



RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Parental Socioeconomic Background on the Schooling and Academic Performance of Students in District Dir Upper: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Children's schooling is important for their personal growth and plays a vital role in socioeconomic development of a nation. Parents' socioeconomic background plays a vital role in shaping children's schooling and impacts their academic achievement. Children of the upper class parents have enough resources available for fulfilling the requirements of their studies, while children of poor parents have lesser resources to support their education. This study aims at empirically diagnosing the relationship between parental socio-economic background and children (students) schooling and academic achievements. The study was conducted in Tehsil Dir of District Dir Upper, while applying qualitative research design. The primary data was collected from a sample of twenty four (24) purposively selected respondents. The respondents comprised of two different categories i.e. 12 students selected from Class X to Class XII from the Govt. Higher Secondary School Gandigar Dir Upper and 12 Parents including 06 from poor family background and 06 from rich family background. Primary data was obtained through interview, using semi-structured interview guide. The study found that children of poor parents are not performing well in their academic career as they have lesser opportunities and resources. They also remain absent from school to help their parents in agriculture field, business and homework etc. Further, the study revealed that rich parents have positive impacts on the academic achievements of their children. The study suggests provision of equal educational opportunities to children of both poor and rich families. The study also suggests supporting the poor students with scholarships, technical and free education so to avoid widening the existing gap among rich and poor students.

KEYWORDS Academic Achievement, Economic Status, Educational Disparity, Impact, Social Capital

Introduction

This Socioeconomic background is the social standing or class of an individual or group in a particular society or set up relative to others. Usually, it includes a number of factors and has been measured in terms of education, income and occupation, and has been recognized as a key determinant in one's future life. The socioeconomic status of students has significant impact on the learning environment and educational achievements of students. It is evident from the existing literature that children of economically rich families have enough resources and opportunities for utilization of their skills and talents in their academic journey. In contrast, the choices and opportunities of children of low socioeconomic backgrounds are limited and they face different issues in accessing educational opportunities and exhibiting their skills and talents. Usually, children's initial learning is determined by his/her home environment and the surroundings he or she grew up. For poor parents it is hard to manage home expenditure along-with provision of reading environment to their children, however; the rich families face lesser or no issue in catering the educational requirements of their children at an early age.

The economic status of parents, their educational qualification, and their reading habits, environments of the home and parents occupation are directly linked to their children education. In early life children imitate their parents and the reading and education environment of the family motivate children towards education and learning (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015). Several studies claimed that children growing up in poor environment usually suffer from delay in developmental growth and experience learning disabilities (Saifie & Mehmood, 2011, p.127). Besides, parents of low socioeconomic background are unable to support their children in appropriate manner and they face difficulties in arrangement of children educational requirements including teaching materials, books and notebooks, and school uniform. The students of high economic background do not face such difficulties and they behave their children in positive manner and provide them healthy and conducive environment which helps the children in focusing on their studies and make positive achievements in their academic career (Saifie & Mehmood, 2011).

Similarly, students' academic performance also impacts their future career opportunities. Thus, it is primarily the socioeconomic background that determines his environment of learning and transforms the social context in his future life. Relevant studies found that children (students) from upper class families are usually better in class participation, take part in discussion easily, perform better in presentation, exhibit good communication skills and take leading role in class activities, while students from poor families first find it difficult to adjust themselves in a new educational setting, they are shy, and mostly avoid taking part in class related activities (Uwaifo 2008; Singh & Choudhar, 2015). This reflect that students from poor families are at disadvantaged position in educational institutions and the existing class structure, the curriculum and teaching-learning process reinforce and strengthen rather than reduce this gap. Poor students despite their educational desirability are unable to equally participate in class activities and thus, education as an important institution is not a equalizer of the prevailing socio-economic inequalities and instead divides the class on the basis of socioeconomic backgrounds (Ullah, Saeed, Ahmad, Khan, & Naz, 2021). In this context, Balami. (2015), Eshetu. (2015) Adzido, Dzogbede, Ahiave, & Dorkpah (2016) in their studies found close relationship between the socioeconomic backgrounds of parents and academic achievements of their children. Relevantly, in another study conducted in Nigeria & Karachi it was concluded that children whose parents are facing financial challenges are behind in their studies compared to children whose parents have no financial worries. These studies indicated that children of rich parents ask their parents for purchase of school/study requirements (books, pen, charts, bags, fee etc) without any hesitation and the parents fulfills these requirement without any negative reaction, however; for poor students it is difficult to ask their parents for daily school requirements and they usually fear as well as face harsh attitude from their parents. This discourage and de-motivate children in their studies and they are in inferiority complex in the class and influence their self-esteem in the class (AlDahdouh, Osorio, & Caires, 2015; Sadia, Memon, & Pathan, 2021). This paper aims at investigating the impact of parental socioeconomic background on the educational performance of students. An attempt has been made to incorporate student's as well as parents experiences and perspectives to reach conclusion.

