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Exploring the Effects of Socioeconomic Factors on Secondary School Learners' Academic Performance: The Case of Ahmed Djoudi Secondary school- Ounougha.

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Declaration

We hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment

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Signature

Dedication

To my beloved parents

Your love, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in education shaped my path.

This work is built on the foundation you laid.

To my wife

Your patience, strength, and endless support carried me through every challenge.

You are my greatest ally.

To my children, Yacine, Sirine, and Tamim

Your curiosity, laughter, and resilience remind me why this work matters.

You are my inspiration.

Ferhat REGUIG

Dedication

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of socioeconomic factors on academic performance among secondary school students in Algeria, using Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School in Ounougha as a representative case to uncover systemic patterns and structural dynamics embedded within the national secondary education system. Understanding how social background shapes educational outcomes is essential for addressing entrenched inequalities and fostering equitable learning opportunities across the country. Despite policy efforts toward educational standardization, disparities in student achievement persist — yet the mechanisms through which socioeconomic variables influence performance at the institutional level remain underexplored. This study therefore aims to: (1) analyze the relationship between household income, parental education, family structure, and academic achievement; (2) identify key barriers faced by disadvantaged learners as perceived by both students and educators; and (3) evaluate the adequacy of existing institutional support mechanisms in mitigating these challenges. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research is based on survey data collected from 57 students and 11 teachers. This study by an Algerian teacher-researcher finds that 88% of students see their family's economic hardship as a major barrier to learning, with teachers citing lack of resources, stress, and limited parental support as key issues. Despite this, over 80% of students remain motivated and aim for higher education. Yet, only 27.3% of teachers report access to structured support programs. The study calls for urgent policies—such as scholarships, free materials, mental health services, and inclusive teaching training—to close achievement gaps and advance educational equity in Algeria.

Keywords: Socioeconomic factors, academic performance, secondary education, educational equity, parental influence.

List of Abbreviations

AERA: American Educational Research Association

DZD: Algerian Dinar

GPA: Grade Point Average

HCT: Human Capital Theory

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

NBER: National Bureau of Economic Research

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

SES: Socioeconomic Status

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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General introduction

1. Background of the study

Education plays a central role in shaping individual opportunities and contributing to national development. In Algeria, significant efforts have been made to improve access to secondary education and promote literacy across the country. Studies indicate that despite these improvements, disparities in academic achievement persist, often linked to students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Benyahia and Pherali (2019) highlights the uneven distribution of educational outcomes, particularly among learners in disadvantaged regions.

Socioeconomic factors—including parental income, education, family structure, health, nutrition, and access to learning resources—profoundly shape students' educational outcomes. Disadvantaged students often face barriers such as limited books and digital tools, inadequate study environments, emotional stress, and reduced parental support due to financial or educational constraints. These factors undermine engagement and motivation, widening achievement gaps.

International evidence confirms this pattern. Sirin (2005), in a meta-analysis of 74 studies, identified a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between SES and academic achievement across diverse contexts, linking outcomes to family income, parental education, and occupation. Taras (2005) further noted systemic barriers for low-SES children: scarce resources, limited parental involvement due to work, and under-resourced schools—all cumulatively impeding success.

In North Africa, similar disparities persist. El Menyari and Segbenya (2021) found Tunisian students from higher-income households consistently outperformed peers, attributing this to private tutoring, enriched home learning, and school choice advantages. El-Aoufi (2023) similarly showed in Morocco that economic hardship—especially in rural areas—constrained

academic progress, as limited technology, overcrowded classrooms, and parental illiteracy intensified the impact of poverty.

These issues are especially pronounced in suburban and rural schools, where institutional support systems are often underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented. Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School in M'sila serves as a representative case for examining how these dynamics affect academic performance among Algerian secondary school learners. Studies focusing on eastern Algeria reveal that rural schools face compounded challenges related to teacher retention, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to extracurricular learning materials. Bousnina and Benamar (2021) note the difficulties associated with maintaining a stable teaching workforce in remote areas, while Djeffal and Bouchenak (2023) emphasize the impact of inadequate facilities on student learning outcomes.

Understanding the interplay between socioeconomic conditions and educational success is essential for identifying systemic inequities and developing targeted interventions that promote fairness and inclusivity in education. Recent studies by Boukhatem (2022) and Belabbes and Benmalek (2023) further illustrate how structural inequalities continue to shape educational outcomes in marginalized urban and rural communities. This study examines how socioeconomic factors influence academic performance, contributing to ongoing discussions on educational reform in Algeria and informing evidence-based policies aimed at reducing inequality and enhancing learning outcomes for all students.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although access to education in Algeria has expanded, persistent disparities in secondary students' academic performance reflect underlying socioeconomic inequalities. Household income, parental education, job stability, and access to learning resources are widely acknowledged as key determinants of academic trajectories. Students from underprivileged

backgrounds often face material and social barriers — including inadequate study materials, poor nutrition, and limited home-based academic support — which significantly constrain achievement. Despite growing awareness of these influences, there remains a critical gap in context-specific, empirical research on how specific socioeconomic factors directly shape academic outcomes within Algeria's secondary education system. Much existing work focuses on broad structural issues or international comparisons, neglecting localized dynamics. This lack of granular evidence hinders policymakers and educators from designing targeted, effective interventions — resulting in generalized equity initiatives that often miss the real needs of disadvantaged learners. This study therefore addresses a central research problem: the insufficient understanding of how specific socioeconomic variables influence academic performance among Algerian secondary school students. Through mixed-methods analysis, it aims to generate actionable, evidence-based insights to inform more equitable and responsive education policies and support systems.

3. Aims of the study

This study aims to:

- identify the key socioeconomic factors that may affect secondary school learners' academic performance.

- investigate the nature, scope and interplay of socioeconomic factors and their systemic influence on secondary school learners' academic performance.

- analyze Algeria's education policies and institutional frameworks, identify systemic gaps in addressing socioeconomic disparities, and propose equitable reforms to improve resource distribution, community collaboration, and access for marginalized groups, ensuring alignment with inclusive national education goals.

4. Research questions

a- What are the key socioeconomic determinants that significantly influence academic performance among secondary school students in Algeria?

b- To what extent can these socioeconomic factors impede or enhance the students' performance?

c- What actions should Algerian authorities take to prevent these factors from negatively affecting learners' performance?

5. Research hypotheses

H1: The socioeconomic factors may affect secondary school learners' performance.

H2: Students from higher-income families are more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes compared to those from lower-income families, due to greater access to educational resources and support systems.

6. Significance of the study

The significance of this study is in its ability to reveal and address educational disparities arising from socioeconomic factors in Algeria. By offering localized insights, the research aims to inform policy-makers and educators about the specific challenges faced by disadvantaged students, guiding the development of targeted interventions and policies to enhance educational equity. Furthermore, improving educational outcomes for all students can boost Algeria's economic development and social cohesion, making this study crucial for fostering a more equitable and prosperous society.

