researchers diversely. The class of the people to which they belong to is determined by their status in society (Akhtar&Niazi, 2011).

The detailed study of the phenomenon that helps positioning individuals among other members of society with reference to the given life facilities, is called the socioeconomic status of those people. Some define socioeconomic status by calculating the list of facilities and luxuries that one possesses, whereas some focus on the state of maintaining a social standing or rank of people in society while explaining the phenomenon of SES that may reciprocate again to the life facilities. Some indicators that contribute to understand the SES are also the two parents versus single parent, divorce, parenting practices, family size and neighborhood (Shah, Atta, & Qureshi, 2012).

Parental qualification, monthly income, occupation (Akhtar&Niazi, 2011), available life facilities including conveyance, property, residence are said to be some indicators of measuring SES. Through the measure of socioeconomic status, people are considered to belong to several classes in the society. On the basis of these

indicators or factors of SES people of a society are divided into three major categories of high, middle and low class (Akhtar&Niazi, 2011). It is evident from the definition that few elements are common in defining socio-economic status. So it can be stated as relative social and economic position of an individual with regard to the income, education, occupation and other related factors in a combined socio-economic perspective.

It may seem a surface issue to assume and relate the performance of students by only calculating some of the given life facilities to them as results of studies regarding socioeconomic status do not only favour the relationship of achievement and socioeconomic status but there do also prevail some contradicting results that refuse to support the existence of such relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement (Hanes, 2008). But there is no denial with the observation when the ways of treatment practically seem dependent on the socioeconomic state particularly in schools and generally in the society then the information like level of SES of students provides preliminary base to point out further prevailing related discrepancies in the system of education.

Coming from the other route, the relation of society, economy and home environment are so embedded that training of a child can be said to be dependent upon the three said pillars. The academic performance of the child has relationship with the child rearing practices adopted by the parents at home where not only the socioeconomic status of parents play its role but educational level of parents also contributes its part (Ogunshola and Adewale, 2012). A few studies have also stated that parents' educational level can be seen as major influential factor in child's academic achievement (Plomin, Defries & McClearn 1990). The other indicators that contribute in providing possible smooth access to education further relate to the available facilities provided by parents at home (Astone&McLanahan 1991; Haveman, Wolfe & Spaulding 1991; Sandefur, McLanahan&Wojtkiewicz 1992). The role of home environment, parental qualification, and available facilities altogether make up the view that determine not only the SES level of a child in society but also contribute to raise the interest of that child in studies.

The more parents are qualified, the likely brilliant chances are found for their children to excel in academics. As the findings of a study support the similar

viewpoint that parents with high level of education serve as motivation factors for children escorting them to go for higher education (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Haveman, Wolfe & Spaulding 1991; Sandefur, McLanahan & Wojtkiewicz, 1992).

The Students who relate to high SES are usually high achievers as they have open opportunities and facilities that are necessary to accelerate the progress in academics. Whereas people belong to low or average SES classes face lack of resources and facilities that is why their achievement damages by remaining low and they are less likely to be successful (Akhtar&Niazi, 2011).

Due to the ignorance and less research on SES of parents it was previously related to the income, earnings, and educational level of family only. Evidences from several studies conducted at different times and places reveal the interest of many sociologists and academicians regarding the exploration of effect of SES on academic achievement of students (Shah, Atta, &Qureshi, 2012).

The findings of research conducted by Majoribanks (1996) clearly show that socioeconomic status is not only significant to study the life of learners within school whereas the interests and aspirations of students outside the school, while in society, are also affected by their level of socioeconomic status.

Evidences from several studies have been found that report relationship of achievement scores and socioeconomic status of students. But studying the phenomenon of SES among secondary school students is important to clearly determine its contribution in achievement scores of students as at this level of school, as students require more facilities than at earlier grade levels at school plus the perceptions about self-develop proficiently at this age level with the reference of SES level and gender. This study will help bring some betterment in the prevailing practices of teachers and school administration by noticing the fact that the ways of equal treatment with all students yield bias-free education and ultimately impact on the achievement scores of students.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the relationship between socio economic status and achievement of students.
2. Explore the mean difference of achievement scores of students on the basis of gender.
3. Identify the difference in mean scores of socioeconomic status of students with respect to

students' achievement scores.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a relationship between the level of socio economic status and achievement scores of students?
2. Does there exist a difference in the academic achievement of male and female students?
3. To what extent difference exists among the level of socio economic status of students and the achievement scores of students?

