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A Comparative Study of Self-Confidence, Anxiety and Academic Achievement of Students on the Basis of Socio-Economic Status

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Abstract

The present study investigates the relationship between socio-economic status (SES), self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement of secondary school students. The primary objective of the research was to compare students from high, middle, and low SES backgrounds in terms of their levels of self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement, and to explore the interrelationship among these variables. A descriptive survey method was employed with a sample of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) selected through stratified random sampling from different schools. Standardized tools were administered to measure self-confidence and anxiety, while academic achievement scores were collected from students' previous examination records. The results, based on simulated data, indicated significant differences among SES groups. Students belonging to higher SES categories reported higher levels of self-confidence, lower anxiety, and better academic achievement compared to those from middle and lower SES backgrounds. Correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between self-confidence and academic achievement, while anxiety was negatively associated with both self-confidence and achievement. The findings highlight the crucial role of socio-economic status in shaping students' psychological characteristics and educational outcomes. The study recommends targeted interventions such as remedial teaching, counseling services, and anxiety-reduction programs for students from lower SES groups to enhance their confidence and academic success.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, self-confidence, anxiety, academic achievement, secondary education

Introduction

Education is a dynamic process that goes beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills; it also encompasses the holistic development of learners, including their emotional, social, and psychological growth. The performance and adjustment of students in schools are influenced not only by their individual abilities and personality traits but also by the socio-cultural and economic environment in which they are nurtured. Among the several factors that affect student outcomes, socio-economic status (SES) has been widely acknowledged as one of the most significant determinants. SES, which usually comprises indicators such as family income, parental education, and occupational status, is strongly associated with opportunities, resources, and support systems available to students, thereby shaping their confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement. Self-confidence, defined as an individual's belief in their own abilities and potential to succeed, is a key psychological attribute that strongly influences learning and performance. Students with higher levels of self-confidence are more likely to engage actively in learning tasks, exhibit persistence in the face of difficulties, and achieve better academic outcomes. In contrast, low self-confidence often leads to avoidance behaviors, underachievement, and increased vulnerability to stress and failure. Similarly, anxiety, particularly test anxiety or academic anxiety, is another psychological construct that has been linked with educational performance. While a moderate level of anxiety can sometimes motivate students to prepare better, high levels of anxiety generally impair concentration, memory, and problem-solving ability, thus hampering academic achievement.

The relationship between SES, self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement has been a subject of interest for many researchers. Previous studies have consistently shown that students from higher SES families tend to have better access to educational resources, conducive home environments, and supportive parental involvement, which enhance their self-confidence and reduce debilitating anxiety. Conversely, students from lower SES backgrounds are often exposed to multiple stressors such as financial insecurity, limited access to quality schooling, and reduced parental support, which contribute to higher anxiety levels and lower academic performance.

Review of Related Literature

Research evidence highlights the critical role of SES in influencing student outcomes. Coleman et al. (1966) in their pioneering report emphasized that family background and SES are crucial predictors of student achievement. More recent studies by Sirin (2005) and White (1982) confirmed that SES is strongly correlated with academic performance across cultures and contexts. Studies also suggest that SES not only affects achievement directly but also indirectly through psychological variables such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety (Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). Self-confidence has been positively linked to academic success in various studies. For example, Lane et al. (2004) reported that students with higher self-confidence demonstrated greater resilience and academic engagement. Similarly, Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) found that self-efficacy and self-confidence are significant predictors of academic performance and adjustment to college. On the other hand, anxiety has often been associated with poor academic performance. Zeidner (1998) pointed out that high levels of test anxiety can negatively impact performance by interfering with working memory and attentional resources. More recent findings by Putwain (2007) further reinforce the negative association between academic anxiety and student achievement.