7. Organization of the dissertation

This study is organized into two principal chapters designed to provide a comprehensive examination of the impact of socioeconomic factors on the academic performance of secondary school students. The theoretical chapter presents a critical review of key concepts, existing literature, and relevant theoretical frameworks concerning the influence of socioeconomic variables—such as family income, parental educational attainment, and access to learning resources—on student achievement. It serves to establish a conceptual foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which these factors shape educational outcomes.

The practical chapter focuses on research methodology, data analysis, and the interpretation of findings. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative research methods, this section investigates the empirical relationship between selected socioeconomic indicators and academic performance. It evaluates the extent to which these variables influence student success, discusses the implications of the findings for educational policy and practice, and offers actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in educational reform.

Together, these two chapters contribute to a holistic understanding of the interplay between socioeconomic conditions and academic achievement, effectively bridging theoretical perspectives with empirical evidence in the context of secondary education in Algeria.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

Socio-Economic Status and Students' Academic Performance

1.1 Introduction

The relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic performance has been extensively documented in global educational research. In diverse national contexts, particularly those marked by economic disparity and uneven access to education, understanding how social class influences learning outcomes remains a key concern for educators and policymakers. This chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining the influence of SES—particularly parental income, educational attainment, and family size—on students' academic experiences. Drawing upon established sociological and educational theories, the chapter explains how disparities rooted in social class can manifest long before formal schooling begins, shaping the trajectory of students' academic lives.

Additionally, this chapter outlines how academic performance is conceptualized and assessed within secondary school settings, especially in systems where standardized evaluation plays a decisive role. It also identifies a range of mediating factors—including psychological, environmental, and institutional variables—that may either buffer or exacerbate the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on student outcomes. By synthesizing global theoretical perspectives with contextual considerations relevant to the Algerian setting, this chapter lays the groundwork for a deeper inquiry into the structural determinants of educational inequality.

1.2 Conceptualizing Socio-Economic Status (SES)

1.2.1 Definition of SES

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a multifaceted construct that condenses an individual's or family's position within a stratified social hierarchy, shaped by economic, social, and cultural resources (Sirin, 2005; OECD, 2018). While foundational definitions emphasize material indicators—such as income, parental education, and occupational prestige—contemporary scholarship underscores the necessity of adopting a more nuanced, context-sensitive conceptualization of SES to capture its dynamic interplay with educational outcomes (Reay, 2018; Bourdieu, 1986). Classical definitions frame SES primarily through economic metrics.

For instance, Sirin (2005) defines SES as "the combined measure of a family's economic resources, including income, wealth, and access to material goods" (p. 423), which directly influences students' opportunities for academic enrichment (e.g., tutoring, technology, or extracurricular programs). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) operationalizes SES in educational assessments like PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) using indices of familial wealth, parental education, and possession of home learning resources (e.g., books, computers).

1.2.2 Functional Role of SES in Educational Contexts

Within education, socioeconomic status (SES) functions both as a robust predictor and a mediating mechanism of academic outcomes. As a predictor, SES consistently correlates with test scores, graduation rates, and college access — reflecting cumulative advantages (or disadvantages) tied to income, parental education, and occupation (Sirin, 2005; OECD, 2019; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). As a mediator, SES channels structural inequality into educational performance through access to resources (books, tech, tutoring), school quality (often wealth-linked), and parental capacity to support learning (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Lareau, 2011).

Crucially, SES is not merely correlational — it is a dynamic social mechanism reproducing inequality across generations. High-SES families provide enriched environments (museums, tutors, networks) that transmit cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and reflect "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2003) — parenting strategies aligned with school norms (e.g., assertiveness, structured routines, institutional fluency). Schools thus reward behaviors already cultivated at home, granting high-SES students an often invisible advantage.

In contrast, low-SES students face *opportunity gaps* — systemic disparities in access to resources, experiences, and supports that enable success — rather than mere *achievement gaps* (Darling-Hammond, 2014). These manifest as under-resourced schools, underqualified or

overburdened teachers, and limited access to advanced curricula — constraining trajectories regardless of individual effort.

Moreover, SES does not operate in isolation. It is amplified by institutional mechanisms: funding formulas (e.g., U.S. property-tax-based models), tracking, and teacher assignment policies embed structural inequality into daily schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Cultural mismatch further compounds disadvantage when institutional norms (communication styles, behavioral expectations) conflict with students' home cultures (Ogbu, 2003).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is certainly one of the most widely used predictors of academic success — but it's also debated. Critics argue that SES oversimplifies inequality by treating income, education, and occupation as interchangeable, while ignoring cultural, racial, or regional factors that shape students' real-life opportunities (Lareau, 2011; El-Aoufi, 2023). While economic indicators such as household income and parental occupation are commonly used to identify educational disparities, they offer only a partial view of inequality. A more comprehensive understanding of educational inequality requires integrating cultural, social, and structural dimensions. Culturally, student success often hinges on alignment between family practices and school norms. Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital and Lareau's (2011) concerted cultivation explain how middle- and upper-class families deliberately structure children's time (e.g., lessons, sports, tutoring), actively engage institutions (e.g., advocating with teachers), and instill self-advocacy — behaviors that schools reward as "engagement" or "readiness." Socially, access to institutional brokers — trusted adults like teachers, counselors, or mentors who decode systems, unlock hidden opportunities, and guide students through institutional rules — can be as vital as material resources (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Structurally, policies such as property-tax-based school funding, curriculum tracking, and residential segregation systematically advantage affluent students while marginalizing others (Darling-Hammond,

2014; Reardon, 2011). Relying solely on economic metrics risks overlooking how deeply inequality is embedded not just in wallets, but in relationships, routines, and institutional design — as Calarco (2021, p. 27) aptly observes, "Inequality is not only in the wallet — it's in the wiring." To truly understand — and address — educational disparities, we must look beyond income and examine how advantage is culturally shaped, socially transmitted, and structurally reinforced. By adopting multidimensional frameworks, researchers and policymakers can better address the root causes of educational inequity and design interventions that transcend simplistic income-based solutions.

1.2.3 Key factors of SES

1.2.3.1 Parental Income

Parental income — a core dimension of socioeconomic status — directly structures children's educational opportunities by determining access to material resources (e.g., books, technology, private tutoring), school choice (via residential zoning or private fees), and enrichment activities that reinforce academic success (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, p. 23; Lareau, 2011, p. 108). It further mediates access to critical supports such as private tutoring (Calarco, 2018, p. 72), extracurricular programming (Leos-Urbel, 2014, p. 3), digital learning tools (OECD, 2020, p. 12), and even foundational necessities like consistent nutrition and reliable transportation to school — factors shown to significantly impact attendance, cognitive functioning, and academic engagement (Berliner, 2009, p. 14; Rothstein, 2004, p. 37).