Material and Methods

The present study was carried out to find out the impact of the socio-economic backgrounds of parents on the schooling and academic performance of students. The study was undertaken in Tehsil Dir, of District Dir Upper, while applying qualitative research design. The respondents were identified and accessed after an initial survey conducted for the identification of the target respondents. The primary data was collected from a sample of twenty four (24) purposively selected respondents. The respondents comprised of two different categories i.e. 12 (twelve) students and 12 (twelve) parents. Further, the students were selected from Class X to Class XII from the Govt. Higher Secondary School Gandigar Dir Upper. In addition, the sample of parents was also equally divided i.e. (6 parents were taken

from poor family background and 06 parents representing rich family backgrounds. Similar procedure was also use for division of students sample i.e. 06 (six) students were equally selected from poor and rich family backgrounds. Among students, data was collected from students of class X, Class XI and Class XII. The selection of sample enabled data triangulation and ensured comprehensive data collection. From both parents and students, data was collected at a place convenient to them in order to derive maximum information, wherein each interview last about 40 minutes. The collected information (through interviews) were transcribed and after passing from different phases it was analyzed under different themes to clarify the issue, derive study findings and conclusions. Although, this study was not ethically challenging, however; ethical guidelines were adopted as per APA manual seventh edition 2020, i.e. informed consent was taken from respondents, data was coded to ensure respondents anonymity and confidentiality.

Theoretical Understanding

This study has utilized social capital theories for formulation of the theoretical framework. For developing a broader understanding of the study question we have used the social capital theories of Theodore Schultz (1960), Pieere Bourdieu (1986) and James Samuel Coleman (1990). Theodore Schultz, in his article on "Capital Formation by Education" (1960), argued that education as a form of investment with high return than investment in business. After this, the concept of human capital formation was widely used in education and incorporated in policies related to education. He recognizes education as a significant investment in man and considered education as a form of human capital. However; in this study we argue that education is not forming equally capital, and this capital formation through education is impacted by students' socioeconomic background. Besides, this study also draws its support from Pieere Bourdieu theory of social capital (1986) that conceptualizes that social capital based on power and there has been different constrains in access to education on the basis of class, gender and race. Bourdieu argued that social capital is not equally available in society and these are primarily derived from an individual social position and status in society. Thus, social capital gives power to the person and enables him to mobilize resources and acquire power (Bourdieu, 1986). He claimed that social are associated to one's class in social stratification and it helps a person in utilizing it and accumulating resources and advancement. As, Bourdieu stated that a person who has social capital also utilize it a derive benefits from social networks For Bourdieu, social capital is manifested through benefits derived from social networks, that creates differences in acquisition of power and status. Here we argue that in educational institutions a rich student with more social capital (derived from parental backgrounds) are at advantaged position in the teaching-learning process compared with poor students, and thus creating the significant potentials for creating and broadening social networks. James Samuel Coleman (1990) explains that social capital facilitates the activities and functions of an individual in the social structure. In his theory Coleman explained that social capital plays a vital role in an individual educational achievement. In his book "The Adolescent Society (1961), he has role of the family and community and environment in student's academic performance and ultimate achievement. He categorized the impact of families on children's educated and stated that through financial capital, human capital, and social capital families influence the schooling and education of their children (Coleman, 1988). He associated human capital with parental education and explained that educated parents provide their children a better environment for their cognitive growth and intellectual learning (Colman, 1988). Social capital in this context results in individual optimization, promote individuals' actions, enhance their education and increases chances of social mobility.

