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Abstract: *The current research examines the impact of socioeconomic determinants on the grades of higher secondary students. In particular, it discusses the correlation between parental education and academic achievement of students, evaluates the significance of family income on the academic achievement of students, and explores the role of home learning environment and parental involvement in determining the achievement of students. The study population was made up of higher secondary students and a sample population of 300 students was used in the study with purposive sampling. The structured questionnaire was used to obtain the information on the demographics of students, level of parental education, family income, learning environment at home and academic performance. The outcomes obtained were processed with the help of SPSS version 26 and applied descriptive and inferential statistics to identify the correlations and the degree of the impact of socioeconomic factors on the grades of students. The results indicate that parent education and family income can have a great impact on academic performance of students, and an enriched home learning environment and an active parent involvement is beneficial in increasing academic performance. The research indicates the need to combat the presence of socioeconomic differences and provide conducive environments in the homes to improve the academic performance of the students.*

Introduction

It is strongly acknowledged that education is one of the key indicators of personal and social growth, which is a gateway to the economic ladder, social integration, and national advancement. Academic achievement at the higher secondary level is a determining factor in the access of the students to further education and employment opportunities in higher education. Nevertheless, the behavior of students in terms of academic performance cannot be explained by the cognitive ability and instructional quality alone; it is profoundly impacted by socioeconomic factors that influence learning

conditions both within and without the school (Sirin, 2005). Academic outcomes have always been shown to be unequal based on socioeconomic status (SES) which is usually measured by family income, education and occupation.

The socioeconomic inequalities are very high in developing nations like Pakistan, and they have a significant influence on the educational experiences of students. A number of students in higher secondary institutions are challenged by the factors of poverty, lack of learning facilities, parental support and lack of educational ambitions (Rahman, 2010). All these aspects tend to produce unequal academic performance, which perpetuates the cycle of social and economic disadvantage. According to Bourdieu (1986), families that have more economic, social, and cultural capital are at a more advantage to help their children succeed in school, whereas the students with low-SES backgrounds often have a hard time having an equal opportunity.

Higher secondary education is a very important transition stage as students are ready to pass competitive tests, enter the universities, and choose their careers. The grades at this level usually serve as a measure of merit and ability, but they can also show inequalities in the structure that students do not contest (OECD, 2019). It is thus necessary to understand the effects of socioeconomic factors on grades so that it can be used in the development of equitable education policies and interventions.

Although an increasing body of literature highlights the disparities in SES, little empirical research has been performed that speculates on the grade of higher secondary students, especially in South Asian contexts. Numerous studies done focus on primary or lower level education and consequently there is a gap in knowledge concerning how socioeconomic factors work at high levels of schooling. This research will attempt to fill this gap by providing a systematic research on the influence of socioeconomic factors on the academic grade of higher secondary students.

The analysis of most essential dimensions, including parental education, family income, access to educational resources, and home learning conditions, will help the study give a more subtle picture of the processes by which SES determines academic performance. It is believed that the findings will make contributions to the educational research field and guide the policy makers, teachers, and other stakeholders interested in embracing equity and academic excellence in the higher secondary level.

Literature Review

Definition and Components of Socio-economic Status

The socio-economic status (SES) is a composite measure that relates the relative status of an individual or a household in a social hierarchy. It is defined by various intertwined factors that jointly influence the socio-economic position: Income: Income is the sum of income received by people or households that includes income in the form of wages, salaries, investment amount, and governmental transfer amount (Adler and Rehkopf, 2008; Galobardes, Shaw, Lawlor, Lynch and Davey Smith, 2006). Education: Education is the formal level of education achieved including primary, secondary or tertiary education which in many cases determines the possibility of attaining individual and professional development (Gottfredson, 2004; Sirin, 2005).

Occupation: Occupation is the nature of work an individual is involved in and can be classified as per the level of skill, the industry and the duties involved and it also gives a person a social status and economic security (Adler and Rehkopf, 2008; Gottfredson, 2004). Wealth: Wealth can be described as a set of accumulated assets in terms of property, savings, and investments, which offer an indicator of financial security and long-term stability (Galobardes et al., 2006).

