THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

MIHĂILĂ TEODOR
University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology

Abstract
The following pages will present the influence that socioeconomic status has on school performance. Depending on culture, region and country, the socioeconomic status has an significant impact on school performance and it is seen as a good indicator of it.

Method: Participants: a group of 100 young students age between 18 and 24 years old (M.=20.19; S.D.=1.54), all of them aged over 18, being in their fourth year of high school; Instruments: in order to validate the hypothesis we used a socioeconomic questionnaire of our own, since the concept covers several financial factors such as family, parents' academic level, lifestyle, family influence, the number of people in the house. For the academic performance measurement we used the average grades of the students. This group was given a questionnaire measuring the socioeconomic status. School performance was assessed by consulting the students' class books School performance correlates directly proportional to the duration of hours spent learning per day (r =0.221, p <0.05). Another statistically significant correlation is the one between school performance and extracurricular activities (r = -0.30, p <0.01) After the results were analyzed, we were able to determine that school performance is, indeed, influenced by the hours spent learning, free time, the presence of siblings in the family and the family home place, (in the rural or urban area), all of which are metrics for the socioeconomic status.

Keywords: rural, urban, socio-economic status, academic performance, extracurricular activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In general, the concept “socioeconomic status” highlight to the position of individuals, families, or other units on one or more dimensions of stratification (Fergusson, Horwood and Boden, 2008). The socioeconomic status has been measured in many ways, including educational and occupational attainment,
exposure to poverty, income and exposure to adverse life events such as unemployment or monoparental families (Fergusson et al, 2008). Exposure to social inequality was evaluated on individual, family and community levels (Bardley and Cowyn, 2002 as cited in Fergusson et al, 2008). The results were collected in different ways for different purposes, but were used more or less to describe the social and economic stratifications and their effects on life (Fergusson et al, 2008). According to Bowden and Doughney (2011) children who have a higher socioeconomic status were more likely to aspire to higher education. In developing countries, the socioeconomic status affects nutrition and health and even the spread of HIV/AIDS, which in turn affects the economy by eliminating work force (Drawler, 2005).

The way of defining and measuring the socioeconomic status has changed significantly in the last years according to Etwisle and Aston (1994) as cited in Zhao, Valcke, Desoete and Verhaeghe (2011). In the studies that followed, several indicators were added, such as home resources, home atmosphere, personal library books and other school issues (Caldas & Bankston, 1997, OECD, 2004 cited in Zhao et al, 2011).

Since 1990, the impact school and related contexts have on school performance has been taken into account. This resulted in additional indications, such as the socioeconomic status of the school and the economic status of neighbors (Sirin, 2005, as cited in Zhao et al, 2011). Although the socioeconomic status indicators appear to vary, the most used are the educational level, parental occupation and family financial level (Zhao et al, 2011).

Education gaps among people with different socio-economic statuses were characterized as a lasting social phenomenon (White, 1982, cited in Ma, 2001). Differences in the socioeconomic status in schools may cause large differences in the academic performance, differences that are also called "socioeconomic gaps" in academic achievement (Ma, 2001).

Families and individuals with low socioeconomic status, suffer from high incidence when it comes to psychosocial characteristics, being cynical, hostile and having a low self-esteem (Blacksher, 2002).

The socioeconomic status may vary greatly from country to country. Countries that tend to have large differences in the socioeconomic status also have large differences in school achievement (PISA, 2009).

Furthermore, socioeconomic status is related to school performance, it does not mean that the rich are born smart. This only means that, in richer families, children are more likely to have more experiences that stimulate their intellectual development (Sandro, 1987).

The literature shows that the socioeconomic status of the family is consistently found to be the only strong predictor when it comes to educational outcomes (Franso et al, 2005 as cited in Zhao et al, 2011). To explain this phenomenon, the researchers argue that parents who come from families with low
socioeconomic status are less involved in their children's schooling and support them less compared to parents of children from families with a higher socioeconomic status, resulting in performance lower academic (Ho and Willms, 1996; Jeynes, 2003; Siliskas et al, 2010, cited in Zhao et al, 2011).

Studies that were done between 1918 and 1975 show an average correlation of 0.29, while Sirin (2005) shows that the average correlation is 0.34. The impact of the socioeconomic status on performance varies greatly depending on economy, region or country (Zhao et al, 2011). Jennifer (2005) highlight that the socioeconomic status is related to the home environment and he argued that the socioeconomic status dictates the quality of life of a student. The study conducted by Sandro (1987) showed that 46% of the students with socioeconomic status who have medium to low and working-class parents want to pursue higher education. To reduce the dropout rate from 29% to 11%, the teachers decided to prepare a regular report for the parents, and to make visits at the students' homes. A study conducted in 2009 about the socioeconomic status, cultural status and academic performance, showed that students who have parents with low education, unemployed or with jobs where wages are low, have difficulties in engaging in curricular and extra-curricular activities, which leads to lower academic performance than other pupils (PISA, 2009).

Delaney, Harmon and Redmond (2010) show that students with a low socioeconomic status underestimate themselves because of the socioeconomic status they inherited from the parents and the performance characteristics of the high school. Bowden's and Doughney's study (2011) has shown that a student is more likely to aspire to a university if he has internet at home, if he is encouraged by teachers to pursue higher education or if he goes to a private school. A higher importance in the influence of students than the teachers’ encouragement has the educational level of the parents, especially the mother's. It was discovered that even the cultural and economic variables play a crucial role in the model aspirations of students and that they increase significantly the predictive power of them to attend university.

Parental involvement has an important role in children's school performance, both constructs seem to be positively related. Also, it was noted that when children are surrounded by caring parents who are involved in their school activities and do their homework together, children are more likely to respond positively to extra-curricular activities and have higher performance (Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011).

