

The Academic Success Among the Students of Low-Income Families.

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ABSTRACT

Students' academic success is often impacted by various factors such as family background, socio-economic status, and access to educational resources. However, students from low-income families face unique challenges that hinder their academic achievement. The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze these challenges and identify potential strategies to support the academic success of these students. The study began by examining the impact of poverty on the educational outcomes of students. It will evaluate how economic hardships, limited access to resources like textbooks and technology, and unstable living conditions may impact their academic performance. A qualitative research design was used in the study to understand how the expected result of academic success among students from low-income families can vary based on individual circumstances. However, research and studies will show that there are potential challenges that students from low-income families may face that can impact their academic success. These challenges may include limited access to educational resources, such as textbooks or technology, lower-quality schools, inadequate nutrition, less parental involvement, and increased exposure to stressful home environments. This research intends to investigate the above issues and to provide recommendations for Policymakers to focus on increasing the availability and affordability of educational resources, such as providing free textbooks or laptops to low-income students. Additionally, interventions that target the socio-emotional well-being of students, such as counseling services or mentorship programs, should be implemented.

Keyword: Family income, academic success, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

In many high-poverty developing countries, education is seen as a crucial pathway for socioeconomic advancement. Although education does not guarantee employment, it significantly enhances future earning potential and job opportunities, thereby contributing to higher lifetime income and improved life choices. However, academic failure remains a serious issue with long-lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities, potentially reducing civic involvement and productivity (Nsiah, 2017).

Parental financial support is vital for children's academic success. Studies show that children of financially stable parents are generally more motivated and achieve better academically. However, some argue that parental income is not a definitive predictor of academic performance, with students from lower-income families often striving to improve their socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, a growing performance gap persists between students from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Casas, 2023).

Investing in education is crucial for human capital development. Low-income parents often cannot invest sufficiently in their children's education due to resource constraints, negatively affecting their academic performance. A positive correlation exists between students' cognitive abilities and their parents' socioeconomic status. Children in poverty frequently face hunger, disease, instability, and insecurity, leading to behavioral problems, poor academic achievement, and social and emotional development issues. Research in resource-limited countries shows that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are disadvantaged in terms of growth, education, and potential realization (Msofe & Wandela, 2022).

Variations in financial status and preschool literacy experiences contribute to differences between eager and reluctant readers. Middle-class or high-income households tend to engage more in literacy activities, like reading stories, compared to low-income families. This "blue-collar value" emphasizes the importance of family time despite long working hours. Family factors such as income, parental occupation, and education significantly affect reading and literacy outcomes, contributing to the academic achievement gap for children from low-income families. (Law, 2012).

Students living in poverty face more challenges compared to their peers. In the 2015-16 academic year, 19% of individuals under 18 lived in poverty, with 24.4% of students attending high-poverty schools. Poverty-related issues, including health problems, homelessness, food insecurity, and lack of medical care, cause significant stress and hinder students' academic performance (Native, 2015).

Parents' educational aspirations for their children correlate with their socioeconomic status. Higher levels of parental education and income enhance their involvement in their children's activities. Many illiterate parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds are unaware of educational requirements. Some low-income parents plan to support their children's homework, while others rely on schools due to financial constraints, resulting in poor academic performance (Bushra et al., 2010).

This study aims to examine academic access among students from low-income families. Specifically, the study aims to identify the key barriers to academic access faced by students from low-income families, to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and programs aimed at improving academic access for low-income students, and to identify the role of teachers in influencing students from low-income families who excel academically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher's Impact on Students from Low-Income Families

Despite the numerous challenges faced by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, the role of teachers is pivotal in shaping their academic success. Teachers must address various factors, including language learning needs and motivational elements, to enhance teaching effectiveness for these students. Teachers who provide tailored resources and activities can significantly impact the development and achievement of underprivileged students. In the U.S., students qualifying for free or reduced education are deemed economically at-risk based on federal poverty thresholds (Furcsa, 2020).

Teacher effects are notably higher in low-SES schools, meaning that a child's academic outcomes can vary significantly based on their teacher (Nye et al., 2004). Teachers play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by low-income students, yet often these students do not receive the necessary support. Educators can make a positive difference by recognizing and overcoming their biases, ensuring fair special education referrals, and adapting their teaching styles to meet the needs of these students (Tâm et al., 2016).

Studies have shown that teachers often have preconceived notions about students from different SES backgrounds. Teachers may rate high-SES students higher than low-SES students with similar academic achievements, and negative initial perceptions of low-SES students can become self-fulfilling prophecies. However, teachers who hold high expectations for their students can significantly elevate the self-perceptions and academic outcomes of low-SES. (Tâm et al., 2016)

Teachers who feel responsible for their students' success tend to offer higher levels of support, but this attitude is more common in high-SES schools. It is crucial to recognize that while family financial situations affect academic performance, educators can significantly influence student success through their attitudes and actions (Furcsa, 2020).

Barriers Faced by Students from Low-Income Families

Students from low-SES backgrounds often face negative achievement and health outcomes due to the

mismatch between their interdependent cultural norms and the independent norms emphasized by educational institutions (Silverman et al., 2023) Poverty significantly impacts educational attainment, as seen in Canadian studies that align with findings from other wealthy nations. Socioeconomic disadvantages and related risk factors such as high family stress and lower parental education adversely affect academic performance and cognitive development (Rogers et al., 2018)

A study across Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam highlighted that wealth protects academic success, depriving talented but underprivileged students of educational opportunities. Bright children from poor backgrounds often fail to progress due to obstacles related to their socioeconomic situations, leading to a significant gap in higher education enrollment between the richest and poorest students. (Poor Children Are 'Failed by System' on Road to Higher Education in Lower-Income Countries, 2021).

