

The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Child Development

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to show how the environment affects child development. The socioeconomic in which you live has a great effect on your environment. Children of a lower socioeconomic status are found to perform lower in school than those of a higher status, primarily due to lack of resources. A child's ability to learn, self determination and test scores are all things that can be affected by their socioeconomic status. Peer Reviewed articles were used to examine specifically how socioeconomic status affects a child's ability to learn and develop.

Keywords: socioeconomic, socioeconomic status, learning, development, children, school

The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Child Development

Personal experiences affect cognitive, physical and emotional development, all in different ways. The environment that one is raised in has a big effect on their life and development. Socioeconomic status is one of the ways our environment is affected. Most people believe socioeconomic status is just about how much money you make, but socioeconomic status actually has a great deal to do with the person you are. Though socioeconomic status does not define you, it still contributes to the person you are now and who you become in the future. Socioeconomic status can be a factor in lots of things in your life such as where you go to school, work, and live. Being born into a certain socioeconomic status also affects the people you meet and the decisions you make.

Background

According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status is one's class they are classified in based on their education, income, and occupation. They also stated that examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control. Socioeconomic status is a hierarchical system used to divide classes. Socioeconomic status is not definite, and can change based on one's job, how much money they make, and their schooling. However, the socioeconomic status in which you were born in often has a great effect on which socioeconomic status you will stay in. For example, those born at a higher socioeconomic status have access to more money and better schools, which means it is easier to get better jobs in the future. While someone with a lower socioeconomic status, and less income who doesn't have access to better schools or better jobs, will likely be stuck in the same socioeconomic status. However this is not always the case, and

there are many people such as celebrities who were born in a lower socioeconomic status, who have worked their way up into a higher socioeconomic status. And although they are in a higher socioeconomic status now, they had a much different experience getting there than a person who was already born into a high socioeconomic status. With that being said, socioeconomic status still plays a big role in our experiences, and development.

Research Question

The research question explored was “how does a child's environment affect their development, or more specifically, how does socioeconomic status affect a child’s learning?” This question was explored because it is important to know how socioeconomic status, which is something children cannot change, affects children's ability to learn. It would also be important to further explore what can be done to prevent children from having different opportunities just because they are born into a lower socioeconomic status.

Search Criteria

When I picked the topic of how socioeconomic status affects children's learning, I used an online database to look up articles on my topic. The online database I used was from the Longwood University Greenwood Library. I started first by using keywords to find articles that related closely to my topic. The keywords I used included socioeconomic status, learning, development, children, and school, with socioeconomic status being my main focus. I also made sure all of my articles were peer-reviewed, and I tried to use ones mainly from the United States, so if there was an article that focused on another country I didn't use it. Most of the articles that I found fit my topic perfectly and they all supported each other's information. Something I was also seeing a lot was that the articles had lots of authors, which I liked because it meant that

multiple people were able to consult with each other about the topic and all agree that the information was correct.

Review of Literature

There are many ways that a child's environment can affect their development. The environment in which a child is raised has a great effect on their physical, cognitive, and emotional development. Socioeconomic status specifically plays a big part in the development of a child because children of a lower socioeconomic status may not have as many resources as a child from a higher socioeconomic status. In the journal article titled "Unpacking socio-economic risks for reading and academic self-concept in primary school: Differential effects and the role of the preschool home learning environment" it was found that preschool children of a lower socioeconomic status can be negatively affected by their social disadvantage, and poor learning environments (Crampton & Hall, 2017). Negative associations with home learning environments during preschool years can have an affect on children's reading and vocabulary at a young age, consequently making it hard for them to keep up in the future. This results in a lack of desire to continue learning. Many children who have a negative home environment may be constantly told to be quiet or to not make noise, making them have no desire to continue to speak or learn. It is important for children, especially at a young age, to be encouraged to talk, read, and build other literacy skills, so they can build a sense of understanding the world around them and a want to learn more. Similarly the article "Exploring the Effect of Disability, Race-Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Status on Scores on the Self-Determination Inventory: Student Report" also shows the connection between socioeconomic status and self-determination (Shogren, et al., 2018). In the article they used

