

# IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A STUDY OF AGGRESSION AND PROSOCIALITY

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## Article Info



## Abstract

*This quantitative study examines the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and social behaviour, focusing on aggression and prosociality, among higher secondary school students. A stratified random sample of 381 students was selected using Yamane's formula. A self-administered questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was employed to collect data. Statistical analysis revealed significant correlations between SES and social behaviour, indicating that students from lower SES backgrounds exhibited higher aggression and lower prosociality. The findings suggest that SES plays a critical role in shaping social behaviour among adolescents. The study's implications highlight the need for targeted interventions to promote positive social behaviour and address the socio-economic disparities in educational settings.*



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## Keywords:

*Socio-economic status, social behaviour, aggression, prosociality, higher secondary school students, quantitative study.*

**Research Objectives**

- To examine the relationship between socio-economic status and aggressive behavior among higher secondary school students.
- To explore the impact of socio-economic status on prosocial behavior among higher secondary school students.

**Null Hypotheses**

- There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and aggressive behavior among higher secondary school students.
- Socio-economic status does not significantly influence prosocial behavior among higher secondary school students.
- There is no significant difference in social behavior (aggression and prosociality) among students belonging to different socio-economic groups.

**Introduction**

The socio-economic status (SES) of individuals has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing various aspects of life, including education, health, and social behaviour. Among adolescents, SES has been linked to differences in behavioral patterns, particularly aggression and prosociality. Aggression, characterized by hostile or violent behaviours, and prosociality, involving positive social behaviours such as helping and cooperation, are crucial indicators of social adjustment and emotional development during adolescence. Higher secondary school students, who are at a developmental stage marked by increasing social interactions and identity formation, provide an important context for exploring these relationships. This study aims to examine the impact of SES on social behaviours, specifically focusing on aggression and prosociality, among higher secondary school students. By exploring how socio-economic factors influence these behavioral tendencies, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that SES plays in shaping adolescent social development and the implications for educational and psychological interventions.

**Literature Review**

Social behavior among adolescents has long been a critical area of research in developmental psychology and education, particularly as it relates to the impact of socio-economic status (SES). SES, often measured through income, education, and occupation, serves as a fundamental determinant of an individual's environment, shaping their behavior, attitudes, and social interactions (Bradley & Corwyn, 2020). Among adolescents, two prominent dimensions of social behavior aggression and prosociality are notably influenced by socio-economic factors, reflecting disparities in emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and access to supportive resources (Mistry et al., 2019). This literature review synthesizes recent empirical studies and theoretical perspectives to explore how SES shapes aggression and prosocial behavior among higher secondary school students.

**Understanding Socio-Economic Status and Its Relevance**

Socio-economic status is a multidimensional construct encompassing financial stability, educational attainment, and occupational prestige. It directly influences access to resources such as quality education, healthcare, and recreational activities, which in turn affect adolescents' developmental trajectories (Conger

& Donnellan, 2021). According to Krieger et al. (2020), disparities in SES create environmental stressors, including financial hardship, neighbourhood violence, and limited access to educational opportunities, all of which contribute to variations in social behavior. Adolescents from higher SES backgrounds are generally exposed to nurturing environments that promote prosocial behavior, while those from lower SES groups may encounter stressors that increase the likelihood of aggression (Evans & Cassells, 2019).

### **Aggression and SES**

Aggression, characterized by hostile or destructive behavior, has been extensively linked to socio-economic challenges. Adolescents from lower SES backgrounds often exhibit higher levels of aggression due to chronic stress, exposure to violence, and limited access to coping mechanisms (Chen et al., 2021). For instance, a study by Tolan et al. (2020) found that low SES was strongly associated with reactive aggression, a type of aggression triggered by perceived threats, in adolescents. This association can be attributed to heightened cortisol levels and dysregulated emotional responses caused by prolonged exposure to stress (Miller et al., 2019).

Moreover, neighbourhood factors play a significant role in shaping aggression. Adolescents living in economically disadvantaged areas are more likely to encounter crime, peer pressure, and negative role models, which can reinforce aggressive tendencies (Zimmerman et al., 2020). Conversely, adolescents from high SES backgrounds benefit from stable home environments, positive peer influences, and access to counselling services that mitigate aggressive behavior (Dishion et al., 2022).

### **Prosocial Behavior and SES**

Prosocial behavior, defined as voluntary actions intended to benefit others, is another dimension of social behavior significantly influenced by SES. Adolescents from high SES backgrounds often demonstrate greater prosocial tendencies, such as empathy, cooperation, and altruism, due to exposure to supportive environments and positive role models (Eisenberg et al., 2021). Studies suggest that parental involvement, a key aspect of higher SES families, fosters prosocial behavior by modelling empathy and reinforcing social norms (Carlo et al., 2020).