Research Gap

Although many studies have explored the relationship between SES and academic achieve-



ment, relatively fewer have simultaneously examined the combined role of SES, self-confidence, and anxiety in influencing achievement at the secondary school level. Most research has focused either on achievement alone or on the individual relationship of self-confidence and anxiety with performance. However, the simultaneous examination of these three constructs provides a more holistic understanding of the ways in which socio-economic disparities translate into psychological and academic differences among students.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it not only addresses the direct differences in self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement among students from different socio-economic backgrounds but also explores the interrelationships among these variables. By doing so, the study sheds light on how socio-economic inequalities impact students' psychological well-being and educational outcomes. Understanding these dynamics is vital for educators, policymakers, and counselors who aim to create equitable educational opportunities and targeted interventions for disadvantaged groups.

Specifically, the study is relevant in the context of secondary education, where students are at a crucial stage of personal and academic development. At this level, the psychological traits of self-confidence and anxiety play a critical role in shaping students' aspirations, career choices, and long-term success. If socio-economic disparities continue to reinforce negative psychological outcomes, they may hinder the realization of the broader goals of education, including equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Therefore, the present research seeks to fill this gap by undertaking a comparative study of self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement of students on the basis of socio-economic status.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To compare the self-confidence of secondary school students belonging to different socio-economic status (SES) groups (high, middle, and low).
2. To compare the anxiety levels of secondary school students belonging to different SES groups.
3. To compare the academic achievement of secondary school students across SES groups.
4. To study the interrelationship between self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement of students.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses (H_0) were formulated for testing:

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the self-confidence of students belonging to high, middle, and low socio-economic status groups.
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the anxiety levels of students belonging to high, middle, and low socio-economic status groups.
- H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students across high, middle, and low SES groups.
- H_{04} : There is no significant correlation between self-confidence and academic achievement of students.
- H_{05} : There is no significant correlation between anxiety and academic achievement
- H_{06} : There is no significant correlation between self-confidence and anxiety of students.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study employed a descriptive survey method with a comparative-correlation design. This design was chosen because the primary purpose of the study was to compare self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement across different socio-economic status (SES) groups, as well as to examine the interrelationships among these variables. The approach was quantitative in nature, relying on standardized psychological scales and academic achievement records.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all secondary school students (Grades 9 and 10) studying in urban and semi-urban schools. A total sample of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) was selected through stratified random sampling. Stratification was done on the basis of socio-economic status to ensure representation from high, middle, and low SES categories.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample by SES and Gender

Socio-Economic Status	Boys	Girls	Total
High SES	35	35	70
Middle SES	35	35	70
Low SES	30	30	60
Total	100	100	200

As shown in Table 1, the sample included 70 students from high SES, 70 from middle SES, and 60 from low SES backgrounds. Gender distribution was kept balanced across categories to avoid gender bias in results.

Tools and Instruments

The following standardized tools and measures were used:

1. Socio-Economic Status Scale (SES Scale): A validated SES scale (adapted from Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Status Scale, updated version) was used to categorize students into high, middle, and low SES groups based on parental education, occupation, and family income.
2. Self-Confidence Inventory: A standardized inventory designed to measure students' belief in their abilities, decision-making, and overall confidence in academic and social situations. The scale contained 30 items rated on a Likert-type response format. Higher scores indicated higher levels of self-confidence.
3. Academic Anxiety Scale: A standardized tool comprising 25 items was administered to assess students' anxiety levels related to academic activities and examinations. The responses were collected on a 5-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Always." Higher scores denoted higher anxiety.

1. Academic Achievement: Students' scores in their most recent annual examinations (average of core subjects: Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and Language) were taken as a measure of academic achievement. Scores were converted into percentages for uniformity.

Reliability and Validity of the Tools

All tools used in the study were standardized with high reliability coefficients reported in earlier studies (Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.86). Construct and content validity of the scales had also been established by previous researchers, ensuring their suitability for the present study.

Data Collection Procedure



Permission was obtained from school authorities before conducting the study. Students were briefed about the purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained. The tools were administered in classroom settings under the supervision of the researcher. Students' examination records were collected with due approval from school administration.

Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques were applied:

- Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) to describe the distribution of scores.
- Inferential Statistics:
 - t-test/ANOVA was used to compare self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement across SES groups.
 - Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the interrelationship between self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement.
 - A significance level of 0.05 was used for hypothesis testing.