different tests to see self-determination scores in children. They got children of different races, socioeconomic status, as well as some with disabilities. In their results they found that children of a lower socioeconomic status do not perform as well in school as children of a higher socioeconomic status, therefore making the child feel like they are incapable of doing things, so they stop trying. Although self determination is about your willingness to do things for yourself, it actually comes from encouragement from others first, which makes children gain the confidence to want to do things by themselves. This is why it is important for parents, teachers, and peers to support children in their ideas and desires, so that they can gain confidence, which leads to more self-determination. Without self determination, children stop developing properly and fall even further back in school. Other things that factor into a child's self-determination are race and disabilities. Just like socioeconomic status, race and disability also have been shown to affect children's performance in school, as well as their self-determination. Minority children and children who have disabilities have also been shown to have lower self-determination scores, similar to children of a lower socioeconomic status. This may be because some of these children might not be getting the necessary attention at home to encourage them to do things and build their own self determination. Children who have disabilities also may have less self-determination because they are different from others, and may feel insecure. Children with disabilities also may need more accommodations for them to be able to learn and develop properly. If these accommodations are not available for children with disabilities then they may not be able to properly learn and understand, making them frustrated and no longer wanting to learn. Race and socioeconomic status are also correlated a lot of the time, and because of this, children of a lower socioeconomic status include many minorities. An article titled "Early

elementary teacher ratings of behavior as predictors of grade retention: Race, gender, and socioeconomic status as potential moderators” also talks about the correlation between minorities, socioeconomic status, behavior and grade retention, while including gender as well. (Mattison, et al., 2018). Their research found that among students who are male, there are higher rates of retention and poor behavior ratings for those who are Black or Hispanic, and from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Retention rates are also higher in those who live in urban areas and whose parents have a lower level of education. Their study also concluded that students who are Black, male, or low-income are also more likely to experience poorer school outcomes in comparison to their peers. Retention in lower grades can lead to children not wanting to continue school, resulting in them dropping out of school later in life. Another reason that behavior problems and retention rates are so high in children of a lower socioeconomic status is because they may not be getting attention otherwise, and see this as a last result. Children who come from a lower income family may not get an adequate amount of attention at home because their parents may have to work constantly to provide for them. This results in behavioral problems at school to cause attention to themselves. This is why it is important to make sure that children are getting a sufficient amount of attention and encouragement from the people around them to try and avoid behavioral problems.

Socioeconomic status can affect learning in different ways, but reading and vocabulary have been shown to be an area it has one of the largest effects on. In the article “Vocabulary knowledge mediates the link between socioeconomic status and word learning in grade school” it was shown that children of a lower socioeconomic status process words differently than those of a higher socioeconomic status (Maguire, et al., 2018). Children of a higher socioeconomic status

are often read to and spoken to more often, which means they know more words when coming into school. However, even if a child in a lower socioeconomic status knows the same amount of words as a child in a higher socioeconomic status, they may not be able to effectively use the vocabulary they know. Therefore, they may be further behind in school because of their inability to correctly use their known words. A way that educators are trying to prevent this from happening is by providing more preschool programs and home intervention. In “Enriching preschool classrooms and home visits with evidence-based programming: sustained benefits for low-income children” it is shown that preschool and home visiting interventions help children who are from a low income family (Bierman, et al., 2018). This helps them because they may not have the resources available to them at home, so if preschool or headstart is an option, low income children will benefit in their development. Head Start and Preschool programs are known to have a greatly significant effect on children, especially those with lower income, who may not have the resources otherwise. Also, home visits make it so that children are more encouraged to have a healthy home learning environment, which will make them want to learn more at home. Ways to improve a healthy home learning environment is by making sure children have their own space to do work at home that is designated just for work, such as a desk or a table. This makes it so that children associate that one place with school and learning, which will make them more focussed on their task. The article “Attending, learning, and socioeconomic disadvantage: developmental cognitive and social neuroscience of resilience and vulnerability” also talks about how socioeconomic status can affect human development, such as educational achievement, social behavior, and health (Schibli, et al., 2017). Children with lower socioeconomic status have lower test scores when tested on cognitive functions, including language, memory, and attention,

than those with a higher socioeconomic status. Children in a lower socioeconomic status are also more likely to focus less on tasks. Implementing more preschool and home intervention programs could help to possibly prevent these test results from happening in the future, by also working to build memory, and attention skills.