Students with low socioeconomic status and poor backgrounds tend to get low school performance. An important role in students' academic performance is played by the academic level of the parents, in Turkey especially the father's. Students who come from monoparental families or with parents who are not home owners tend to have better academic performance. The results of the study conducted in Turkey revealed that the household size and the number of siblings does not affect the school performance of the students. Students' perceptions of teachers tend to
have great significance because it has been shown that students who appreciate their teachers and say that the professors’ treatment is a very good one tend to have higher performance than those who say the way their teachers treat them is a bad or very bad (Engir-Demir, 2008).

The study by Khajehpour (2011) on the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance claims that when parents are involved in children’s activities, their school performance tends to increase.

In other cultures, the socioeconomic status influences a little the school performance, but it has been demonstrated that when socioeconomic status is high its effects on school performance drops significantly (Egeli, Oghan, and Harputluoglu Ozturk, 2004).

A school without facilities, situated in a neighborhood where the socioeconomic status of students is low, affects their performance (Cobbold, 2006). In a California study it was demonstrated that larger schools have students with higher socioeconomic status, and smaller schools have students with average or low socioeconomic status (Friedkin and Necochea, 1988 cited Cobbold, 2006).

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

- The objective of the study is the relation of SES and academic performance.
- Theoretical, the students that have a low SES, tend to have a low academic performance.

2.2. HYPOTHESIS

1. The students with low socioeconomic status have a low academic performance compared those with a high socioeconomic status.
2. The students who live in the rural area have a lower financial level than students who live in the urban.

3. METHOD

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

For this study, we used a group of 100 young students age between 18 and 24 years old (mean=20.19; standard deviation=1.54), all of them aged over 18, being in their fourth year of high school. This group was given a questionnaire measuring the socioeconomic status.
3.2. INSTRUMENTS

Socioeconomic Status Questionnaire (Burtăverde & Mihăilă, 2011) with the following dimensions: family, parents' academic level, lifestyle, family influence, the number of people in the house. For the academic performance measurement we used the average grades of the students.

3.3. PROCEDURE

The instrument was administered in the "paper and pencil" method, in two highschools from towns Giurgiu and Bucharest. Before they started filling in the questionnaires, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their training was made. The instruments were given to students older than 18 years, all of them in their last year of highschool.

4. RESULTS

Table 1. Means, Minim, Maxim, standard deviations for academic performance and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minim</th>
<th>Maxim</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PA= academic performance

Looking at Table 2, we can see that the socioeconomic factors that influence school performance are the following: the number of siblings in the family, the number of hours spent learning, leisure and parents residing in rural and urban environments. We can say that the number of siblings in families adversely affects school performance (r = -0.247, p < .05), and we can also say that once there are brothers in the family, the number of people at home has also increased.
Tabel 2. Person correlation for Academic performance and socio-economic status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1).PA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2).Brothers</td>
<td>.222*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) H learned</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4).afterschool</td>
<td>.289**</td>
<td>.285**</td>
<td>.398**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5).RUA</td>
<td>.259**</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.274**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PA= academic performance, H learned= hours learned, RUA= rural urban areas
**p<.01, *p<.05

School performance correlates directly proportional to the duration of hours spent learning per day ($r = 0.221, p <0.05$). Another statistically significant correlation is the one between school performance and extracurricular activities ($r = -0.300, p <0.01$), as we can see from Table 2 that extracurricular activities are inversely proportional to free time, which means that students who have more free time tend to have higher performance, while those with more extracurricular activities have a lower performance. Another statistically significant and directly proportional correlation is the one between school performance and the rural-urban environment (residence).

Table 3. Mean differences between rural urban areas and academic performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Rural</td>
<td>8.7585</td>
<td>.53633</td>
<td>2.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Urban</td>
<td>9.0727</td>
<td>.45644</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.005

From Table 3, we can see that students whose parents reside in rural areas have lower performance than students whose parents reside in urban areas ($t (98) = -2.41, p <0.05$). All that can be seen in Table 4 indicates that those who live in rural areas also have a lower financial level than those who live in urban areas ($t (98) = -2.64, p <0.05$).

Table 4. Mean differences between rural urban areas and financial level of family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Rural</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>2.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Urban</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.005
5. CONCLUSIONS

We can say that the hypothesis of the study has been confirmed, the socioeconomic status affecting, indeed, school performance, through the following indicators: parental residence (rural-urban), hours spent learning, leisure activities and the presence of siblings in the family, just as it is shown in other studies (Jennifer, 2005; Zhao, Valcke, Desoete, Verhaeghe, 2011; Sirin, 2005; Engir-Demir, 2008; Bowden & Doughney, 2011; Delaney, Harmon, Redmond, 2010; Egeli, Oghan, Ozturk, Harputluoglu, 2004, Sandro, 1987). Looking through literature, although there are attempts to eliminate the gap between socioeconomic statuses and performance through several school programs, there are still differences in school performance when it comes to socioeconomic status. According to the PISA studies (2009), Romania has the most significant growth when it comes to reducing disparities between socioeconomic status and school performance by implementing programs to help students with financial and family problems. Relating the PISA study with this study, we can say that in Romania there are differences in socioeconomic status and performance, but they tend to diminish significantly through the implemented programs.

One of the study limits would be the bias of the participants when they completed the questionnaires, since we cannot always be 100% sure of their honesty when answering the questions. It might also matter that the questionnaires were given to students who were part of national colleges, which guarantees a higher performance compared to other normal high school students.

A future study that could help reduce disparities between socioeconomic status and school performance could be the relationship between the socioeconomic status of the school, its size and prestige on one side and the socioeconomic status of students, on the other.

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6. REFERENCES


Sandro, C., (1987). Schools urged to get parents involved Family participation aids academic

