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The Role of Gender, Socioeconomic Factors and its Impact on Students' English as a Second Language (ESL) Performance

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Abstract: The present study aimed to compare the gender differences among ESL students' performance and determine the socioeconomic factors that impact ESL undergraduate students' success in Pakistan. A quantitative survey method was used. 380 participants were taken part in the survey questionnaire currently enrolled in bachelor's degrees at various Universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Two hypotheses were formulated, and the data was collected on a socioeconomic questionnaire consisting of 18 items and divided into three sub-factors. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the factors; K treatment Kruskal–Wallis (Friedman statistics test) was used to know the statistically significant impact, while an independent sample t-test was used to compare the gender differences. The study findings were made up of a three-factor model through EFA; the Friedman test indicated a statistically significant impact of socioeconomic factors on ESL students' performance, while independent sample t-test results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in gender between socioeconomic factors and ESL students' performance. Based on the results findings conclusion has been made.

Keywards: Gender difference, Socioeconomic factors, English as a Second Language, Students' performance

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Introduction

Socially created features of women, men, girls, and boys are referred to as gender [1]. It encompasses the conventions, behaviors, and duties of being a woman, man, girl, or boy, in addition to their respective relationships. Gender, being a social construct, differs from culture to society and is subject to change throughout time [2].

However, research on the link between second/foreign language learning and gender has undergone a substantial transformation over the last three decades, as growing gender concepts have influenced it in language studies [3]. In addition, gender is commonly acknowledged to affect second language acquisition significantly. Based on past research undertaken in the area of second language acquisition (SLA), it has been shown that several variables impact language learning, whether connected to the learner's background or individual qualities such as age, linguistic ability, motivation,

personality, and gender. Gender has been examined in areas such as learning techniques [4], skill acquisition [5], and even mistake creation [6] while analyzing the process of language acquisition.

Nonetheless, it is known that studying English in non-English speaking nations is difficult for many language students. Because English is not often used in daily contact, most of them cannot learn English efficiently. As mentioned by several academics, non-English speaking nations do not need English as an essential function in daily life and communication; hence, English is often learned for educational or academic reasons and via classroom teaching [7].

In contrast, students' socioeconomic status is the most common dimension by combining educational level, occupational status, and income level [8]. Ariani and Ghafournia [9] scrutinized the relationships between students' socioeconomic status and learning outcomes. The results showed patterned relationships between the students' socioeconomic characteristics and their learning outcomes in English. Students with higher levels of social and economic status were more likely to obtain higher scores on the proficiency test and higher grades in English. According to Babikkoi, Razak [10], the socioeconomic level of learners is a crucial element that might affect English language learning results. This is especially true since learners are motivated to study. Students with a poor socioeconomic position are often unmotivated to study, and this scenario is not comparable.

However, few research papers have examined the link between gender inequalities, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency in the Pakistani setting [11]. Therefore, the ultimate aim of the current research is to offer pertinent data and investigate the degree to which socioeconomic inequalities impact the second language performance of students regarding their gender. While the specific aims were; *(1)* To determine the socioeconomic factors which impact students ESL performance. *(2)* To compare the gender difference in ESL performance regarding their socioeconomic status and their impact on ESL students. Based on the research aims following two study hypothesis were formulated;

H1: There is statistically positive impact of socioeconomic factors (parents' education, parents' Job and parents' income) on ESL students.

H2: There is statistically significance difference of socioeconomic background (parents' education, parents' occupation and parents' income) on ESL students as per their gender (male and female).

Related Studies

It has been noticed that the socioeconomic factors of a student's family are connected to the student's success in the language [12]. In most cases, a composite measure that considers the learners' parents' income, education level, and occupation is used to ascertain the socio-economic factor. It is because the socioeconomic factor is a factor that affects the learners. Researchers have looked at the connection between language learners' socioeconomic status and their language proficiency [13].

According to Akhtar [14], the house's atmosphere directly emphasizes the parents. Because it is their responsibility to construct and administer it. The home's atmosphere is shaped by various elements, including the parents' education, occupation, attention, and money. The term "Socioeconomic Status" refers to compiling all of these criteria (SES).

The research findings by Ariani and Ghafournia [15] showed a favorable association between the socioeconomic position of the pupils and the general language results. In addition, they hypothesized that the language learning process might be sped up if language instructors were equipped with the information necessary to assist language students in navigating the challenges posed by their divergent perspectives.