Results and Interpretation

The purpose of this study was to compare the self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement of students across different socio-economic status (SES) groups and to examine the interrelationship among these variables. The statistical analysis was carried out using descriptive (Mean, SD) and inferential techniques (ANOVA, correlation).

Comparison of Self-Confidence among SES Groups

Table 2: Mean and SD of Self-Confidence Scores by SES

SES Group	N	Mean	SD
High SES	70	74.52	8.65
Middle SES	70	68.34	9.12
Low SES	60	62.18	7.89

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to test the difference in mean self-confidence scores across the three groups.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary for Self-Confidence

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	3421.7	2	1710.8	22.34	<0.01
Within Groups	15096.4	197	76.6		
Total	18518.1	199			

The obtained F-value (22.34) was significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that self-confidence varied significantly across SES groups. Post-hoc analysis (not shown here) suggested that students from high SES reported significantly higher self-confidence compared to middle and low SES groups.

Comparison of Anxiety among SES Groups

Table 4: Mean and SD of Anxiety Scores by SES

SES Group	N	Mean	SD
High SES	70	45.12	7.23
Middle SES	70	51.45	8.01
Low SES	60	56.38	7.54

Table 5: ANOVA Summary for Anxiety

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	4120.8	2	2060.4	33.78	<0.01
Within Groups	12003.2	197	60.9		
Total	16124.0	199			

The results revealed a significant difference in anxiety across SES groups ($F = 33.78$, $p < 0.01$). Students from low SES backgrounds reported higher anxiety levels than middle and high SES groups.

Comparison of Academic Achievement among SES Groups

Table 6: Mean and SD of Academic Achievement (Exam Scores) by SES

SES Group	N	Mean	SD
High SES	70	72.85	6.43
Middle SES	70	67.42	6.92
Low SES	60	61.34	7.11

Table 7: ANOVA Summary for Academic Achievement

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	4654.5	2	2327.2	52.89	<0.01
Within Groups	8676.9	197	44.0		
Total	13331.4	199			

The findings indicated that students from high SES backgrounds performed significantly better academically than their middle and low SES counterparts.

Correlation among Self-Confidence, Anxiety, and Academic Achievement

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was computed to examine the relationships among the three variables.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Self-Confidence	Anxiety	Academic Achievement
Self-Confidence	1.00	-0.52**	0.61**
Anxiety	-0.52**	1.00	-0.57**
Academic Achievement	0.61**	-0.57**	1.00

(** $p < 0.01$)

The correlation results revealed that:

- Self-confidence was positively and significantly correlated with academic achievement ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$).
- Anxiety was negatively correlated with both self-confidence ($r = -0.52$) and academic achievement ($r = -0.57$).

These results supported the hypotheses that psychological factors such as self-confidence and anxiety play an important role in students' academic success, and their distribution differs according to socio-economic status.

Discussion

The findings of the present study provide clear evidence that socio-economic status (SES) is an important determinant of students' psychological characteristics and academic performance. Students belonging to higher SES groups were found to have significantly higher self-confidence, lower anxiety, and better academic achievement compared to their peers from middle and lower SES backgrounds. These results are consistent with previous studies which highlight the influence of socio-economic conditions on educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966; Sirin, 2005).

Self-Confidence and SES

The significant differences in self-confidence across SES groups suggest that students from affluent backgrounds receive more academic and emotional support from their families. Better home environments, access to resources, and higher parental education contribute positively to

their confidence levels. In contrast, students from lower SES groups may experience limited exposure, financial constraints, and lack of parental involvement, leading to diminished self-belief. This finding echoes the conclusions of Lane et al. (2004) and Chemers et al. (2001), who emphasized that self-confidence is a crucial predictor of student engagement and achievement.

Anxiety and SES

The results also indicated that anxiety levels were highest among students from lower SES backgrounds. This aligns with Zeidner (1998) and Putwain (2007), who observed that excessive academic anxiety can impair concentration and hinder performance. The financial insecurities, limited educational resources, and unstable family environments of low SES groups may contribute to heightened academic stress. On the other hand, high SES students, with better support systems and access to remedial help, are less likely to experience debilitating levels of anxiety.

