



The Impact of Low Socioeconomic Status on the Quality of Education

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Introduction:

According to the American Psychological Association (APA):

- (a) Low socioeconomic status (or low SES) defines a reduced access to resources, commonly associated with poor education, unemployment, and correlated negative outcomes.
- (b) An achievement gap exists between high and low-income students due to a lack of financial and educational resources, familial and psychosocial factors, and equity variables existing beyond the classroom.
- (c) Despite variables, the school system plays the largest role in low-SES impacts

The research presented uses these attributions to measure the impact of originating from a low SES background on the quality of education to draw attention to the achievement gap and recognize the need for equitable education.

Methods:

Interviews were conducted to determine what personal characteristics influenced their academic success.

Hollifield-Hoyle and Hammons's (2015) interview questions were adapted to focus on R1 university students instead of community college students.

- ❖ Student Sample Population: Three low-income R1 university students*
 - *first-generation college students receiving financial aid/scholarship resources
 - *sample comparable with Hollifield-Hoyle and Hammons's sample
- ❖ Interviews conducted and recorded via Zoom or text.
- ❖ Duration: ~45 mins

Interview Questions and Subquestions for Comparable Results:

15. Did anything influence you to choose a university education over attending a different institution of higher learning? (i.e. state college, community college) If yes, what and why?

Is there a relationship between where low-income students achieve higher educational attainment? How might these factors have been incorporated in more low-income districts to increase positive outcomes?

16. How have university supports impacted you?

Discusses the efficacy of bridging the gap programs post-secondary school.

17. What elements of your primary and secondary educational experiences helped or hindered your educational success today?

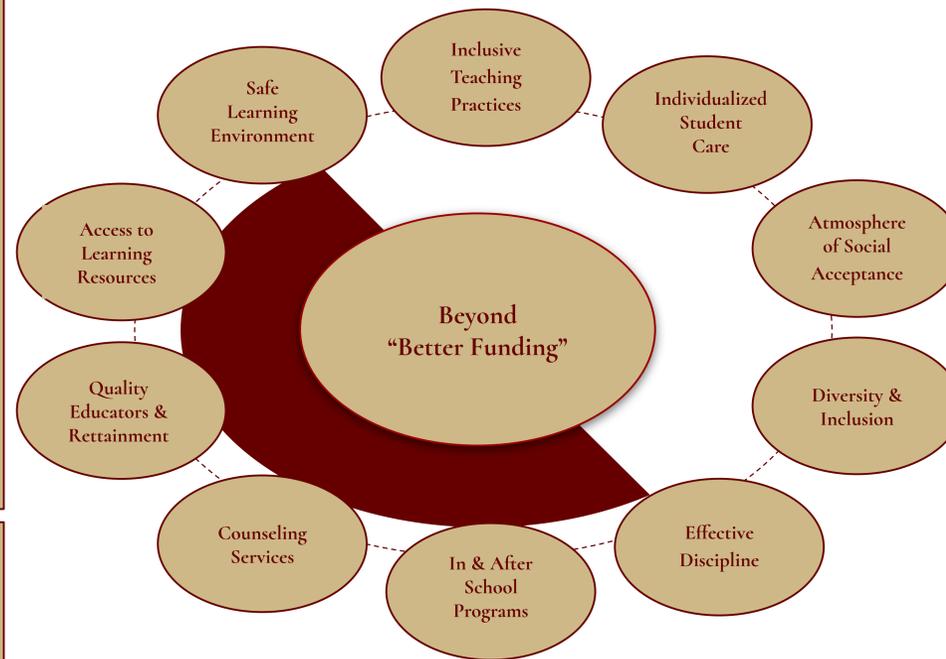
Primary and secondary education lay the framework for higher educational achievement. Did teacher quality and the level of available resources have an impact?

18. How have your university educational experiences been similar or different to your primary and secondary education?

This allows for further comparison and helps determine whether or not student needs are being met.

19. Is there anything else you would like to include?

This allows for the collection of supplementary data and the potential development of future related studies.