Ogunshola and Adewale [16] indicate that the link between society, education, and the economy is so important that a student's training depends on all three factors. A student's social class, in which the student's financial situation and educational level have a big effect, is tied to the student's learning outcome, which is related to the student's social class. However, socioeconomic position impacts not only the results of students' language acquisition but also the students' desire to learn, their ability to self-regulate, and their views about themselves [17]. According to Vellymalay [18] social and economic variables are the primary contributors to the educational resources available to students and have the

biggest influence on the results of their education. Students may also be motivated and assisted by social aspects, which helps them to have better learning chances and educational settings.

Moreover, studies have demonstrated that a student's socioeconomic status and learning performance have a link that ranges from moderately significant to very relevant. Put another way, students who achieve academic achievement come from higher social and economic levels, and students who do not succeed come from lower socioeconomic categories [19-21].

Research Methodology

The term "research methodology" refers to the comprehensive strategy or technique that the researcher chooses to use to integrate the many aspects of the study in a coherent way that provides an answer to the research topic. Therefore, the quantitative survey method was used [22, 23].

Participants Description

The present study was conducted in the largest province of Pakistan by a population known as Punjab. The participants were undergraduate students currently enrolled in bachelor's degrees at various universities in Punjab, Pakistan. They consisted of 380 students and were selected through convenient sampling. For getting data, 186 males and 194 females have taken part.

Research Instruments

For collecting the data, a socioeconomic questionnaire was designed based on previous studies in this field [24]. The socioeconomic questionnaire consisted of 18 items, further categorized into three sub-dimensions: parents 'education [25], with 6 items, parents' job [26], with 6 items and parents' income [27], with 6 items. 5 points Likert scale was used to get participants' responses (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree). The reliability of the instruments/questionnaire was checked through Cronbach's alpha. The pilot study was also conducted on 50 students, and the results were satisfactory in collecting the data at a large scale, as suggested in the literature [28].

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

In the procedure, firstly, the institutions gave express consent after explaining the study's purposes. Then the participants were approached at their Universities on consented days and explained the procedure and study purpose to them. After that, questionnaire survey sheets were distributed among participants with the request to answer each statement mentioned in these survey sheets. Survey sheets were also translated into the native language of the participants for their easiness and exact understanding. Further, the collected data were entered into statistical software to analyze. 4 survey sheets were excluded because of missing data. Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Results Findings

Table 1 indicates the frequency and percentage of demographic variables divided into three parts; age, gender and discipline. Age ranged from 18-25 (f=144, %=37.9), and 26-30 (f= 236, %=62.1). Gender, males were (f=186, %=48.9), while females (f=194, %= 51.1). Finally, discipline were education (f=54, %=14.2), psychology (f=108, %=28.4), sociology (f=125, %=32.9), and physical education (f=93, %=24.5).

Table 1. Statistics of Sample' Characteristics

Variables		No. of Students	Percentage (%)	M	SD
Age	18-25	144	37.9		
	26-30	236	62.1	1.62	0.486
Total		380	100.0		
Gender	Male	186	48.9		
	Female	194	51.1	1.51	0.501
Total		380	100.0		
Discipline	Education	54	14.2		
	Psychology	108	28.4		
	Sociology	125	32.9	2.68	0.998
	Physical Education	93	24.5		
Total		380	100.0		

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

Table 2 shows the reliability of the overall socioeconomic questionnaire and each sub-dimension. The reliability of the questionnaire was conducted through Cronbach's Alpha. The alpha values of parents' education were .76, parents' job .72, parents' income .85 and socioeconomic were .87, which fulfill the criteria suggested in the literature.

Table 2. Reliability statistics of each sub-dimensions and Overall Socioeconomic Questionnaire

Dimensions	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Parents 'education	6	.76
Parents' job	6	.72
Parents' income	6	.85
Socioeconomic	18	.87

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the socioeconomic factors. Figure 1 and table 3, demonstrated the factors loadings and each items and values sorted by size and made three factor model which were parents' education, parents' job and parents' income. The first factor ranged from .686 to .854, second factor ranged from .512 to .726 and third factor raged from .550 to 722.