Although cognitive development is the most prominent way in which a child of a low socioeconomic status is affected, physical development can also be negatively impacted. Children of a lower socioeconomic status may not have the ability to purchase healthy foods or have a parent who has enough time to cook for them. They also may not have the money to be involved in sports and extracurricular activities, resulting in them eating a lot of fast food, and being involved in sedentary activities, which is not very good for children. Physical health also has an effect on performance in school. If a child is not getting the appropriate nutrients they need, then they may not be able to focus properly in school, or have enough energy to do their work. This is why schools stress that it is important to eat breakfast on a daily basis.

What can be done to help?

Resources also play a large part in a child's development. Since children of a lower socioeconomic status may not have as many resources as someone of a higher socioeconomic status it can be harder for them to get ahead in school. For example, a child that went to a private school their whole life and had tutors to help them in school and with testing, are automatically at an advantage over a student from a lower socioeconomic status at a public school without the access to tutors or extra help. Consequently, when both those students go to apply to college there is one with a clearly higher chance of getting in. Or even if both of these students do get into the same school, a child of a lower socioeconomic status may not be able to pay for the

school without scholarships. Therefore, the socioeconomic status in which you were born does have an effect on your life as a child, as well as your life into adulthood. Having programs specifically for children of lower socioeconomic status could help them with their performance in school. Since implementing more preschool classes, as well as home intervention was shown to help school performance, continuing similar programs through youth, and into adulthood could also help. There are programs around now to help children such as “The Federal TRIO Programs” which are programs that are available in multiple states for children from lower income schools and disadvantaged backgrounds to get the help they need in school throughout middle school, highschool, and up until college. These programs are shown to have helped students with performance in school, as well as influencing many high schoolers' decision to go to college.

Findings, Revisit of Research Question

The findings of all the articles were generally the same: children of a lower socioeconomic status tend to not perform as well in school as children of a higher socioeconomic status. It was also found that children of a lower socioeconomic status have more trouble learning and retaining information. Minorities and people with disabilities also are among those who don't perform as well in school. Socioeconomic status can also affect a child's willingness to learn. If a child has never been encouraged to talk, read, or write, they are more likely to have problems with self-determination, and they will have a lack of desire to continue to learn.

Lack of resources have been shown to play a large part in children's ability to learn and develop. However, there are some solutions to help children of a lower socioeconomic status such as providing programs specifically for children of lower income families to get the extra

help they may need, while also providing healthy environments for them to learn in. It is important for children, especially those of a lower socioeconomic status to be encouraged to keep learning, even when it may seem difficult.

Future Research Questions

This is a very interesting topic I want to keep studying over the years. I think if I were to go more in depth with my studying, I would look at more international cases. In the beginning of my research I stated that I mostly wanted to focus on cases from the United States for this project specifically. However, I think that I could really benefit from seeing the statistics in other countries, especially in developing countries. In some developing countries there are a lot of children who don't go to school because they can't. Since this is not the case in the United States and schooling is required here, I know that the findings would be very different. I also think it would be interesting to look at how developing countries break down their socioeconomic status, because I know in other countries gender is more important than class, and females often receive less schooling than males. However, I would still like to keep track of how socioeconomic status correlates to school performance over the years and if eventually socioeconomic status will not correlate with school performance, in the United States. It would also be interesting to see what programs may be put into place to help children of a lower socioeconomic status succeed in school.

Conclusion

In conclusion, children of a lower socioeconomic status do not perform as well in school, with a lack of resources being a leading factor. However, there are things that can be implemented to help these children succeed in schooling, and later in life. It is important to

understand that although socioeconomic status is an important factor in one's life it does not define the person you are or your capabilities.

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