Limited Case Study Results & Evaluation:

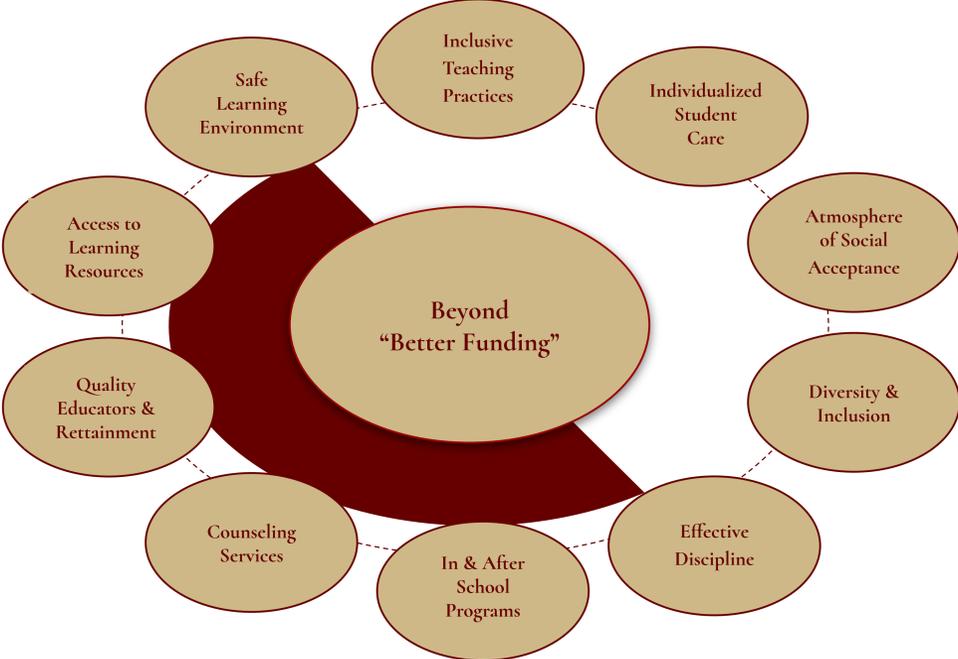
- ❖ Respondents largely selected their university due to supports and financial aid opportunities.
 - Assistance programs generate networking opportunities that respondents claimed provided a communal support system for similar adversities.
 - Participants suggest grants and gap bridging programs could provide better opportunities to low-income students.
- ❖ Information can be key.
 - Respondents learned about university supports virtually via presentations and university emails.
 - Some respondents sought financial and educational support from high school guidance counselors.
- ❖ Individualized student care, such as life coaching and student mentors, provided respondents with social and educational support.
 - All respondents detailed a peer or staff member met via university supports who aided in their post-secondary transitional process.
 - Previous university support recipients guided respondents, fostering positive relationships.
- ❖ Quality and compassionate educators are necessary; culturally and socially aware educators can improve student environments.
 - One respondent noted teachers should be mindful of their audiences to avoid generalizing student situations.

Similarities	Differences
Respondents originated from low-SES, disadvantaged demographics	Respondents age gap varied between studies
Cost and location were important variables in the high education selection process	University attendees considered other variable such as available major programs
Respondents were motivated to attend an institution of higher learning for career opportunities	University students reported more parental engagement and support; community college respondents valued self motivation
Fostering positive relationships through high school or campus resources aided in transition	University respondents felt their needs were better met to prepare for higher education; community college attendees faced inadequacies during primary and secondary school
Respondents received the Pell Grant	The Pell Grant did not adequately cover community college students' cost of attendance; respondents receiving university supports were financially supported beyond Pell Grants

References and Acknowledgements:

1. American Psychological Association. (2017, July). *Education and socioeconomic status factsheet*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 26, 2023, from <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education>
2. Chenes, E. D. (Ed.). (2009). *Opposing viewpoints: The achievement gap*. GREENHAVEN PRESS.
3. Hollifield-Hoyle, H., & Hammons, J. (2015). The Neglected Minority: Interviews with Successful Community College Students from Poverty. *The Community College Enterprise*, 21(2), 29-61. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/neglected-minority-interviews-with-successful/ocview/1767086366/se-2>
4. Moreu, G., & Brauer, M. (2022). Inclusive Teaching Practices in Post-Secondary Education: What Instructors Can Do to Reduce the Achievement Gaps at U.S. Colleges.

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Discussion:

There is frequent discussion into the limited resource access resulting from low SES and the multiple possible variables this imposes. What does this mean? This can include language barriers that interrupt parental engagement, a strong predictor of student success; this can include less study time from balancing school and work loads and other educational experience interruptions.

Despite these variables, students are guaranteed the right to a free public education under the 14th Amendment. Yet, educational experiences across socioeconomic groups still demonstrate a lack of equity. School districts are typically funded by local taxes; poorer areas provide minimal funding. Policy changes to better appropriate financial resources would greatly improve student outcomes. But, there is still more that can be done to decrease the achievement gap among high and low-income students.