Conceptually, economic capital does not merely signify wealth — it actively converts into cultural and social capital, granting higher-income students institutionally rewarded advantages in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This conversion operates through material, physiological, and psychological pathways documented empirically. Dearing et al. (2021) show that income enables access to material scaffolds — computers, internet, tutoring, structured activities — not just as tools, but as mechanisms for cultivating cognitive discipline, time

management, and institutional fluency — traits schools valorize as "merit." Economic resources thus become embodied cultural capital: a child with a tutor learns not only math, but how to seek help, negotiate deadlines, and perform "academic selfhood" — the assertive, strategic, authority-comfortable behaviors institutions recognize as competence (Calarco, 2018).

Glewwe & Sadoulet (2022) highlight that financial stability ensures nutrition and healthcare — physiological foundations for cognitive stamina and regular attendance. A healthy, well-nourished child isn't "smarter," but is better positioned to focus, retain, and avoid absenteeism — interpreted by schools as "engagement." Walsemann et al. (2023) reveal that economic hardship fuels chronic familial stress, depleting parental capacity for school involvement and impairing students' emotional regulation — often misread by educators as "lack of motivation" or "behavioral problems." Here, economic capital becomes social capital: affluent parents, free from survival stress, model institutional navigation — attending meetings, emailing teachers, advocating strategically — teaching children how to "work the system."

Together, these studies expose the mechanisms through which financial disparities become institutionalized advantage. Economic inequality doesn't merely "affect" education — it is reproduced through it, as schools mistake the artifacts of privilege for signs of merit (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 45).

1.2.3.2 Parental Educational Attainment

Parental education is among the most powerful predictors of children's academic success — not because of inherited intelligence or income alone, but through the quiet, daily transmission of cultural norms, practices, and dispositions that align with school expectations (Feinstein, 2003; Davis-Kean, 2005).

Educated parents are more likely to cultivate what Bourdieu (1986) calls embodied cultural capital: not just books or vocabulary, but habits like reading aloud with open-ended questions ("What do you think happens next?"), discussing current events at dinner, or modeling persistence through personal challenges. These practices — often invisible to those who grow up with them — teach children how to think, speak, and behave in ways schools reward as "critical thinking," "engagement," or "maturity" (Sullivan, 2022, p. 114; Lareau, 2011, p. 112). Children don't simply learn content; they absorb academic dispositions — curiosity, comfort with abstraction, resilience — that are frequently mistaken for innate ability.

This cultural alignment is reinforced by academic socialization: the deliberate shaping of attitudes and behaviors that help children navigate institutional systems. Highly educated parents tend to set high, non-negotiable expectations, advocate proactively (requesting advanced placement, meeting teachers, appealing grades), and possess "institutional know-how" — knowing whom to contact, which forms to complete, and how to frame requests effectively (Heckman & Kautz, 2023, p. 29). For these families, the education system feels navigable, even malleable — not intimidating or opaque.

Equally important is the modeling of academic identity. Children of educated parents don't just hear "do well in school"; they witness it. They see parents reading for pleasure, returning to school themselves, debating ideas, or overcoming professional setbacks — normalizing intellectual ambition and persistence as part of everyday life (Feinstein et al., 2021, p. 7). This lived example fosters what Lareau (2011) terms an "educational destiny" — the belief that college and career success are not just possible, but expected.

Yet these advantages are not neutral. Schools often misrecognize middle-class norms — assertiveness, negotiation, rule-following — as universal markers of merit, while misreading alternative forms of competence. A child who shows respect through silence, solves problems

collaboratively, or prioritizes family responsibilities may be labeled “disengaged” or “defiant” — not because they lack ability, but because their cultural repertoire doesn’t match institutional expectations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 28; Calarco, 2018, p. 67).

In this way, parental education functions as both predictor and mechanism: it embeds advantage not in wealth alone, but in the reproduction of academic culture — one that schools, often unconsciously, reinforce. The result? Children of college-educated parents are up to three times more likely to earn degrees themselves, even after controlling for income (Hout, 2012, p. 407; OECD, 2019, p. 87).

Ultimately, the intergenerational transmission of educational success is less about what parents know — and more about what society values. And until schools recognize the cultural specificity of their own norms, the cycle will continue — not through malice, but through the quiet, everyday reproduction of what counts as “success.”

1.2.3.3 Family Size

Family size is a critical — yet often overlooked — dimension of socioeconomic status that shapes educational outcomes through context-dependent pathways. Larger families may experience *resource dilution*, where finite parental time, attention, and finances are spread thinly, potentially diminishing the quality of academic support per child (Blake, 1981; Downey, 2001). Yet this effect is not uniform: cultural norms and extended kin networks can buffer constraints (Blake, 1989), while sibling dynamics may either mitigate disadvantage through mentoring (“resource multiplier”) or intensify it via competition (Downey, 2022). In low-income or agrarian settings, larger families may also face higher *opportunity costs*, as child labor displaces schooling (Edmonds & Schady, 2022). Crucially, family size does not act alone — its impact is mediated by parental income and education. Higher income enables enriched learning environments; higher parental education enhances resource deployment (Sirin, 2005).

Yet larger family size can dilute these advantages (Blake, 1989; Downey, 2022). Together, economic hardship, limited cultural capital, and structural constraints create *cumulative disadvantages* that disproportionately affect marginalized learners (Dearing et al., 2021; Feinstein et al., 2021). This underscores the need for a holistic, systems-oriented approach to understanding — and redressing — educational inequality.

1.2.4 Theoretical Perspectives on SES and Education.

To better understand the mechanisms through which socioeconomic status affects academic performance, several theoretical frameworks offer valuable insights:

1.2.4.1 Cultural Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu & Passero, 1977):

This theory posits that students from higher SES backgrounds benefit from early exposure to dominant cultural codes and practices that align with the expectations of formal schooling. This familiarity gives them a subtle but significant advantage in academic settings.

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural reproduction expands socioeconomic status (SES) beyond income to include *cultural capital* — the knowledge, behaviors, and skills that families transmit to navigate educational systems effectively. Unlike economic resources, cultural capital refers to the unspoken social assets — such as familiarity with academic language, comfort interacting with authority figures, or the habit of reading for pleasure — that are acquired through upbringing and align with what schools value and reward. These assets are not evenly distributed: children from highly educated or affluent families often absorb them effortlessly at home, giving them an invisible head start. Schools, in turn, tend to mistake these socially acquired traits for "natural ability" or "good character," reinforcing existing inequalities under the guise of meritocracy. From this lens, SES reflects not only material wealth but also the ability to decode dominant academic norms — such as prioritizing literacy, engaging in abstract reasoning, or confidently advocating for advanced coursework. Reay

(2018) further argues that *habitus*, a concept describing how deeply ingrained social dispositions shape perception and action, mediates how students from low-SES backgrounds internalize, negotiate, or resist these educational inequities — revealing that disadvantage is not just structural, but embodied in everyday practices and self-perceptions.