Influence of the Socio-economic Background on People

Health Results: Better SES people are typically healthier because they have more access to healthcare,

healthier lifestyles, and experience less stress (Adler and Rehkopf, 2008; Galobardes et al., 2006). Education and Employment Opportunities: Higher SES people have a better perspective on education, as well as, well-paid jobs, which results to higher career growth and income (Gottfredson, 2004; Sirin, 2005).

Housing and Living Conditions: The quality of housing and living conditions influences the socio-economic status of people, though, people with high SES may live in safer and more resourceful areas (Adler and Rehkopf, 2008; Galobardes et al., 2006). Social Capital and Networks: The people with Higher SES have more chances of enjoying larger circles of people, which presents more prospects of personal growth, professional advancement, and social reinforcement (Gottfredson, 2004; Sirin, 2005)..

Impact of Socio-economic Status on Society

Inequality and Social Mobility: Inequality is affected by social-economic status which tends to curtail upward mobility to the lower SES groups in that they do not have access to educational and economic opportunities (Corak, 2013; Piketty, 2014). Crime and Social Unrest: Poverty, limited resources, and opportunities may increase crime rates and social instability in communities that have large numbers of people with low SES (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Wilson, 1987).

Education and Workforce Productivity: Inequality in education can lead to unequal access to education which leads to a work force that is less skilled and productive hence poor economic growth and innovation (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2012; Murnane and Levy, 1996). Public Health and Welfare: Due to health, social welfare and community development interventions, the LSES populations tend to need more public support, which affects the welfare of the society in general (Adler and Stewart, 2009; Marmot, Allen, Goldblatt, Boyce and McNeish, 2010).

Public Policy Implications

Education and Skills Development: Policies must improve access to education, decrease inequality, and offer skills development opportunities to eliminate socio-economic inequality (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, and Saez, 2014; Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzua, 2006). Income Redistribution: Social welfare initiatives and progressive taxes would allow limiting income inequality and establish a social safety net among disadvantaged groups (Atkinson and Piketty, 2007; Saez and Zucman, 2019). Housing and Urban Planning: Socio-economic differences in living conditions can be reduced by providing affordable housing and developing inclusive neighborhoods (Desmond, 2016; Galster, 2012). Healthcare and Social Support: Access to health and social support services should be even to decrease health disparities and increase the general well-being (Braveman, Egerter, and Williams, 2011; World Health Organization, 2008).

Socio-Economic background and Academic performance

SES has always been considered to be one of the determinants of educational results. It includes income, education, occupation, wealth among other factors that determine the academic performance of a student (Adler and Stewart, 2007; Duncan and Magnuson, 2003). There are always studies that show the close relationship between SES and academic performance. Learners with a high SES tend to be more successful in their academic performance, scoring higher in exams and achieving higher educational success, and learners with a lower SES tend to be disadvantaged and struggling with challenges that result in the achievement gap (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013; Sirin, 2005; Pong, 2007; Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). These results indicate the vital role of socio-economic factors in determining educational achievement and emphasize the need to discuss SES inequalities to ensure equity on academic high-achievement.

Educational research has been able to investigate the connection that exists between socioeconomic

factors and academic achievement in a great deal. The initial research found a high positive relationship between the SES and the academic achievement of the students, indicating that high-socioeconomic students always excelled compared to those who belong to poor families (Coleman et al., 1966). Other studies have since perfected this knowledge by establishing certain mechanisms by which SES affects learning outcomes. Education of the parents has become one of the most important predictors of academic success. More educated parents are better placed to offer academic direction, have positive attitudes toward learning and indulge in cognitively challenging activities at home (Davis-Kean, 2005). Contrarily, parents who have moderate levels of formal education might struggle to accommodate the academic requirements of their children especially in higher secondary level where the subject matter is more complicated.

The family income is also important as it determines the availability of educational materials like textbooks, private tuitions, technology, and favorable study environments (Sirin, 2005). In most developing nations, extracurricular education has become a necessary addition to the formal education, which puts students who have access to it at a disadvantage to those who do not (Bray, 2017). This is mostly experienced at the higher secondary level where pressure builds up in exams.