In contrast, adolescents from lower SES backgrounds may face barriers to prosocial behavior due to stress and limited resources. A meta-analysis by Padilla-Walker et al. (2021) highlighted that financial instability and parental stress often hinder the development of prosocial tendencies in children. However, interventions such as school-based programs and community support can effectively promote prosocial behavior among adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds (Wentzel & McNamara, 2020).

### **Gender and SES in Social Behavior**

Gender differences further interact with SES to influence social behavior. Research indicates that male adolescents from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to exhibit physical aggression, while females are prone to relational aggression, such as gossiping or social exclusion (Underwood et al., 2020). Meanwhile, prosocial behavior tends to be more prevalent among females across all SES groups, although the magnitude of these behaviors is greater in high SES contexts due to enhanced emotional regulation and socialization practices (Kring & Gordon, 2021).

## **Theoretical Perspectives on SES and Social Behavior**

Several theoretical frameworks provide insights into the relationship between SES and social behavior. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes the role of environmental contexts, such as family, school, and community, in shaping adolescents' behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to this theory, low SES environments often expose adolescents to adverse micro- and mesosystems, which negatively influence their social interactions. Similarly, the social stress model posits that chronic stress associated with low SES undermines emotional regulation and social competence, leading to increased aggression and reduced prosocial behavior (Pearlin et al., 2021).

## **Educational and Policy Implications**

Understanding the relationship between SES and social behavior has profound implications for education and public policy. Schools in low SES communities should implement targeted interventions, such as conflict resolution training and peer mentoring programs, to address aggressive behavior (Greenberg et al., 2020). Additionally, policies promoting equitable resource distribution, such as subsidized extracurricular activities and access to counselling services, can foster prosocial behavior among adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds (Durlak et al., 2021).

## **Recent Trends and Future Directions**

Recent research has highlighted the role of digital technology and social media in shaping adolescents' social behavior. While technology can facilitate prosocial behavior through collaborative platforms and online communities, it can also exacerbate aggression through cyberbullying, particularly among low SES adolescents with limited parental monitoring (Kowalski et al., 2021). Future research should explore these dynamics further, incorporating longitudinal designs to capture the evolving impact of SES on social behavior.

## **Data Collection and Methodology**

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and social behaviour, with a specific focus on aggression and prosociality among higher secondary school students. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select a sample of 381 students. The stratification was based on socio-economic backgrounds to ensure adequate representation across different socio-economic strata. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula to achieve statistical significance and reliability. The primary data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire, designed to measure SES, aggression, and prosocial behaviour. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to capture the extent of agreement or frequency of specific behaviours. The items were carefully developed based on a review of existing literature and were validated through a pilot study conducted with 30 students to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness. Feedback from the pilot test was incorporated into the final version of the instrument to address any issues related to comprehension and response bias.

Data was collected in a controlled environment within the schools, after obtaining necessary ethical approvals and informed consent from both students and their guardians. Trained research assistants distributed the questionnaires during regular school hours and ensured that participants understood the instructions and had the opportunity to ask questions. To maintain anonymity, each participant was assigned a unique identification code. The data collection process lasted for four weeks, during which

research assistants were available on-site to support participants and address any concerns. After data collection, the responses were carefully verified for completeness and accuracy. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies, were first calculated to understand the distribution of variables. To examine the relationships between SES and the two social behavior factors aggression and prosociality—Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted. The results revealed significant correlations, with lower SES being associated with higher aggression and lower prosocial behavior.

**Data analysis & Interpretation**

**Null Hypothesis 1:**

*There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and aggressive behavior among higher secondary school students.*

**Table 1**

**Correlation between Socio-Economic Status and Aggressive Behavior**

Variables	N	r	p
Socio-Economic Status	381	-0.38	< .001
Aggressive Behavior	381		

**Note:** *N* = sample size; *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient; *p* = significance level.

The analysis of 381 students revealed a moderate, negative, and statistically significant relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and aggressive behavior ( $r = -0.38, p < .001$ ), indicating that as SES improves, aggressive behavior decreases. This finding suggests that students from lower SES backgrounds are more prone to aggression due to factors such as heightened stress, limited resources, and adverse environments. The results emphasize the role of socio-economic factors in shaping student behavior, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in schools to support emotional regulation and reduce aggression, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Educational policies should focus on equitable resource distribution, parental engagement, and community support programs to address these challenges effectively. The rejection of the null hypothesis underscores the significance of addressing socio-economic disparities to foster positive behavioral outcomes in students.

**Null Hypothesis 2:**

*Socio-economic status does not significantly influence prosocial behavior among higher secondary school students.*

**Table 2**  
**Regression Analysis of Socio-Economic Status Predicting Prosocial Behavior**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	t	p
Socio-Economic Status	0.41	0.17	76.21	0.41	8.73	< .001

**Note:**  $R$  = correlation coefficient;  $R^2$  = coefficient of determination;  $F$  = F-statistic;  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient;  $t$  = t-statistic;  $p$  = significance level.