In the Algerian context, research has shown that students from families with higher levels of parental education and professional status are significantly more likely to achieve academic success — not solely due to economic advantage, but because their home socialization more closely mirrors the linguistic norms, behavioral expectations, and cultural codes embedded in the formal education system (Benyahia & Pherali, 2019, p. 117). These students often enter classrooms already fluent in the "language of schooling" — whether in Modern Standard Arabic or French, depending on institutional track — and are more likely to possess the unspoken competencies schools reward: knowing how to ask for help, how to structure written arguments, or how to interact with authority figures. In Bourdieusian terms, this reflects the intergenerational transmission of *cultural capital* — where academic success is less about innate ability and more about inherited familiarity with institutional rules (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 24–26). As Benyahia & Pherali note, such alignment allows students to navigate the system with greater ease, while peers from less educated or rural backgrounds — despite equal motivation — often face hidden penalties for mismatched linguistic registers or unfamiliarity with bureaucratic norms (2019, p. 121).

1.2.4.2 Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988):

According to this perspective, *social capital* — defined as the networks, norms, and social trust that enable collective action and mutual support (Putnam, 2000, p. 19; Coleman, 1988, p. S98) — plays a crucial role in scaffolding student learning beyond the classroom. Unlike cultural or economic capital, social capital resides in relationships: it is activated when parents exchange information about effective tutors, when neighbors supervise children's

homework, or when community members advocate collectively for better school resources. In education, social capital operates through "bridging" ties (connections to institutions or individuals outside one's immediate circle, e.g., teachers, mentors, college counselors) and "bonding" ties (strong, trusting relationships within families or peer groups that provide emotional and practical support) (Putnam, 2000, p. 22–23; Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1076).

For students, access to robust social networks can mean the difference between navigating institutional gatekeeping successfully — such as applying to selective programs or securing internships — and being excluded due to lack of guidance. However, in low-income or marginalized communities, structural barriers — residential segregation, under-resourced schools, and institutional distrust — often constrain the formation and mobilization of such capital (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 581; Small & Newman, 2001, p. 25). Families may possess strong bonding ties internally but lack bridging ties to institutions that hold power — resulting in what Stanton-Salazar (2011, p. 1080) terms "institutional sponsorship gaps." Consequently, students from these communities frequently miss out on informal academic supports — mentorship, recommendation letters, enrichment opportunities — not because of individual failure, but because the social infrastructure that enables such advantages is unevenly distributed. Thus, social capital is not merely "helpful" — it is a mechanism of educational reproduction, reinforcing privilege for those embedded in resource-rich networks while systematically limiting mobility for those on the margins.

Recent studies in North Africa suggest that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack access to informal mentorship or academically oriented peer networks — critical forms of *social capital* that scaffold motivation, reinforce study habits, and demystify institutional pathways (Taras, 2005, p. 89). In contexts where formal academic support is limited or unevenly distributed, informal relationships — with older siblings who have navigated exams, neighbors who tutor, or peers who form study circles — become vital for

sustaining engagement and clarifying expectations. Yet, as Taras observes in the Moroccan and Algerian cases, structural marginalization often isolates low-income students from such networks: they are less likely to encounter mentors who model academic success, less likely to be embedded in peer groups that normalize higher education, and less likely to receive "just-in-time" advice — such as how to prepare for national exams or apply for scholarships (2005, p. 93–94). This absence reflects what Stanton-Salazar (2011, p. 1078) terms an "institutional sponsorship gap," where students without embedded advocates must navigate complex systems alone — a burden that compounds academic disadvantage. In Bourdieusian terms, this is not merely a lack of "help," but a deficit in the relational infrastructure that transmits *cultural capital* and mediates *habitus* — shaping not only what students know, but whether they believe success is attainable or "for people like them" (Reay, 2018, p. 47; Lareau, 2011, p. 165).

1.2.4.3 Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964):

Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Becker, 1964) frames education as a strategic investment — like financial or physical capital — where individuals (or families) expend time, effort, and resources expecting future returns: higher wages, mobility, and status (pp. 9–11). Wealthier, more educated families are better positioned to invest: they can delay employment, afford tutoring, and absorb academic setbacks without financial risk. Crucially, they are also more likely to *perceive* education as a reliable path to advancement — not from optimism, but from lived evidence: professional networks, visible career ladders (Becker, 1964, p. 15; Carnevale et al., 2020, p. 34). This perceived return fuels persistence — students who believe effort yields reward are more likely to seek help, endure hardship, and pursue credentials. Yet HCT's economistic model has been widely critiqued for assuming a level playing field. It neglects how *cultural capital*, *institutional bias*, and *habitus* determine who actually benefits — and for whom returns are structurally blocked (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 26; Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 132). In credentialist societies — Algeria, Egypt, Southern Europe — where degrees gatekeep stable

employment, these dynamics intensify. High-SES students treat higher education as low-risk, high-return; disadvantaged peers — lacking economic buffers, mentors, or institutional fluency — may rationally discount its value, even when academically capable (Reay, 2018, p. 51; Willis, 1977, p. 12; Benyahia, 2016, p. 73). Thus, what appears as differential "motivation" or "aspiration" often reflects *embodied structural advantage*. Educational investment does not pay off universally — but selectively, for those already equipped to navigate and extract value from the system.

1.3 Measuring Academic Performance in Secondary Education

1.3.1 Definition of academic performance

Academic performance is a multidimensional construct reflecting students' mastery of curricular objectives, typically assessed through standardized tests , course grades , completion rates , and competency-based evaluations (Pope & Sydnor, 2010; OECD, 2021). However, contemporary scholarship emphasizes a broader conceptualization that integrates cognitive skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving) and non-cognitive skills (e.g., perseverance, self-efficacy), recognizing their joint contribution to lifelong success (Duckworth et al., 2021; Kautz et al., 2022). This dual focus aligns with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) expanded definition of academic performance, which includes "skills for life" such as emotional resilience, collaboration, and adaptability (OECD, 2023).

1.3.2 Cognitive Skills: Cognitive skills refer to mental processes enabling knowledge acquisition, reasoning, and problem solving. Key components include:

- Working Memory : Retaining and manipulating information during tasks (e.g., solving math problems).
- Processing Speed : Efficiently analyzing and responding to stimuli (e.g., reading comprehension).

- Executive Functioning : Planning, organizing, and self-monitoring progress (e.g., time management for exams).
- Critical Thinking : Evaluating evidence and constructing logical arguments (e.g., essay writing).

These skills are strongly correlated with standardized test scores and subject-specific proficiency (Deary et al., 2022). For example, a 2023 meta-analysis found that executive functioning predicts 35% of variance in secondary school mathematics performance (Sätyr et al., 2023). However, cognitive development is mediated by environmental factors such as nutrition, early childhood stimulation, and access to enriched learning environments—all of which are disproportionately constrained in low-socioeconomic status (SES) households (Noble et al., 2022).