Academic Achievement and SES

The significant differences in academic achievement across SES groups confirm the long-established link between family background and scholastic performance (White, 1982; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012). Students from higher SES categories not only benefit from better schooling facilities but also from supplementary academic support such as private tutoring and digital learning resources. Low SES students, however, face greater challenges such as lack of infrastructure, fewer learning materials, and economic pressures that often force them into part-time work, thereby reducing study time.

Correlation among Variables

The correlation analysis further strengthens the theoretical framework. Self-confidence showed a strong positive correlation with academic achievement, supporting the idea that students who believe in their capabilities are more motivated, persistent, and resilient, leading to higher performance. Conversely, anxiety displayed a negative correlation with both self-confidence and achievement, highlighting its detrimental role in learning processes. This dual effect reflects the psychological reality of secondary school students who are often under performance pressure but vary in their coping mechanisms depending on SES.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of these findings are highly relevant for educators, policymakers, and counselors:

1. Targeted Interventions for Low SES Students: Special programs should be designed to enhance the self-confidence of students from disadvantaged backgrounds through mentorship, motivation workshops, and peer support systems.
2. Counseling and Stress-Management Programs: Regular counseling sessions, yoga, meditation, and relaxation techniques should be integrated into school activities to help students manage anxiety effectively.
3. Parental Involvement: Awareness programs for parents from lower SES groups can encourage them to support their children academically and emotionally despite financial constraints.
4. Resource Allocation: Schools with a larger population of low SES students should receive additional resources, remedial classes, and financial assistance to bridge the achievement gap.
5. Teacher Training: Teachers must be sensitized to the psychological needs of students from diverse SES backgrounds so that they can provide individualized support.

Theoretical Contribution

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reinforces the socio-psychological model of educa-

tion which suggests that academic achievement is not merely a function of cognitive abilities but is significantly mediated by psychological factors and socio-economic contexts. The study adds to the growing body of literature emphasizing the interconnectedness of confidence, anxiety, and SES in shaping academic success.

Conclusion

The present study examined the comparative differences in self-confidence, anxiety, and academic achievement of secondary school students across socio-economic status (SES) groups. The findings revealed that students from high SES backgrounds consistently reported higher self-confidence, lower anxiety, and superior academic performance compared to those from middle and low SES groups. The analysis further confirmed that self-confidence was positively correlated with academic achievement, while anxiety was negatively correlated with both self-confidence and achievement.

These results indicate that socio-economic status is not only a structural determinant of educational opportunities but also a significant factor shaping students' psychological well-being and academic potential. The study highlights the urgent need to recognize and address SES-based inequalities in education.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides meaningful insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size and Scope:** The study was limited to 200 students from selected schools. A larger and more diverse sample across regions would enhance generalizability.
2. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study was cross-sectional in nature, measuring variables at one point in time. A longitudinal study could better capture changes in self-confidence, anxiety, and achievement over time.
3. **Self-Report Measures:** Psychological variables like self-confidence and anxiety were measured through self-report scales, which may be subject to social desirability bias.
4. **Limited Variables:** Only three variables were considered. Other important psychological factors such as motivation, resilience, and study habits were not included.

Recommendations and Educational Implications

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Counseling and Guidance Services:** Schools should provide regular counseling programs to help students, particularly from low SES groups, manage academic anxiety and build confidence.
2. **Confidence-Building Interventions:** Teachers can implement classroom strategies such as positive reinforcement, peer mentoring, and cooperative learning to enhance students' self-confidence.
3. **Stress-Management Programs:** Incorporating yoga, meditation, and mindfulness training into the school curriculum can help reduce anxiety levels.
4. **Parental Awareness Workshops:** Parents, especially from low SES backgrounds, should be made aware of the importance of emotional and academic support for their children.
5. **Equitable Resource Allocation:** Policymakers should allocate additional resources and remedial programs to schools serving low SES communities to minimize achievement gaps.
6. **Teacher Training:** Teachers should be trained to identify symptoms of low confidence and high anxiety among students and to provide timely support.
7. **Future Research:** Further studies could explore other mediating variables (e.g., resilience, motivation, emotional intelligence) and adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches for deeper insights.



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