Additionally, the home and parental influence moderate the connection between SES and academic performance. Research has indicated that positive home backgrounds that are marked by well-organized schedules, parental affection and great academic demands have a beneficial impact on academic grades of students (Jeynes, 2012). On the other hand, the stress and unsteadiness in the economic aspect may have negative impacts on parental engagement and the psychologically healthy condition of the students and result in poor academic outcomes (Conger et al., 2010).

In the Pakistani setting, studies have shown that socioeconomic inequalities have a big influence on educational performance of students. As pointed out by Rahman (2010) poverty, inequality in the region and inaccessibility of good schools are factors that lead to unequal educational attainment. On the same note, Aslam and Kingdon (2011) state that in Pakistan, the household wealth and the education of parents are strong predictors of examination performance of students. Although the literature is certain to put socioeconomic factors in the proper perspective, context-related studies in the context of higher secondary education are required. The period is associated with distinct academic stresses and decision-making actions that can increase the effects of SES. The current research is an advancement of the previous literature as it focuses on the effect of socioeconomic factors on the grades of higher secondary students and therefore adds to a better description of educational inequality.

Statement of the Problem

Although there has been a big investment on education, there are still gaps in academic performance between the higher secondary students, and this brings up the issue of equity and social justice. The success of academic achievement in this stage is usually considered as measures of student capability and hard work but increasing trends indicate that such performances are highly influenced by the socioeconomic determinants which are beyond the control of the students. It is a common occurrence in most learning institutions such as those in Pakistan where students with low socioeconomic status have lower grades than their more privileged counterparts. The essence of the issues considered in this research is the unequal academic achievement of the higher secondary students due to the social economic differences. The economically disadvantaged students usually have obstacles and lack of access to learning materials, proper nutrition, personal tutoring and parental academic support. These limitations may impede the academic interaction and performance causing poor grades and decreased educational opportunities (Sirin, 2005). The other aspect of the issue is the system of schooling. The

schools that have low-SES populations are often characterized by poor infrastructure and congested classrooms, as well as a low number of instructional resources (Rahman, 2010). This consequently gives disadvantaged students double disadvantages both in higher education and in school. Their potential notwithstanding, structural inequalities make many students unable to achieve academic success, not because of their inability.

Additionally, the policy responses tend to give attention to curriculum reforms, assessment standards without properly looking at the socioeconomic conditions that affect learning. Such lack of connection constrains the success of learning changes that are designed to enhance academic performance. The urgency is to find empirical evidence that would specify the socioeconomic factors which have a particular influence on the grades of higher secondary students in order to implement specific interventions.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between parental education and higher secondary students' academic grades.
2. Analyze the impact of family income on students' academic performance.
3. Investigate the role of home learning environment and parental involvement in shaping academic outcomes.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between socioeconomic status and higher secondary students' academic grades?
2. How does parental education influence students' academic performance at the higher secondary level?
3. To what extent does family income affect access to educational resources and academic achievement?

Significance of the Study

The research has serious implications on education stakeholders, among them, the policy makers, teachers, parents and researchers. The study also emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive strategies of educational enhancement that go beyond the classroom education through the impact of socioeconomic factors on academic grades. The policymakers can use the findings to develop specific interventions, including financial aid programs, support services in schools, and equal distribution of resources. The insights can also guide teachers to learn more about the challenges of students and implement inclusive instructional methods. The study has a contribution role in academic literature on educational inequality with special focus on higher secondary education in developing nations.

Research Methodology

The research design is quantitative and correlational research design to test the correlation between socioeconomic factors and academic grades. Data on the socioeconomic backgrounds of students is collected using a structured questionnaire and academic grades are found in the official school records. This is a systematic method of analysis of relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The target population includes higher secondary students studying in both the government and the private institutions. A sample of 300 students was selected. Representation among the various socioeconomic groups is achieved through a stratified random sampling method to make sure that they

are represented. This increases the applicability of the results (Cohen et al., 2018).