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The sample of the study was comprised 200 SSC students (101 males and 99 females) from non-randomly selected four government schools of Lahore. All the students were the subjects of the study.

Scale: A self- developed socioeconomic status measuring questionnaire was used as instrument of the study. It was comprised of ten factors of socio-economic status. The factors included parental education, monthly income, parents' occupation, family size, residence, facilities, transportation and property. Second part of the instrument was composed of demographic variables including gender and academic achievement of students. Previous results were used for this purpose. Responses of academic achievement reported by students were counter checked by administration in order to avoid any misinformation.

Data collection: The data were collected by the researchers themselves. It was ensured to the students that the data will be used for the research purpose only and the information provided by them will be kept confidential. The students were provided relax environment and flexible time to fill the questionnaires.

Data analysis: The data were analyzed through SPSS. The results are shown in tables below.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of socio economic status of students.

Levels of SES	Frequency	Percentage
Low	69	34.5
Average	66	33.0
High	65	32.5

By running the frequency distribution of the collected data, the normality of data and the levels of socio economic status of students as high, average and low were identified in order to further run the analysis. Table 2 clearly indicates high positive correlation between the levels of socio economic status of students and achievement scores. It is significant at p<.05 level.

It is found that there is positive correlation between socio economic status of students and their academic achievement scores that is supported by the results.

Table 2. Correlation between socio economic status and students' achievement

Variables	r-value	Sig.
Socio economic status and Achievement scores	0.301	.000

Table 3. Independent sample t-test for the mean difference of achievement on the basis of gender

Variable	N	Df	t-value	Sig.
Male	101	198	.238	.812
Female	99			

The above mentioned table 03 indicated that there is no significant difference between the achievement scores of male and female students (Male mean score=64.0198, Female mean score=64.4343).

Table 04. One-way ANOVA for difference in mean scores of students' academic achievement scores at different SES levels (high, middle and low).

Achievement	SS	df	MSS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3018.09	2	1509.050	11.014	.000
Within Groups	26990.77	197	137.009		
Total	30008.87	199			

The above mentioned table 04 revealed that the difference in the mean scores of students' academic achievement at high, middle and low SES levels is highly significant. Post Hoc test further identified the existence of difference between high and low SES levels and middle and low SES levels. So it was found that achievement scores of students differ with respect to the level of their socioeconomic status. It is concluded that students' academic achievement scores differ with respect to the SES levels of students.

DISCUSSION

The prime purpose of the study was to explore the relationship of socioeconomic status and students' achievement scores. Findings of this study show a strong relationship of socioeconomic status with the achievement of students. The way SES level wise difference has been found on the achievement level of students which is further a proof of the amount of responsibility that parents are shouldered with in terms of not only upbringing their children by potentially educating them but also ensuring to send their children in schools, provide them with basic as well as other life facilities that contribute in

determining their position in society Majoribanks (1996). These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies. For example research carried out on sample of Nigerian society Ogunshola and Adewale (2012) states that there is a profound positive effect on achievement of students with regard to different indicators of SES. Similar results were reported by Rothman (2003) who presented that SES causes differential treatment with students belonging to varied levels of strata of society on the basis of economy. He also states that effect of SES on the achievement score is not deniable. These results are in consent with finding current study.

The gender bias prevails in different shapes in the system of education in that the availability of facilities with regard to being male or female is overtly less observed however expecting proficient performance and learning skills in some subjects have been seen related to males and females separately. One of the major objectives of the present study was to explore gender wise difference in the achievement score of secondary students, it was not found as significant (Mayes and Calhoun, 2011). Literature supports the idea of different achievement patterns in boys and girls with respect to sharp development of skills as boys have been found more proficient in computational skills whereas girls have been seen proficient in language acquisition (Ginsburg and Pappas, 2004). Although these kind of gender wise differences have less directly influential to the overall achievement of students in terms of obtaining high or low achievement scores but the skill acquisition wise differences are supported with the evidence of researches (Mayes and Calhoun, 2011). The findings of present study while dealing with the demographic variable of gender were inconsistent with the previous researches that in showed not a significant gender wise difference in achievement scores of students. This research has concluded a cease fire stating that both of these factors pay equally half role, however this also support the idea that society and economy play very important role in better performance of the students (Back and Lee, 2011).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Following are suggestions for future researchers regarding same variables. The same variables can be studies with different psychological constructs including self-confidence and self-concept.

Similarly studies can be conducted on students with some disabilities who need extra care and attention at home and as well as in schools.

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