Results and Discussion

The collected information were passed through different steps and analyzed under different themes. The different themes were discussed in light of secondary literature while primary quotes were mentioned in its support. Thematic analysis helps in clarifying the

issue under study and deriving findings and conclusion of the study. At first the general and demographic characteristics were presented to know respondents' composition and different categories, after this detailed analysis has been given under different themes.

The demographic table explains the categories and characteristics of respondents. The table shows that in the total respondents 12 (50%) were in age group 15-25 years. 03(12.5%) were in the age group of 26-35, while the remaining 09 (37.5%) each were in age category from 36- 45. The information also show that most respondents' i.e. 12 (50%) belong to joint family, 06 (25%) equal were from nuclear and joint family. Further, on the basis of education, 056 (25%) respondents were illiterate, 18 (75%) were educated up to metric or above. In addition, 12 (50%) respondents were married and 12 (50%) were unmarried. On the basis of income respondents were divided into two categories and monthly income of 12 (50%) respondents was from a minimum of 25000-45000, while monthly income of 12(50) respondents was from 50000-250000.

Table 1
General and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Total
15-25	12	50%	12
26-35	03	12.5%	03
36- 45	09	37.5%	09
Total	24	100	24
Family Types	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Joint Family	12	50%	12
Nuclear Family	06	25%	06
Extended Family	06	25%	06
Total	24	100	24
Education	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Illiterate	06	25%	06
Matric & above	18	75%	18
Total	24	100	24
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Married	12	50%	12
Unmarried	12	50%	12
Total	24	100	24
Family Income	Frequency	Percentage	Total
25000-45000	12	50%	12
50000-250000	12	50%	12
Total	24	100	15

Income of Parents and its Impact on Children Schooling/Education

Parents' jobs and income plays a vital role in schooling of their children. Relevant studies indicate that economic status of parents influence the academic achievement of their children in a positive manner. On contrary, parents of poor economic status are unable to find enough financial resources and they are unable to sufficiently invest in the education of their children (Ahmad, 2016; Lareau, 2003). Poor parents consider the provision of physical requirements (clothing, food, and housing) for their children as their primary responsibility, while education of children remains their secondary priority. In this context, a one's class and the acquisition of cultural capital facilitate his/her education and academic performance (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Families where children face financial constraints, their educational attainment are negatively affected. In these poor families, children are the helper and financial contributors in family income as they are working with their parents in agriculture, small business and other home works and find little or not work for school home work (Bjorman, 2005). Further, Ahmad (2016) in his study found that poor parents are

unable to pay attention to different academic activities of children and they usually fail to create conducive educational environment at home that motivate and encourage their children for getting education. During field interviews a respondent (student) told that *"We have no separate study table or room in our home. We study in our bed of sitting on the floor. Sometimes we also continue our homework outside under trees when guests comes our homes and occupy our communal room. This disturbs our study time and we are always from those rich students who do not have such problems in their homes"*. The first worry and task of poor parents is to search for livelihood and because of poverty the ratio of drop out from schools is also higher among poor students as compared to students from rich backgrounds (Engle, & Black, 2008). In similar study by Kainuwa and Yusuf(2013) it is argued that the incidences of drop out from school is higher among poor students because they are unable to pay different fees of schools including registration, admission and examination fee, the cost of textbooks, purchase of uniform as well as cost of transportation for daily pick and drop. Similar ideas were shared by a respondent (parent) during field interview:

"Due to my poor economic condition I am unable to afford my son's schooling in standard private schools. The monthly fee, and daily expenditure of private schools are very high and it is difficult to fulfill requirements of these schools. With my current income I hardly support the basic needs of my family"