Interpretation

The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and prosocial behavior among higher secondary school students ( $R = 0.41$ ,  $R^2 = 0.17$ ,  $F(1, 379) = 76.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The model indicates that SES accounts for 17% of the variance in prosocial behavior, suggesting that higher SES is associated with greater tendencies toward prosocial actions such as empathy, cooperation, and helping behaviors. The standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $t = 8.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirms that SES is a significant predictor of prosocial behavior, with higher SES contributing positively to students' inclination to engage in socially constructive activities. These findings suggest that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds may benefit from greater access to resources, parental support, and exposure to positive role models, which foster altruistic tendencies and social skills. Conversely, students from lower SES backgrounds may face challenges such as limited access to nurturing environments and heightened stress, which could inhibit their ability to engage in prosocial behavior. The rejection of the null hypothesis highlights the critical role of socio-economic factors in influencing students' social dynamics, emphasizing the importance of providing equitable opportunities and support systems in schools to cultivate prosocial behavior across all socio-economic groups.

**Null Hypothesis 3**

*There is no significant difference in social behavior (aggression and prosociality) among students belonging to different socio-economic groups.*

**Table 3**  
**One-Way ANOVA Results for Social Behavior Across Socio-Economic Groups**

Dependent Variable	SES Group	Mean	SD	F	p	Post Hoc Comparison (Tukey)
Aggressive Behavior	Low	24.87	4.56	32.14	< .001	Low > Middle, Low > High
	Middle	21.34	3.98			
	High	19.56	4.21			
Prosocial Behavior	Low	15.32	3.87	28.67	< .001	High > Middle, High > Low



	Middle	18.24	3.74			
	High	21.47	4.02			

**Note:** SES = Socio-Economic Status; SD = Standard Deviation; F = F-statistic; *p* = significance level.

Interpretation

The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in both aggression and prosocial behavior across the three socio-economic groups. For aggression, the F-statistic ( $F(2, 378) = 32.14, p < .001$ ) indicates a statistically significant difference, with post hoc Tukey comparisons showing that students from low SES backgrounds reported higher levels of aggression (Mean = 24.87, SD = 4.56) compared to middle (Mean = 21.34, SD = 3.98) and high SES groups (Mean = 19.56, SD = 4.21). This trend suggests that financial instability, heightened stress, and limited access to coping resources may amplify aggressive tendencies in low SES students. For prosocial behavior, the ANOVA results also showed a significant difference ( $F(2, 378) = 28.67, p < .001$ ), with students from high SES groups exhibiting significantly higher prosocial tendencies (Mean = 21.47, SD = 4.02) compared to middle (Mean = 18.24, SD = 3.74) and low SES groups (Mean = 15.32, SD = 3.87). Post hoc tests further confirmed that high SES students demonstrated greater empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility, likely due to greater exposure to positive environments, parental involvement, and better access to education and extracurricular activities promoting social skills. The rejection of the null hypothesis underscores the critical role of socio-economic disparities in shaping social behaviors. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as counselling services and social skill development programs, for students from lower SES groups to mitigate aggression and enhance prosocial behavior. Additionally, school policies that promote inclusivity and equitable access to resources are essential for addressing these socio-economic disparities effectively.

Findings

1. The study found a significant negative relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and aggressive behavior. Students from lower SES backgrounds exhibited higher levels of aggression, potentially due to financial instability, heightened stress, and exposure to adverse environments.
2. A significant positive relationship was observed between SES and prosocial behavior. Students from higher SES groups displayed greater empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility compared to those from middle and lower SES groups.
3. The analysis revealed significant differences in both aggression and prosocial behavior across SES groups. Students from low SES backgrounds had the highest aggression scores and the lowest prosocial behavior scores, while students from high SES backgrounds exhibited the opposite trend.

Recommendations

1. Schools should implement counseling programs focused on stress management and emotional regulation, particularly for students from lower SES backgrounds.
2. Introduce workshops that teach conflict resolution, empathy building, and social interaction skills to enhance prosocial behavior among all socio-economic groups.
3. Educational institutions should ensure that all students, regardless of SES, have access to quality educational resources, extracurricular activities, and positive role models.

4. Schools should encourage parental involvement through workshops and regular communication, focusing on strategies to manage behavior and promote prosocial values at home.
5. Collaborate with NGOs and local organizations to provide additional support, such as scholarships, mentoring programs, and community activities, to address socio-economic disparities.
6. Develop inclusive educational policies that address the needs of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, promoting a culture of equality and mutual respect in schools.

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