1.3.3 Non-Cognitive Skills: Non-cognitive skills encompass traits, behaviors, and attitudes that influence academic engagement and long-term outcomes. These include:

- Grit : Sustained passion and perseverance toward long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2021).
- Self-Regulation : Managing emotions, attention, and impulses to meet academic demands.
- Growth Mindset : Belief that abilities can be developed through effort (Dweck, 2022).
- Resilience : Adapting to setbacks and stressors without compromising performance.
- Social Competence : Collaborating effectively with peers and teachers.

Emerging research underscores the predictive power of non-cognitive skills for educational attainment and career readiness. A 2022 study across 15 countries of the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that students with high levels of grit were 40% more likely to pursue tertiary education, independent of IQ or family income (Heckman & Kautz, 2023). In low-SES contexts, however, chronic stress, food insecurity, and unstable home environments often impede the development of these skills (Hair et al., 2023). In Algeria, secondary students from rural areas report significantly lower self-efficacy scores due to overcrowded classrooms and limited teacher feedback, exacerbating achievement gaps (Benyahia & Guemara, 2023).

Cognitive and non-cognitive skills are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Cognitive skills enable students to process complex material, while non-cognitive skills sustain effort and adaptability in the face of challenges.

1.3.4 Common metrics and assessments in secondary schools

1.3.4.1 In the global context

Academic performance around the world is often evaluated through standardized national exams, which serve as key indicators of student achievement and educational quality at various stages of learning. These assessments are designed to be uniform across all participants within a country, ensuring that students meet set curriculum goals before progressing to higher levels of education or entering the workforce. They are typically administered at critical transition points such as the completion of primary or secondary schooling and are used for certification, selection into advanced programs, and informing policy decisions. While these exams provide a consistent and objective measure of learning outcomes, they can also place significant pressure on students and may not always reflect broader competencies such as creativity or problem-solving skills.

Another widely used method of evaluating academic progress is continuous assessment, which involves regularly measuring student performance throughout the academic year rather than relying solely on end-of-term examinations. This approach incorporates various forms of

evaluation — including assignments, class participation, quizzes, presentations, and project work — offering a more comprehensive and longitudinal view of students' abilities and academic development. Continuous assessment supports ongoing learning by providing timely feedback, encouraging consistent effort, and reducing the stress associated with high-stakes final exams. It also allows educators to identify and address learning gaps early, promoting deeper engagement with subject matter and fostering transferable skills.

International benchmarking assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) play a crucial role in comparing educational outcomes across countries. These assessments evaluate how well students can apply their knowledge to real-life situations — such as solving practical problems, interpreting data, or constructing reasoned arguments — and provide critical insights into the effectiveness of different education systems globally (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019, p. 23). By highlighting disparities and identifying successful policies and practices, international benchmarks help governments make informed decisions about curriculum reform, teacher training, and resource allocation. These studies are instrumental in shaping global education agendas and promoting improvements in teaching and learning worldwide.

Grade Point Averages (GPAs) provide a cumulative, numerical summary of students' academic performance over a defined period — typically calculated by converting letter grades into standardized point values and averaging them across courses (National Association for College Admission Counseling [NACAC], 2021, p. 7). Widely used in higher education and employment contexts, GPAs provide a straightforward way to compare student achievement within an institution or system. They reflect consistency, effort, and overall academic capability, making them a common criterion for scholarship awards, program admissions, and

job applications. While GPAs can give a general indication of academic success, they may not fully capture individual growth, specific talents, or non-cognitive skills such as resilience or leadership.

1.3.4.2 In Algeria

In Algeria, secondary education reaches its culmination in the Baccalaureate exam (Bac), a high-stakes national assessment that serves as the primary gateway to higher education (Benyahia, 2016). Administered at the end of the third year of secondary school, this standardized examination plays a pivotal role in determining students' academic futures, effectively separating those who qualify for university enrollment from those who do not (Bouabdellah, 2018). As such, the Baccalaureate functions not only as a measure of academic achievement but also as a decisive mechanism for social mobility. However, according to Kadi & Benamar (2020), systemic inequalities significantly affect students' readiness and performance on this critical exam. They state that learners from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds often face structural barriers — including limited access to preparatory resources, experienced tutors, and digital learning tools — that constrain their ability to compete on equal footing. These disparities are particularly pronounced in rural and underfunded urban schools, where inadequate infrastructure and teacher shortages compound existing challenges (Taleb, 2021). Consequently, students from lower-income families enter the examination hall already at a disadvantage, not due to lack of ability, but due to unequal opportunities in preparation and support. This inequity raises important concerns about the fairness and inclusivity of an exam-based system that purports to offer equal opportunity while reinforcing pre-existing educational divides (Mebarki, 2019).

1.4 The Relationship Between SES and Academic Performance

A substantial body of research consistently demonstrates a strong and enduring correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2010; Sirin,

2005). Students from higher SES backgrounds tend to outperform their lower-SES peers across a range of academic indicators, including standardized test scores, grade point averages, high school graduation rates, and aspirations for postsecondary education (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). This relationship is not limited to individual performance but also manifests at the institutional level, where schools serving predominantly low-SES populations often report lower average achievement levels and fewer resources compared to those in wealthier communities (OECD, 2018). This disparity arises from a complex interplay of interrelated mechanisms, including access to educational resources, home learning environments, parental involvement, and the influence of social and cultural capital. Each of these mechanisms contributes uniquely to shaping students' academic outcomes.

1.4.1 Differential Access to Educational Resources

Higher-SES families are more likely to afford private tutoring, enrichment programs, books, technology, and high-quality preschools—all of which contribute to early cognitive development and sustained academic success (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In contrast, children from lower-SES households may attend underfunded schools with outdated materials, larger class sizes, and less qualified teachers, limiting their opportunities for quality instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2014).

1.4.2 Home Learning Environments and Early Development

Children from higher-SES homes are typically exposed to richer language environments, greater access to reading materials, and more frequent engagement in cognitively stimulating activities such as museum visits or educational games (Hart & Risley, 1995). These early experiences lay the foundation for later academic skills and motivation to learn (NICHD, 2002).

1.4.3 Parental Involvement and Educational Expectations

Parents with higher SES are more likely to be actively involved in their children's schooling—attending parent-teacher conferences, advocating for better placement, and encouraging academic pursuits (Pomerantz et al., 2007). They also tend to hold higher educational aspirations for their children, which can positively influence students' own goals and self-efficacy beliefs (Davis-Kean, 2005).

1.4.4 Social and Cultural Capital as Mediating Factors

Social and cultural capital, as theorized by Bourdieu (1986), further explains this link. Cultural capital—such as familiarity with the norms and practices valued in formal education—can give higher-SES students an advantage in navigating school systems and performing well on assessments that reflect dominant cultural knowledge. Social capital, including access to networks of professionals and mentors, can open doors to internships, scholarships, and other opportunities that support academic and career advancement.