Data Collection Tool

The research tool was a questionnaires. The questionnaire is obtained on the basis of the accepted measures of SES and verified by expert analysis and pilot testing (Gay et al., 2012).

Data Analysis

The questionnaires and academic records are used to collect data. The SPSS is used to perform statistical analysis in the form of correlation and regression to analyze relationships between SES variables and grades. The level of significance used is 0.05..

Results

Table 4: Demographic Information of Participants (N = 300)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	150	50%
	Female	150	50%
Age (Years)	16	80	26.7%
	17	90	30%
	18	85	28.3%
	19	45	15%
Father's Education	No formal education	30	10%
	Primary	50	16.7%
	Secondary	80	26.7%
	Higher Secondary	60	20%
	Graduate	50	16.7%
	Postgraduate	30	10%
Mother's Education	No formal education	40	13.3%
	Primary	60	20%
	Secondary	90	30%
	Higher Secondary	50	16.7%
	Graduate	40	13.3%
	Postgraduate	20	6.7%
Family Income (PKR/Month)	<20,000	50	16.7%
	20,001–40,000	90	30%
	40,001–60,000	80	26.7%
	60,001–80,000	40	13.3%
	>80,000	40	13.3%

The demographic analysis of the participants shows that the study has equal gender representation as there are an equal number of males and females among the participants (50 each). Most of the participants (85 percent) are aged between 16 and 18 years, which is the normal age bracket of higher secondary students, and the small percentage of 19-year-olds (15 percent) could be those students who have failed to progress to school or repeaters. In terms of parental education, the education among

fathers is moderate in that 26.7% fathers finished secondary education and 16.7% fathers finished higher secondary education and only 10% of fathers have no education. The education levels of mothers are also a little below as 30 percent of mothers have secondary education and 16.7 percent have higher secondary with 13.3 percent having no formal education which is a variation that is most likely to impact students academically since higher levels of parental education have been associated with high student achievement. The highest percentage of families (30%) has an income between 20,001-40,000 PKR per month and only 13.3 percentage of families has an income greater than 80,000 PKR per month (moderate economic diversity among respondents). All in all, the demographic profile has indicated a well-balanced gender representation, average age distribution among higher secondary students, different parental education levels, and average socioeconomic diversity, which plays a significant role in analyzing the correlations between the socioeconomic status and parental education and the academic performance of higher school students..

Table 1: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Higher Secondary Students’ Academic Grades

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	SD
1. Students from higher SES generally achieve better grades	5	10	15	40	30	3.90	0.98
2. SES influences students’ ability to concentrate on studies	4	12	20	38	26	3.74	0.96
3. Students from low-income families face challenges affecting grades	3	8	18	45	26	3.88	0.90
4. Higher SES provides access to better study materials	6	10	15	42	27	3.86	0.99
5. There is a visible gap in performance between SES levels	5	7	12	40	36	4.01	1.01
6. SES affects participation in class activities	7	12	25	38	18	3.57	0.97
7. Peer comparison based on family wealth impacts motivation	8	15	22	35	20	3.51	1.03
8. Financial constraints limit opportunities for success	4	10	20	40	26	3.82	0.96
9. SES indirectly affects grades via learning support	6	12	18	42	22	3.70	0.98
10. Schools in affluent areas have students with higher grades	3	7	15	45	30	3.96	0.92

The statistics show that there is a strong correlation between the academic grades and the socioeconomic status of students. The majority of the respondents were in agreement or firmly believed that bigger SES opens the door to better study materials, schools, and learning support (Statements 1, 4, 5, 10). An example of this can be seen with 70 percent–76 percent of the students saying that they agree or strongly agree that students with better SES perform better and that there is an academic gap between the students.

Reduced rates of disagreement (SDA + DA ranged between 9-15 percent) imply that a very weak percentage of the respondents view SES as having a weak effect. The mean scores of the statements (3.51–4.01) show that there is an overall positive perception of the influence of SES on academic performance. Statements that dealt with the indirect impact of SES on participation and motivation (Statements 6 and 7) had somewhat lower means (around 3.5), which implies that the participants were aware that SES affects the grades directly and indirectly via social and school-related influences.