In absence of a permanent and sustainable source of income, poor parents are involved in multiple works and spend huge part of their time in earning a livelihood. Due to their busy routine and tiresome life they found it hard to spare time for their children and given proper attention to the education of their children (Elia & Tokunaga, 2015). Field information also confirms secondary literature and majority of poor parents told that they are unable to give proper attention to the schooling of their children. A respondent uttered: *"Our first task is to provide food to our children then education. Feeding our children is first for us and education is second priority. No matter if a child remains without education but it is important to feed him well"*. However; it was found during field data collection and observation that parents with rich economic backgrounds were likely to recognize education of the children as their first priority. They were very friendly to their children and give proper attention to the school requirements of their children such as admission, tuition fee, books, uniform, and transportation etc. While reflecting upon this a respondent said:

"I personally drop my children to school, while I have arranged a separate vehicle for their picking from school. I purchase books, uniform, and other stationery items for my children and provide them the choice of selection of their water bottle, school bags, shoes and lunchbox. I also check my children daily class work and homework and identify areas of improvement as well. I have also arranged a study table, computer and separate room for my children study at home. I really enjoy my children education"

The learning environment is also equally important to academic achievement. Home environment also influence the schooling of children and rich people provide good learning environment at home. Children from rich families found acquire knowledge, different skills, form attitude and habits in their home and acquire symbolic capital that help them in their future learning as well. In this context, a respondent expressed that: *"Education is a lifelong process. Actually, it start from home, and home based learning serve as a foundation and are very important for the future learning of children. Educated parents train their children in a better way in their early life"*.

As Bourdieu (1986) stated the home environment in fact is the habitus "physical embodiment of cultural capital", which enable the children to learn the behavior of their social setting. Respondents also shared similar experiences and they were of the opinion that economic status of the parents is important in children education and learning. Children from high income families are exposed to the identification and usage of different things in early life as compared to students belonging of poor families. A respondent shared while sharing his experience told: *"economic factor is helpful for creating a suitable learning*

environment at home. Schools also support and perpetuate culture of the rich people. Schooling is an expensive activity and rich people always are at advantage”

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that parental socio-economic status plays a significant part in education and academic performance of the children. Children of high-income families enjoy their studies and they have all the facilities and services required for their education both at schools and in homes. They receive proper care and attention from their parents and they face no difficulties in arrangements of coaching classes, tuition, purchase of computer/laptop, uniform and school textbooks and workbooks. On the contrary, children of low-income families face several challenges and difficulties in fulfillment of their educational requirements. Their parents due to unstable income sources find it hard to give proper attention to education of their children and most of the time precious time of the children are spent in helping their parents in agriculture fields, grazing cattle, providing support in family small business and performing many other works of the home. It is not absolute and poor students also got immense success in their academic careers and usually they are found more hardworking and perviewous towards their education, however poverty has been a great hindrance in their higher education and academic performance. Thus, poor students despite their desirability are unable to acquire proper education and perform better in their academics.

Parents Educational Status and Its Impact Children Overall Academic Performance

Educational status of parents is important in their children schooling and have a positive impact on the overall academic performance of children. As stated by Colmen. (1988); Sewell & Hauser (1993) & Nicholas (2010) children have the intimate relationship with their parents and spent major portion of their time with their parents. In most societies children also receive their early education from their parents. In this context, educated parents exert greater influence on their children because they participate with their children in discussing school related tasks, school activities, children homework (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). In this way educated parents motivate their children and direct them towards achieving their educational goals and children from educated parents perform better education. Ahamad (2016) further added that children of the high socio-economic class get an opportunity for psychological support from their parents. Pakistani society is stratified on the basis of class, ethnicity and gender and this stratification is visible across educational institutions. The children from rich families because of their acquired parental social capital utilized it and develop social networks with students from rich families that impact their lifelong achievements. This study also found that usually poor students surrounds other poor students in educational institutions and their participation in class activities is less than the students from high-income families. A student of class XI, explained: *“As the people are taking leading role in society and the poor are followers or obey their commands. This also happens in schools and students from rich families always are in leading roles in arrangement of class activities (party, study tour, sports activities etc). The main factor behind their leading role is their financial stability and they easily afford such activities”*.