Family income is a strong predictor of future academic performance and access to high-status jobs. Children from low-income families typically lack educational resources, games, books, and interactive learning materials at home, which are more readily available to higher-SES children. These resources and a stimulating home environment significantly support cognitive development and school success (Students' Socio-Economic Status and Performance, 2019).

The Effect of Policies on Improving Academic Access for Low-Income Students

Addressing disparities in higher education attainment is vital for social mobility and economic competitiveness. Higher education not only benefits individuals through better job prospects and incomes but also enhances societal outcomes by increasing economic output, reducing demand for social assistance, and promoting civic engagement. Federal programs like the Pell Grant are crucial for helping low-income students afford college, though other costs such as test and application fees remain barriers. (Perna, 2015).

Programs like the College Ambition Program (CAP) offer support through college visits, financial aid planning, counseling, and tutoring. These initiatives help low-income students overcome social and economic barriers to higher education (Schneider et al., 2012).

A comprehensive approach is necessary to close the performance gap and improve educational outcomes for low-income and minority students. Successful strategies include small class sizes, high expectations, rigorous academic standards, enrichment activities, quality professional development, and parent empowerment programs. Effective implementation and evaluation of these strategies are crucial for systemic school reform and improved academic performance among disadvantaged students (Ward, 2006).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a qualitative research design, suitable for exploring complex issues in-depth and understanding the context and experiences related to Academic Success among Students from Low-Income Families. Qualitative research allows for detailed analysis of textual data, providing rich insights into the phenomena under study. Given that the research relies on secondary data, this approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the existing information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A secondary literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the impact of teachers, barriers faced by students from low-income families, and the effect of policies on academic access.

Teacher's Impact on Students from Low-Income Families

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the academic success of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The literature reveals several key findings:

1. Tailored Support and Academic Achievement: Teachers who provide tailored resources and activities

tailored to the needs of underprivileged students significantly enhance their development and academic achievement (Furcsa, 2020).

2. Variability in Teacher Effects: Studies highlight that teacher effects are more pronounced in low-SES schools, where differing teacher quality can lead to significant variations in academic outcomes among students (Nye et al., 2004).

3. Overcoming Biases and High Expectations: Effective teachers recognize and overcome biases, maintain high expectations, and adapt teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of low-SES students, thereby positively impacting their academic trajectories (Tâm et al., 2016; Van den Broeck et al., 2020).

These findings underscore the critical need for teachers to address both academic and socioemotional needs while fostering an environment that supports equitable learning outcomes for all students.

Barriers Faced by Students from Low-Income Families

Students from low-SES backgrounds encounter multifaceted barriers that impede their academic success. Key findings include:

1. Cultural and Institutional Clashes: Educational institutions often emphasize individualistic values that conflict with the communal-oriented cultural norms of low-income students, leading to negative academic and health outcomes (Silverman et al., 2023).

2. Economic Disadvantage and Educational Attainment: Poverty significantly limits educational attainment, affecting cognitive development and perpetuating cycles of socioeconomic disadvantage (Rogers et al., 2018).

3. Obstacles to Higher Education: Economic disparities result in fewer educational opportunities for talented but underprivileged students, contributing to a significant gap in higher education enrollment between socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged students (Poor Children Are 'Failed by System' on Road to Higher Education in Lower-Income Countries, 2021).

These barriers highlight the urgent need for systemic interventions that address economic disparities, provide adequate support systems, and promote educational equity for all students.

The Effect of Policies on Improving Academic Access for Low-Income Students

Policy interventions are critical in mitigating disparities in educational access and outcomes for low-income students. Key insights from the literature include 1. Financial Aid and Access: Federal programs like the Pell Grant are crucial in reducing financial barriers to higher education. However, challenges such as application fees continue to hinder access for low-income students (Perna, 2015). 2. Supportive Initiatives: Programs like the College Ambition Program (CAP) provide essential support through college readiness programs, counseling, and tutoring, aiming to bridge social and economic gaps in educational attainment (Schneider et al., 2012). Comprehensive Strategies for Equity: 3. Effective strategies such as small class sizes, rigorous academic standards, and community empowerment programs are vital for addressing systemic inequalities and improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students (Ward, 2006).

These findings underscore the importance of targeted policy interventions and comprehensive reform efforts in promoting educational equity and enhancing opportunities for students from low-income backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The literature synthesis highlights the interconnected challenges and opportunities in addressing academic success among students from low-income families. Effective teacher practices, systemic barriers faced by low-SES students, and policy interventions are pivotal in fostering equitable access to quality education and

improving outcomes for all students. Future research and educational initiatives should focus on implementing evidence-based strategies that support the diverse needs of low-income students and promote inclusive educational environments.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and discussions above, here are targeted recommendations to address the challenges highlighted for students from low-income families:

Teacher Training and Bias Awareness: Provide ongoing training for teachers to address biases and enhance their ability to support students from low-income backgrounds effectively.

1. **Equitable Distribution of Resources:** Advocate for policies ensuring fair allocation of effective teachers, educational resources, and support services across schools serving low-income communities.
2. **Community and Family Engagement:** Foster partnerships between schools, communities, and families to enhance support networks and promote active parental involvement in students' education.
3. **Policy Initiatives for Equity:** Support policies at all levels that prioritize funding equity, comprehensive school reforms, and initiatives to reduce educational disparities based on socioeconomic status.
4. **Comprehensive Student Support:** Expand and tailor support programs within schools, including mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and enrichment activities, to meet the academic and social needs of low-income students.
5. **Research-Driven Interventions:** Invest in research to continually evaluate and refine interventions aimed at improving academic outcomes and equity for students from low-income backgrounds.

These recommendations aim to create a more supportive and inclusive educational environment, ensuring that students from low-income families have equitable opportunities to succeed academically.

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