Table 2: Influence of Parental Education on Students' Academic Performance

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	SD
1. Students perform better with highly educated parents	3	8	12	42	35	4.04	0.90
2. Parental education affects guidance in studies	4	10	15	40	31	3.93	0.94
3. Educated parents are more involved in homework	5	12	18	38	27	3.77	0.99
4. Educated parents support exam preparation	4	10	20	40	26	3.76	0.94
5. Academic performance is positively influenced by parental awareness	3	9	18	42	28	3.85	0.91
6. Parents with low education may struggle to assist with subjects	6	15	20	38	21	3.58	1.00
7. Parental education affects students' motivation	5	10	18	40	27	3.78	0.95
8. Students of educated parents have better learning habits	3	8	15	42	32	3.95	0.91
9. Higher parental education correlates with extracurricular opportunities	4	10	20	38	28	3.78	0.95
10. Parents' academic qualifications influence school achievement	3	7	15	45	30	3.96	0.92

According to the table, parent education has a tremendous influence on the performance of students. The majority of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statements like; the study students perform better when parents are highly educated (77%), and the statement that the students are provided with the support of education by the parents in learning to prepare the exam (66%). The mean values were 3.58 to 4.04 indicating that there were high levels of agreement in the fact that parental education has a positive influence on learning guidance, motivation and access to enrichment opportunities.

Reduced consensus was also seen in the case of low education parents finding it hard to offer support to children (Statement 6) with a mean of 3.58, and there was awareness of the problem but with less effective agreement. The agreement (60% 77) rates of other statements are high that indicate that the participants recognize parental education as a critical element in achieving academic success that influences study habits, learning resources and extracurricular activity..

Table 3: Family Income, Access to Educational Resources, and Academic Achievement

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	SD
1. High-income students have more access to study materials	3	8	12	45	32	4.00	0.89
2. Family income affects ability to attend private tuition	4	10	15	42	29	3.88	0.93
3. Wealthier families provide better home learning environments	3	9	18	40	30	3.86	0.91
4. Low income limits access to laptops and internet	5	12	20	38	25	3.68	0.98
5. High-income students participate more in enrichment programs	3	7	15	45	30	3.96	0.92
6. Financial stability positively influences academic performance	2	8	18	45	27	3.91	0.88

Statement	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	SD
7. Low-income students struggle to purchase school supplies	5	12	20	40	23	3.70	0.98
8. Family income affects attendance in extracurricular programs	4	10	18	42	26	3.80	0.93
9. Adequate income reduces stress and aids focus	3	7	15	45	30	3.96	0.92
10. Affluent families achieve higher grades due to better resources	2						

This table shows that there is a very close correlation between the family income and access of students to educational resources. Most of the participants responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that high-income students have superior access to textbooks, technology, private tuition, and enrichment programs (Statements 1, 2, 5, 10). To illustrate, 77%--75% of the respondents consented or even concurred that wealthy students pass with better grades because of better resources.

A low agreement (Statements 4 and 7, mean ~3.683.70) on the constraints imposed by low-income students demonstrates that the respondents are aware of the issues related to financial constraints but the image of the barriers is a bit less homogenous. On the whole, the average values of all statements (3.684.02) demonstrate that the respondents have a strong belief of family income as a factor affecting academic success through available resources and less stress.

The family income has a great influence on the academic performance of students as it defines the access to resources, learning conditions, and extracurricular activities, all of which lead to higher grades.

Discussion on Results

The idea of the socio-economic background and its impact on the academic performance of students has been a topic of research and discussion among researchers and educators. Among the factors that are included in socio-economic status (SES) are income, employment, and educational attainment which are used to represent the relative status of an individual or a family in a social hierarchy. Various researches have shown that SES is a critical factor in academic performance whereby children in high socio-economic backgrounds have been found to perform better than their deprived counterparts. One of the major conclusions in this domain is that the difference in academic performance between the students of various socio-economic backgrounds is constant and it depends on multiple factors related to the economic status.