1.4.5 Cumulative Disadvantage and the Widening Achievement Gap

Importantly, these inequalities often exhibit a cumulative effect, meaning that early disadvantages—such as limited vocabulary exposure or poor-quality schooling—can compound over time, widening the achievement gap as students progress through the education system (Heckman, 2006). This cumulative nature underscores the importance of early intervention and equitable resource distribution to mitigate long-term disparities.

1.4.6 A Multidimensional Framework for Understanding and Addressing Inequality

To fully understand the relationship between SES and academic achievement, it is essential to adopt a multidimensional perspective that considers not only economic factors but also the broader sociocultural and institutional contexts in which education occurs (Reardon, 2011). Policies aimed at reducing educational inequality must therefore address systemic inequities in funding, teacher quality, access to technology, and family supports to ensure all

students have the opportunity to succeed academically, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

1.5 Mediators of the Relationship Between SES and Academic Performance

The influence of socioeconomic status on academic outcomes is mediated by several interrelated factors:

1.5.1 Psychological factors

Students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds often face heightened levels of stress due to a range of environmental and psychosocial challenges, including financial instability, housing insecurity, and emotional strain within the household (Evans & Kim, 2013). These conditions contribute to chronic stress, which has been shown to negatively affect cognitive functioning, particularly in domains such as working memory, attention, and self-regulation—key components for academic success (Noble, Houston, Brito, et al., 2015). Financial instability, for instance, may limit access to essential resources like nutritious food, healthcare, and learning materials, all of which are critical for optimal cognitive development and school readiness (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011).

Housing insecurity further exacerbates these challenges by contributing to frequent school changes, inconsistent attendance, and disrupted peer relationships, all of which undermine educational continuity and academic achievement (Obradović, Long, & Cutuli, 2009). Moreover, emotional strain within the family—often a result of economic hardship—can lead to higher rates of parental depression and interparental conflict, which in turn affect children's emotional well-being and behavioral regulation (Gershoff, Aber, & Raver, 2003).

Emotional well-being, therefore, emerges as a central mediator in the relationship between SES and academic outcomes. Psychological distress and untreated mental health issues can impair students' motivation, concentration, and ability to engage effectively with peers and

teachers (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). This underscores the importance of integrating mental health support and emotional well-being initiatives into educational frameworks to mitigate the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on student performance.

1.5.2 Access to educational resources

Access to essential educational resources—including books, computers, high-speed internet, and structured after-school programs—is disproportionately distributed across socioeconomic groups, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds often encountering significant barriers to acquiring the tools necessary for academic success (Reardon, 2011). These disparities are not merely logistical inconveniences but represent structural inequities that directly influence students' cognitive development, academic engagement, and long-term achievement.

Limited access to books at home has been consistently linked to reduced reading proficiency and vocabulary development, which are foundational for academic performance across subjects (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2018). Students from low-SES households are less likely to have age-appropriate reading materials available, which limits opportunities for informal literacy practice and diminishes exposure to diverse ideas and language structures (Neuman & Celano, 2001). This "book gap" contributes to early and persistent disparities in reading comprehension and knowledge acquisition.

Similarly, unequal access to digital technologies—such as computers and reliable internet—has become increasingly consequential in an era where technology plays a central role in education. The so-called "digital divide" exacerbates existing inequalities by limiting students' ability to complete homework assignments, conduct research, and engage with online learning platforms (Attewell & Battle, 2012). Without consistent access to digital tools, students from lower SES backgrounds may fall behind their peers in both technological literacy and subject-specific content mastery (Van Dijk, 2020).

After-school programs also serve as critical mediators of academic success by providing academic tutoring, enrichment activities, and supervised environments conducive to learning. However, children from low-income families are less likely to participate in such programs due to financial constraints, transportation challenges, or lack of availability in their communities (Mahoney, Parente, & Lord, 2008). As a result, they miss out on opportunities for academic reinforcement, social skill development, and mentorship—factors that significantly influence school performance and future educational attainment (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010).

These resource disparities reflect broader systemic inequalities rooted in unequal school funding, neighborhood segregation, and underinvestment in schools serving marginalized populations (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Schools in low-income areas often have fewer qualified teachers, outdated instructional materials, and inadequate infrastructure, further compounding the disadvantages faced by students outside the classroom.

Addressing these inequities requires targeted policy interventions, including the expansion of public library services, provision of digital devices and internet access, investment in high-quality after-school programming, and equitable school funding reforms. Ensuring that all students have access to the material and institutional supports necessary for learning is essential for promoting educational equity and reducing achievement gaps tied to socioeconomic status.

1.5.3 School environment and peer influence

The school environment plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic trajectories, with factors such as teacher quality, classroom dynamics, and peer interactions significantly influencing educational outcomes (Lee & Smith, 1997). Students attending under-resourced schools often face systemic disadvantages, including larger class sizes, limited instructional

support, and fewer opportunities for academic enrichment, all of which can hinder effective learning and contribute to lower achievement levels (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Teacher quality is one of the most influential school-based determinants of student achievement. High-quality teachers are more effective at delivering instruction, managing classrooms, and adapting to diverse learning needs, which leads to improved academic performance (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). However, under-resourced schools frequently struggle to attract and retain experienced and well-qualified educators due to lower salaries, inadequate administrative support, and challenging working conditions (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). As a result, students in these settings may receive less effective instruction, which limits their academic growth and exacerbates existing opportunity gaps.

Classroom dynamics , particularly class size , also play a significant mediating role in student learning. Smaller classes allow for more individualized attention, increased student participation, and stronger teacher-student relationships, all of which contribute to enhanced academic engagement and achievement (Finn & Achilles, 1999). In contrast, large class sizes—common in under-resourced schools—can overwhelm teachers, reduce instructional time, and diminish students' opportunities to ask questions and receive timely feedback. This dynamic disproportionately affects students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may already require additional support to succeed academically.

Instructional support , including access to special education services, tutoring, and differentiated instruction, further mediates academic success by addressing individual learning needs. Schools serving low-income communities often lack sufficient support staff and resources to provide targeted interventions for struggling learners, leading to unmet academic needs and higher rates of disengagement (O'Day, 2002).

Peer interactions also serve as a critical mediator of academic motivation and performance. The presence of peers who value academic achievement can foster a culture of

learning and encourage pro-academic behaviors through social modeling and norm setting (Wentzel, 2009). Conversely, when students are surrounded by peers who exhibit low academic aspirations or disengagement, they may be more likely to adopt similar attitudes, particularly if there is a lack of positive reinforcement for academic effort (Jeynes, 2010). Moreover, the absence of positive academic role models among peers and within the broader school community can limit students' perceptions of what is achievable, contributing to lowered self-efficacy and reduced educational aspirations (Bandura, 1997).

