

# Mind The Gap – The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance

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## Abstract

At the heart of Freire's 1968 classic text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is how he challenged and categorized wealth disparity - "the haves and have nots". Fundamental in his beliefs is the need to create a level of equity in education by providing equal access. The discrepancy in socioeconomic status (SES) forms gaps in wealth, education, and opportunities, leading to further social categorizations. Behind this differing socioeconomic status (SES) and education disparities are the impacts on students' mental and emotional disposition, cognitive development, and academic performance. This presentation reports on a research project that explored the association between SES and academic attainment. The project profiled more than 6,000 primary and secondary students as well as identified determinants of their academic performance. A total of 131 variables were used. These include students' demographic, academic and SES variables. K-means and Model-based Clustering methods were applied to explore the characteristics of different groupings. The findings indicated a strong association between academic performance and SES. Aside from the student's academic ability, his/her academic performance is highly influenced by the complicated interaction between the many happenings in the student's life such as a family's financial status, access to learning resources, availability of conducive home learning environment, parents' time and many more. It is important to understand the circumstances behind this phenomenon and the effects it has on educational attainment. The findings on cognitive development and academic achievement of children with low SES can provide further insights for policy and practice.

**Keywords:** cluster analysis, educational inequity, learning analytics