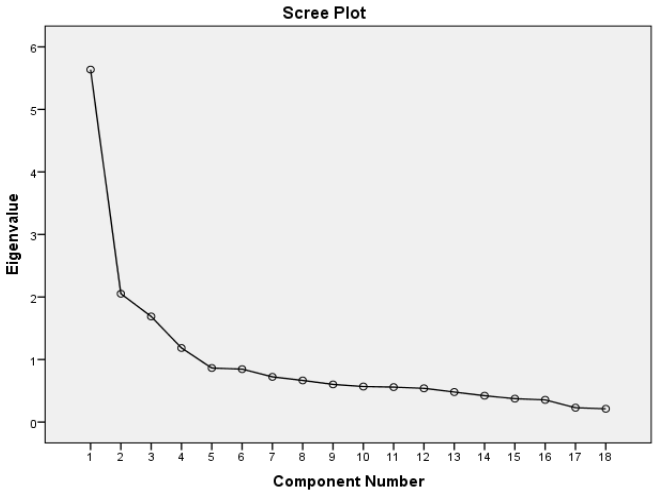

Table 3. Factors Loadings through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Predictors	Items Sorted by Size	Loadings Sorted by Size
Parents' Education	Item6	.854
	Item4	.828
	Item2	.812
	Item5	.854
	Item3	.783
	Item1	.686
Parents' Job	Item8	.726
	Item11	.708
	Item12	.653
	Item9	.570
	Item10	.543
	Item7	.512
Parents' Income	Item18	.722
	Item13	.638
	Item14	.601
	Item15	.580
	Item17	.556
	Item16	.550

Testing of Hypothesis

H1: *There is statistically positive impact of socioeconomic factors (parents' education, parents' Job and parents' income) on ESL students.*

Table 4 indicate the Descriptive statistics of factors' dimensions and overall socioeconomic scale with mean ranks. The mean and standard deviation values of parents' education (M = 19.30, S.D 3.94 and mean rank 2.34), parents' job (M = 17.09, S.D 3.51 and mean rank 1.71), parents' income (M = 17.86, S.D 3.48 and mean rank 1.95) and overall socioeconomic scale (M = 57.88, S.D 8.54 and mean rank 4.00). In contrast, the data acquired using the Likert scale need the use of several examples. The researchers concluded that more investigation was necessary. The Friedman test was used in order to evaluate the firstly hypothesis. The cumulative mean of the scores for all the items that make up the variable is evaluated using the K treatment Kruskal–Wallis [29].

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

Factors	N	M	S.D	Mean Rank
Parents' education	380	19.30	3.94	2.34
Parents' job	380	17.09	3.51	1.71
Parents' income	380	17.86	3.48	1.95
Socioeconomic	380	57.88	8.54	4.00

Note; N = number of participants, M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

Table 5 demonstrate the Friedman test statistics in which Chi square X2 (df = 3, N = 380) =751.121, $p \leq 0.05$ that shows the significant impact of socioeconomic factors exist in each factors like (parents' education, parents' job and parents' income) and overall socioeconomic scale on students' English as second language performance. So based on the findings the 1st hypothesis has been accepted as predicted in this study.

Table 5. Statistics of Friedman Test

N	X^2	*df*	P
380	751.121	3	.000

Note; N = number of participants, X^2 = chi-square, df = degree of freedom, P= significant value

H2: *There is statistically significance difference of socioeconomic background (parents' education, parents' occupation and parents' income) on ESL students as per their gender (male and female).*

Table 6 shows the statistics of independent sample t-test which was conducted to test the 2nd hypothesis the p-value is not less than ≤ 0.05 which clearly shows there was not statistical significance difference found between gender (male and female) and socioeconomic factors with English as a second language performance. Based on t-test findings the 2nd hypothesis of this study has been rejected.

Table 6. Differences between socioeconomic factors and students ESL performance as per their (Male & Female)

Factors	Gender	No. of Students	M	SD	T-test	DF	P
PE	M	186	19.50	3.97	0.994	378	0.321
	F	194	19.10	3.91	0.994	378	0.321
PJ	M	186	17.72	3.15	3.595	378	0.982
	F	194	16.46	3.74	3.608	378	0.982
PI	M	186	17.65	3.34	1.165	378	0.245
	F	194	18.06	3.61	1.167	378	0.0244
Overall	M	186	58.65	8.18	1.721	378	0.085
	F	194	57.14	8.84	1.724	378	0.084
ESL Scores	M	186	23.10	6.33	1.766	378	0.444
	F	194	22.58	6.86	1.767	378	0.443

Note: M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, DF= degree of freedom, ESL = English as Second Language Learner, PE = Parents' Education, PJ = Parents' job, PI = Parents' income, P = significant value

Conclusion

This study was conducted to know the gender differences in second language performance and the impact of socioeconomic factors. Through exploratory factor analysis, the study findings revealed a three-factor model of socioeconomic factors (parents' education, job and income). In comparison, the statistics of the Friedman test showed a statistically significant impact between socioeconomic factors and students' English as a second language performance. Finally, the current study also revealed no statistically significant difference between socioeconomic factors regarding gender variables, male and female. The study results indicated that males and females in Pakistan are not interested in learning a second language and learning English to pass their exams. As Pakistan is a developing nation and facing many challenges, such as; Poverty, political instability and natural disasters Etc., [30], because of these challenges, parents do not have enough money to spend on their children's education. So, in this regard, government and policymakers should play their role in making effective language learning from basic to higher education. Then the language learners will perform better and can be able to compete in the global market.

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