Additionally, enrichment activities —such as arts programs, extracurricular clubs, and advanced coursework—play a vital role in fostering student engagement and deepening cognitive development. These opportunities not only reinforce curricular content but also promote creativity, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). However, under-resourced schools are less likely to offer such programs due to budget constraints and a focus on basic skills instruction, thereby limiting students' exposure to holistic learning experiences that support long-term academic success.

Together, these environmental factors reflect broader systemic inequities in educational provision, wherein resource-poor schools struggle to provide the supportive and stimulating environments necessary for optimal student development. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive reforms aimed at improving teacher recruitment and retention, reducing class sizes, expanding access to instructional support, and fostering positive peer cultures that promote academic engagement.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding how socioeconomic status shapes academic performance, particularly within the context of secondary education. By exploring key concepts such as parental income, education, and family size, and by examining how these factors interact with psychological, environmental, and institutional variables, the chapter establishes a robust framework for analyzing educational inequality.

It also underscores the necessity of addressing structural barriers that limit the academic potential of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The next chapter will present the research methodology, detailing the design, data collection procedures, and analytical strategies employed in the study.

Chapter Two: Field Work

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this study, detailing the data collection and analysis techniques used to address the research objectives. A well-structured methodology ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, while the subsequent data analysis provides meaningful insights into the research problem. The discussion section interprets the results, linking them to existing literature and evaluating their implications. By integrating methodology, analysis, and discussion, this chapter presents a comprehensive examination of the study's outcomes, contributing to the broader understanding of the topic.

2.2 Methodology and Research Design

2.2.1 Research Method

This section outlines the methodological framework employed to explore how socioeconomic factors affect Algerian Secondary School students' academic performance, using Djoudi Ahmed as a case study. The study uses a mixed-methods design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a full understanding of the research topic. This method supports the idea that mixing numerical data with personal experiences gives a clearer picture of complex issues (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).By using both types of data, the study examines how factors like parents' education, family income, and access to learning materials influence student performance. The decision to use both methods came from the need to measure how much socioeconomic status affects academic outcomes and understand those effects through real-life stories.

2.2.2 The population and study sample

The study population comprises 223 secondary school students enrolled at Djoudi Ahmed School, where the researcher serves as a teacher. The researcher chose three classes.

These classes represent various academic levels and branches, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of socioeconomic factors on academic performance. The total number of students across these three classes is 57 (25.56%). The sample was purposefully selected to serve as the primary participants in the study.

This choice was based on several key considerations. First, students in these classes are at varying stages of their secondary education, which allows for an exploration of how socioeconomic factors may influence academic achievement across different educational levels. Second, the diversity in academic branches enables the researcher to examine potential differences in how such factors affect students pursuing different areas of study. Additionally, being within a familiar institutional context facilitates access to relevant data and enhances the feasibility of data collection. Finally, these students are at a critical phase in their academic development, where external factors—particularly socioeconomic ones—are likely to have a noticeable impact on learning outcomes. Therefore, selecting these classes aligns with the exploratory nature of the research and supports the investigation into how socioeconomic factors shape academic performance among secondary school learners.

2.3 Research Instruments

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, this study adopted the triangulation method, utilizing multiple data sources to investigate the impact of socioeconomic factors on learners' academic performance. As noted by Cohen and Manion (2007), relying on a single research instrument is inadequate; employing diverse methods enables researchers to cross-validate data, examine the issue from different angles, and draw more robust conclusions.

This study actively employed two key instruments to collect data. First, the researchers administered a questionnaire to secondary school students to gather information on their

socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., family income, parental education, and access to learning resources) and their perceived effects on academic performance. Second, the researchers conducted a second questionnaire with randomly selected teachers to elicit their perspectives on how socioeconomic conditions influence students' learning outcomes.

2.3.1. Students' Questionnaire

2.3.1.1. Description of Students' Questionnaire

The student questionnaire was designed as a structured mixed-methods instrument to systematically collect quantitative and qualitative data on learners' socioeconomic contexts and their perceived influence on academic outcomes. It comprises four integrated domains: (1) *Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile*, capturing household income, parental education and occupational status, family size, and access to educational resources; (2) *Academic Performance Self-Assessment*, measuring self-reported grades, study behaviors, and perceived barriers such as financial constraints and institutional resource adequacy; (3) *Learning Environment Factors*, assessing parental involvement, school attendance, extracurricular engagement, and intrinsic motivation; and (4) *Open-Ended Responses*, designed to elicit qualitative, contextualized insights into socioeconomic barriers or support systems. To enable both standardized quantitative analysis and rich qualitative exploration, the tool combines Likert-scale items (1–5 ordinal ratings) and closed-ended questions with open-ended prompts.This dual-methodology preserved the rigor of measurable trends while capturing the lived experiences of students, enabling a multidimensional exploration of how structural inequities and personal agency intersect to shape academic trajectories.

2.3.1.2. Administration of Students' Questionnaire

Student questionnaires were personally administered by the principal investigator during regular class sessions to ensure methodological precision and procedural uniformity. Prior to distribution, students received standardized verbal instructions clarifying that participation was entirely voluntary, that they could decline or withdraw at any time without academic consequence, and that all responses would remain strictly anonymous with no personally identifiable information collected. Surveys were completed and immediately collected under direct supervision within classroom settings to eliminate external influence, preserve confidentiality, and maintain data integrity. This protocol was rigorously implemented across all sampling sites to align with ethical research standards for minor participants while ensuring methodological rigor.

2.3.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

2.3.2.1. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was designed to capture teachers' perceptions of how socioeconomic factors influence students' academic performance. Combining closed-ended (multiple-choice, Likert-scale) and open-ended items, the instrument enabled both quantitative analysis and qualitative depth. Section 1 gathered demographic data (gender, teaching experience, grade levels taught). Section 2 probed teachers' observations on how students' socioeconomic backgrounds shape classroom engagement, behavior, and learning attitudes — particularly regarding family support, resource access, and absenteeism. Section 3 assessed perceived links between specific variables (e.g., family income, parental education) and academic outcomes. Section 4 evaluated existing school interventions — such as feeding programs, tutoring, and material aid — while identifying systemic gaps. The final, open-ended section invited reflections on challenges, successes, instructional adaptations, and policy recommendations.

This mixed-format design supported methodological triangulation, pairing trend data with contextual insights. A pilot test with 11 teachers refined clarity and validity prior to full deployment. The finalized tool thus offers a comprehensive lens for analyzing the socioeconomic-academic nexus and pinpointing actionable intervention points.

2.3.2.2. Administration of teachers' questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaires were personally administered by the principal investigator during designated staff meetings within the school setting. Participation was strictly voluntary, with verbal consent confirmed prior to distribution and explicit assurances of complete anonymity (all data anonymized via unique participant identifiers; no personally identifiable information was collected). Surveys were distributed and collected immediately under direct supervision to ensure procedural consistency, eliminate external influence, and preserve data integrity. Following a pilot test with 11 teachers to refine instrument clarity, the final questionnaire was administered to all eligible teaching staff, with the majority responding positively and voluntarily. All administration protocols strictly adhered to institutional research ethics guidelines, with particular emphasis on safeguarding confidentiality and upholding voluntary participation standards.