It is impossible to approach the socioeconomic achievement gap without drawing attention to the racial and ethnic achievement gaps as well. These ongoing trends can be attributed to systemic values that hinder minority success. In terms of this research, there is an overlap observed among racial/ethnic and socioeconomic minorities. It is notable that minorities cannot be grouped together as one. Studies pertaining to the benefits of individualized student care and the observations of minority group differences show the potential successful outcomes of meeting disadvantaged student needs (Chenes, 2009). Despite educational reform potential, diminishing the achievement gap entirely will remain a pressing issue until individual student needs can be met. Relatively, it is challenging to create equitable education due to unavoidable independent variables, including genetic and familial factors.

However, educational institutions serve as a controlled environment. Providing disadvantaged students with quality educators, individualizing care, and creating programs to adapt to different needs have proven efficacy. This includes implementing inclusive teaching practices and adopting a socially inclusive climate (Moreu, G., & Brauer). These methods can be implemented in classroom settings, despite low SES variables beyond the institutions' control.

There are limiting factors relating to the retention of quality educators in low SES districts, primarily for financial related reasons (Swain, et al., 2019). The resource differential also remains omnipresent. Even still, small changes within disadvantaged communities can have major positive impacts. Student success is not dependent on financial factors alone.

Further research is warranted into improving teacher quality in low-income districts despite financial limitations and how to implement more widespread gap bridging programs for low-income students.

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Further research is warranted into improving teacher quality in low-income districts despite financial limitations and how to implement more widespread gap bridging programs for low-income students.

Limited Case Study Results & Evaluation:

- ❖ Respondents largely selected their university due to supports and financial aid opportunities.
 - *Assistance programs generate networking opportunities that respondents claimed provided a communal support system for similar adversities.*
 - *Participants suggest grants and gap bridging programs could provide better opportunities to low-income students.*
- ❖ Information can be key.
 - *Respondents learned about university supports virtually via presentations and university emails.*
 - *Some respondents sought financial and educational support from high school guidance counselors.*
- ❖ Individualized student care, such as life coaching and student mentors, provided respondents with social and educational support.
 - *All respondents detailed a peer or staff member met via university supports who aided in their post-secondary transitional process.*
 - *Previous university support recipients guided respondents, fostering positive relationships.*
- ❖ Quality and compassionate educators are necessary; culturally and socially aware educators can improve student environments.
 - *One respondent noted teachers should be mindful of their audiences to avoid generalizing student situations.*

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Limited Case Study Results & Evaluation:

- ◆ Low-income students from the case study chose to attend one university over other institutions of higher learning due to financial aid provided by university supports. The program offered the most generous grant.
 - Higher education access limits contribute to generational poverty. Gap bridging programs could provide better opportunities to low-income students.
 - Assistance programs generate educational and social networking opportunities. All respondents reaped benefits from a communal support system facing similar adversities.
 - Respondents believe in the benefit of implementing university support programs across national universities.
- ◆ Information can be key.
 - Students must be made aware of available resources. Respondents learned about university supports via virtual presentations and university emails.
 - Counseling services may aid in post-secondary attainment. Some respondents sought financial and educational support from guidance counselors.
- ◆ Individualized student care, such as life coaching and student mentors, provided respondents with social and educational support. The purpose of a personal guide is to aid in keeping students on track and directing them to resources. All respondents detailed a peer or staff member met via university supports aided in their post-secondary transitional process.
 - Previous university support recipients provided guidance to respondents; this displays how schools can foster positive relationships among similar success-oriented students without additional financial cost.
- ◆ There is a need for quality and compassionate educators; culturally and socially aware educators can improve student environments.
 - Being a quality teacher extends beyond subject knowledge. Educators should be aware of the broadness of student backgrounds. One respondent noted teachers should be mindful of their audiences to avoid generalizing student situations.
 - This further supports the need for inclusive teaching practices and highlights the importance of socially accepting atmospheres (Moreu, & Brauer).

Discussion:

- ◆ **The existing resource differential that generated an achievement gap between high and low-income students can be improved by university supports.**

There is frequent discussion into the limited resource access resulting from low SES and the multiple possible variables this imposes. What does this mean? This can include language barriers that interrupt parental engagement, a strong predictor of student success; this can include less study time from balancing school and work loads and other educational experience interruptions.

Despite these variables, students are guaranteed the right to a free public education under the 14th Amendment. Yet, educational experiences across socioeconomic groups still demonstrate a lack of equity. School districts are typically funded by local taxes; poorer areas provide minimal funding. Policy changes to better appropriate financial resources would greatly improve student outcomes. But, there is still more that can be done to decrease the achievement gap among high and low-income students.

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