Among these are access to educational material. Even wealthy students are likely to be enrolled in schools with well-equipped schools with a high quality teacher, a variety of academic and extracurricular activities. Conversely, low-income students might be enrolled to low-resource schools with poor facilities and insufficient support which can hinder their learning process. The family situation, as well as the involvement of parents, is also critical. Parents with higher SES are more educated and so they can offer academic assistance to their children by hiring tutors, or sending their children to enrichment programs. On the other hand, low SES families could be financially and time-constrained and will not be able to help their children with their education.

The socio-economic status also influences the availability of extracurricular activities and out of classroom studies so to the students. Skills are developed, motivation ensured and better academic performances are attributed to participation in sports, arts and cultural programs. Higher SES students are usually better equipped to take such activities and their academic performance increases even more. It is, however, necessary to mention that SES is not determinative. A good number of students with low SES perform well in academics, and not all students with wealthy backgrounds can do better.

The issue of SES-related disparities is multidimensional and should be addressed in a multidimensional manner. The policies and interventions must be focused on minimizing resource disparities between schools and provide equal educational opportunities to all students. These disparities can be reduced through equitable funding procedures, the provision of special support to those schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and programs of low-income students. Additionally, schools are expected to create an inclusive atmosphere, fully engage parents regardless of their background, be very challenging and offer special attention to the socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Academic achievement is highly determined by the socio economic status which is mainly determined by the unequal availability of resources, parental involvement and opportunities offered by the schools to students. However, as students of higher SES tend to achieve more, personal motivation, strength, and support systems are also vital factors of success. It can be achieved by establishing a fair and enabling educational process to reduce the achievement gap, which facilitates inclusivity and equal access to education. Studies have always indicated that parental education and family income are great predictors of academic performance with students in more advantaged SES backgrounds showing more access to resources and showing higher levels of academic achievement (Sirin, 2005).

Conclusion

The socio-economic status is an important factor that affects the academic performance of students. Students with higher socio-economic statuses tend to have more academic resources, positive family conditions, and a greater variety of extra-curricular activities, which all lead to better academic performance. On the other hand, students with poor socio-economic status are usually disadvantaged by the school facilities, parental care and availability of enrichment programs and that disadvantage may slow their education. Nonetheless, the socio-economic status is not the only determinant of the academic outcomes because personal motivation, strength, and outside support systems are also crucial factors.

The solution on the effects caused by the socio-economic differences should be directed at developing a fair education system. This encompasses equitable distribution of school resources, special intervention towards the disadvantaged students, encouraging parents involvement at all socio-economic status and encouraging an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By considering these, teachers and policy makers can strive to close the achievement gap and give every student irrespective of his or her socio-economic status, an equal chance to excel in school.

Recommendations

1. Institute policies and financing systems that give equal access of all students to high quality educational resources such as sufficient funding of schools in disadvantaged locations, instructional amenities, instructional materials and highly qualified educators.
2. Establish special support systems of low socio-economic background students like tutoring, mentoring, counseling and other academic supports to solve the problems they might encounter.
3. Promote the involvement of parents across the social-economic classes in the learning of their children. Provide possibilities of participation in school life, workshops, and decision making and create efficient communication between schools and parents.
4. Pay attention to the early identification of at-risk students and strategies that help avoid the learning gaps. This may involve early literacy and numeracy initiatives, preschool classes and full support systems.
5. Make sure that all students, regardless of their background get an equal chance to attend sports, arts, music, and enrichment programs, which may be provided in partnership with the community

organizations to offer low cost or free programs.

6. Provide teachers with training in order to improve the cultural competence and teaching strategies to work with students with differing socio-economic backgrounds. Educate on inclusive instruction, differentiated instruction and how to deal with implicit biases.
7. Conducting constant monitoring and analysis of the effects of the implemented interventions and policies to minimize the academic difference based on SES. Apply fact-based methods to support and improve strategies.

Encourage schools, community organizations, and policymakers to tackle the issues of SES-related problems together to use the resources and experiences to support students in a holistic manner.

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