Parental education and their involvement in educational activities of their children prove social capital of the children, which their parents have acquired due to their economic status (Colmen, 1988). Educated parents also interact with teachers regularly, discuss children problems and progress with their teachers and usually manage children absenteeism easily and effectively. The involvement of parents in academic activities encourages and motivates their children and results in positive learning outcomes. It also serve as a driving vehicle that transport their children towards their destination, and parental aspirations towards their children education thus proves a determining factor in affecting education (Gopalan, Bakar, Zulkifli, Alwi, & Mat, 2017; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995). Education of parents particularly of mother remains a significant social capital for their children that transform the life and academic achievements of the children. In this study it was found that majority of educated parents were serious about the

education and future of their children. They were checking the homework of students and it was the most important factor of interaction between children, their parents and the educational institution. This interaction enables both parents and children to find out unique qualities of their children and concentrate on the weak areas as well. A respondent (parent) expressed: *"I visit my children school every second week. I discuss the school work and progress of children with the school principal and teachers. I take on their feedback and suggestions for further improvement. This interaction with school enables me to know the strength of my children and help me to identify weak areas"*.

Relevant literature indicates that home environment or the culture of learning at home has been an essential determinant in children learning. In fact, home environment is a combination of social, cultural, and economic factors in which parental education is an important factor in learning inside and outside the school (Coleman, 1961). Relatedly, family background is key to student's learning and it influences the primary and secondary socialization of children. It also works as a source of interest and inspiration for the future career development of children (Pant, 2020). Thomson (2018) also revealed that Further, parents of high socio-economic status encourage their children to develop all the necessary skill for successful learning. Also, parents with rich cultural capital are more aware of the rules and regulation of schools, and easily interact with teachers utilizing their cultural capital, pay more attention to co-curricular activities, create interest in discussion, utilize their communication skills and become outstanding performer in the school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Students belonging to poor socio-economic backgrounds are less motivated to get higher education after completing their secondary education and majority are engaged in the labour market. They usually left their school incomplete, get marriage at early age and becomes parents. The poverty of the parents influences the life chances and choices of their children and promotes intergenerational poverty. A respondent told:

"After completing secondary education I was unable to afford higher education of my elder son. Currently he is working as a mason in a construction company. My second son also joins a auto mechanic workshop after getting his matriculation. I tried to continue their education, but I was unable to do it".

Researchers like Bourdieu (1986) and Colmen (1961) argued that parental economic status and education exert greater influences upon the academic achievement of students and proves an important tool for the learning and achievement of their children. Even upper class educated parents provide equal opportunities of education to their daughters. A respondent said *"I enrolled my daughter in a private school. I pay monthly tuition fee of Rs. 3500 for her education. I believe my daughter will become a doctor"*. On contrary, poor and illiterate parents are careless about their children education and thus, their children are far behind in learning and educational achievements. This was authenticated by a respondent and explained: *"My parents are illiterate and they do not understand my educational requirements. They do not take my education a serious matter and never in my educational activities"*.

Educational opportunities and facilities are different for the children of educated parents and these students because of their parental backgrounds are easy going in their educational journey. This also provides them with skills to enhance their achievements and acquire academic excellence. Poor students find their education as a challenging journey full of frustration and tension. Their parents do not care about their education and never participate in their children's educational activities. These students thus, lag behind in the academic performance.

Conclusion

This study concludes that parental socio-economic status is an important factor for the schooling and education of children. Parent's socio-economic status impacts the education and academic performance of students. The study also found most of the students

enrolled in Govt: schools are from poor family backgrounds while majority of students enrolled at standard private schools are represents upper middle or high income families. Further, this study concludes that the primary focus of poor parents is on earning livelihood to feed the hungry mouths and because of this they are unable to give proper attention to the education of their children. The home environment in poor families is also not conducive for education and learning and majority of poor students do not have a separate study room in their homes. Moreover, it was concluded that economically rich and educated parents give more time and proper attention to the schooling of their children. As they face no financial constrains and enrolls their children in private schools with high fee and standard education environment. Educated and economically rich parents also provide an appropriate and conducive study/learning environment for their children at home and thus their children continue their studies without tension that increases their creativity and results in positive education outcomes.

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