



# The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Youth Development

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## ABSTRACT

Many studies have focused on the impact of low socioeconomic status (SES) on health outcomes, but little attention has been paid to how SES status affects social relationships and cognitive development. This paper aims to investigate the relationship between adolescents' SES and their cognitive development. The paper examines experiments and research conducted to explore the connection between a youth's SES and their daily environment. Analyzing the research provides a deeper analytical understanding of the topic. Experiments are used to demonstrate the relationship between SES and youth development, providing insight into the topic and enabling people to draw their conclusions. The results of this research paper show that there is indeed a connection between socioeconomics and youth development. Previous studies have shown that youths with low SES may be more susceptible to the negative effects of social media, as they are often exposed to cyberbullying, which may change their perspective on themselves and others. Family SES has also been confirmed to be related to youth development, with adolescents from low SES families being more likely to experience challenges and obstacles in life due to their family's SES. Experiments and research conducted by professors have further established that the area a person lives in is often determined by their SES and personal preference, and that environment plays a crucial role in the development of youth as it decides who they interact with daily. As different people vary in SES, it is difficult to list all the effects that a youth's SES has on them.

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## INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic aspect of society continues to captivate researchers due to its ability to shed light on how society functions across various income and education levels. Studies and case analyses have been conducted to uncover the connection between adolescence and their socioeconomic status. While social media is widely accessible to individuals from all walks of life, the mindset of youths is still developing, and their perceptions of themselves and others are subject to change. Family socioeconomic status plays a significant role in various aspects of a youth's life, including the education they receive and their lifestyle. Additionally, an individual's environment is closely correlated with their socioeconomic status, which can significantly impact the development of youths' brains (Kang, 2018).

By better understanding the effects of socioeconomic status on young individuals, researchers can work towards correcting imbalances and creating a more equitable society for future generations. A socioeconomic hierarchy refers to a means of categorizing individuals based on their job, income, education, and environment. This concept provides a concise way of describing someone based on socioeconomic factors. According to the American Psychological Association, "SES affects overall human functioning, including our physical and mental health. Low SES and its correlates, such as low educational achievement, poverty, and poor health, affect our society" (APA, 2017).

The socioeconomic area of society significantly impacts the cognitive development of youths by altering how they perceive themselves and those around them (Baron, 2022). Furthermore, the socioeconomic aspect of social media, parents' income, and level of education can all affect young people's physical and mental health (Rosen, 2013). Therefore, a thorough understanding of the relationship between socioeconomic status and youth is essential for addressing the social inequalities that exist in our society.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Social media has been found to have a significant impact on the beliefs of young people. In a 2018 study by Monica Anderson and Jinjing Jiang, it was found that social media exposes youth to bullying, unrealistic standards, and socio-economic perspectives. Furthermore, research led by Jens Christopher Skogen revealed that youth spend more than two to three hours on social media daily and that there is a negative association between socioeconomic status (SES) and social media addiction. The study found that it is now more common for adolescents from low-income families to have access to social media devices than those from high-income families.

There is a clear relationship between a youth's socio-economic status and negative life events, although the reasons for this remain unclear. Sonia Livingstone's independent research in 2019 suggested that having at least one parent with a university degree reduces the likelihood of a child being a perpetrator of cyberbullying. The study used variables such as the youth's age and gender, country of birth, original economic status, and daily social media usage.

Although many studies have shown a link between socioeconomic status and social media usage among young people, they have failed to identify the exact reasons for this association. Monica Rodriguez Enriquez conducted an experiment in 2019 using a sample of youth under 14 with varying economic statuses to assess the impact of social media use. The study found that youth with lower socio-economic status have a negative perception of themselves, have been exposed to cyberbullying, and are more likely to cause trouble in their teenage years due to their social media use.

Several other experiments have been conducted with varying variables, such as gender, age, economic status, and school. However, most of these experiments have reported similar findings to the original study by Monica Rodriguez Enriquez.

An individual's family's socioeconomic status has a significant impact on how they view themselves and those around them. The early development of youths is affected by their economic status. According to Andraine Baron's research paper, a young child's SES influences both their language and cognitive abilities by what they can learn from their parent. Typically, people with low SES have less education than those with high SES, which can hinder their ability to teach critical thinking to their children. Inappropriate language used by parents may also be adopted by the child. Baron suggests that children raised in low SES environments may also face emotional challenges during their cognitive development due to the stress of struggling for essential resources such as food and clothing, as well as stress from their parents' interactions with them.

Jing Li's controlled experiment drew the conclusion that adolescents with lower socioeconomic status tend to have poorer social relationships than those with higher socioeconomic status. The people that adolescents' families interact with in their daily lives are also often tied to their SES. Professor Sheng Qian's 2020 school-based study in China shows a relationship between one's SES and social relationships among adolescents. The conclusion of the experiment suggests that youths with low SES tend to be more influenced by their peers due to emotional and behavioural problems. It is noted that low SES groups often have lower self-esteem compared to their counterparts with higher SES.

Where a person lives can say a lot about them. The same can be said for youths' living conditions. The location of one's home decides who they spend time together with, the environment that they live in, etc. An individual's home is decided by not only their SES but personal preference. An article written by Deborah J. Bowen states that the factors of SES suggest how well and long people live. These factors "affect our ability to make healthy choices, afford medical care and housing, manage stress, and more." (Bowen, 2018). A research paper to find out SES based on housing type and a neighbourhood's effect on youth was done by SuJin Kang in 2018. The study showed how one's SES is related to where and how a person lives. The paper concludes that the people that a person connects with are related to their SES. Youths with low SES tend to be more influenced by their peers, while people with high SES are more influential. According to the research, "perceptions of status are influenced by objective factors such as income, assets, and occupation. However, the recent swift in asset value is accompanied by a rapid change in the perception of one's status" (Kang, 2018). This means that one's housing relates to the SES factors. Due to recent years, the value of housing has drastically changed, leading to a change in view of one's SES. The area of residence is a crucial indicator of one's SES. Referring to the research paper, it states that "Since subjective socioeconomic status is the perception of one's position in society, a negative perception of one's status is directly associated with relative deprivation, whereas an overly high perception of status causes social conflict" (Kang, 2018). Depending on youths' SES, they may be affected differently. Subjective SES can be defined as a perception of one's position shaped through comparisons inherent to social interactions with people or colleagues. The same can be applied to the interactions of adolescents' friends, peers, role models, teachers, etc. The place where youths reside determines the people they hang around with. Priming is a psychological concept

which occurs when an individual is exposed to a certain stimulus and influences a response to a subsequent stimulus. Priming is mostly found in older adults but also affects youths. An example of priming would be if a young person's friend group swears, they will eventually swear too. Where youth live will prime them into acting like the people, they spend time together with. Youths with high SES are more likely to be affected by priming more positively than those with low SES.

### CONCLUSION

Youth development is significantly impacted by an individual's socioeconomic status (SES). This factor plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's self-perception and how others perceive them. The influence of SES on a child's development has been thoroughly examined through various research papers and experiments. It has been noted that young individuals with low SES tend to be negatively impacted by social media due to their low self-esteem. Moreover, the family's SES affects a youth's peer group and their susceptibility to external influences, which is relatively higher compared to those with a high SES. Additionally, a youth's geographical location can also be associated with their SES, influencing their social circle and environment. The socioeconomic status of an individual also affects how others view and interact with them, leading to the adoption of behavioural patterns similar to those around them. Hence, it has been observed that individuals with low SES tend to mimic the behaviours of people in their surroundings.

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