2.4 Data analysis and interpretation

2.4.1 Data analysis

2.4.1.1 Analysis of Students' questionnaire

This part deals with the analysis of the students' questionnaire findings.

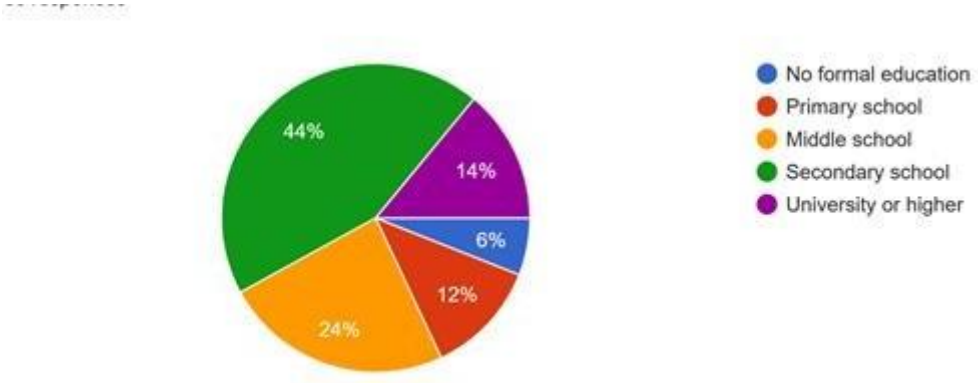
<u>Section one</u>: Demographic Information

- **Q1,2 and 3.**

According to the results, the 50 students are divided into the three levels. There are 34 female students (68%) and 16 male students (32%). The majority of students (50%) are between the age of 16 and 17, (30%) are between 18 and 19, (18%) are between 15 and 16 while (2%) are over 20. All the students study at a suburban school.

<u>Section two</u>: family background and socioeconomic status

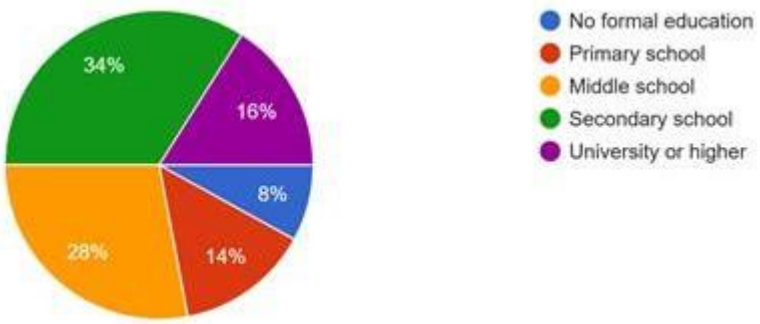
Figure 1: Fathers' Education Level



The pie chart presenting the distribution of fathers' highest level of educational attainment among 50 respondents indicates that the majority, at 44%, completed secondary school, reflecting a relatively high level of formal education. A substantial proportion, 24%, attained education up to the middle school level, while 14% reached university level, signifying a degree of higher educational achievement within this sample. In contrast, 12% of fathers completed only primary school, and a smaller segment, accounting for 6%, had no formal

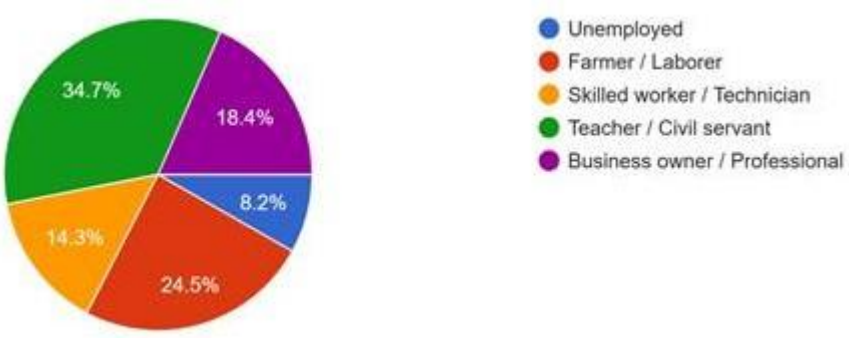
education. Collectively, these findings suggest that, although most fathers have attained at least a secondary level of education, there exists variability in educational backgrounds, potentially influenced by socio-economic factors, generational differences, and contextual barriers to educational access.

Figure 2: Mothers' Education Level



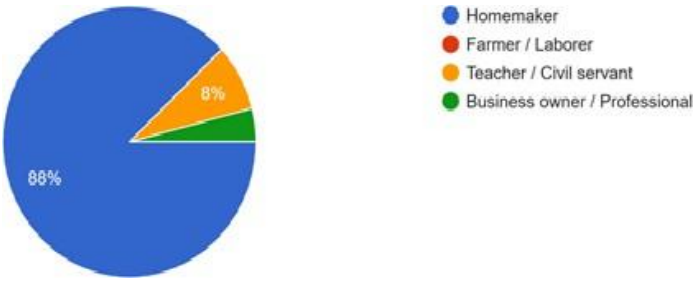
The pie chart shows the distribution of the highest level of education completed by respondents' mothers, based on 50 responses. The largest segment (34%) indicates that the most common level of education is secondary school, followed by middle school at 28%. A smaller proportion (16%) completed university or higher, while 14% reached primary school, and only 8% had no formal education. This suggests that mothers in this sample generally have moderate levels of education, with secondary schooling being the most prevalent.

Figure 3: Fathers' primary occupation



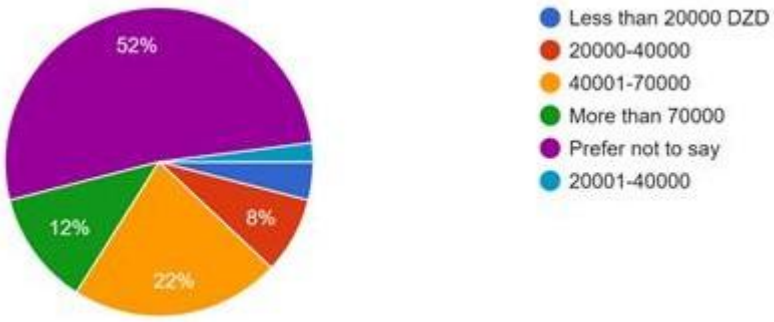
The pie chart illustrates the primary occupation of respondents' fathers, based on 49 responses. The largest segment (34.7%) indicates that the most common occupation is Teacher / Civil servant, followed by Farmer / Laborer at 24.5%. A significant portion (18.4%) are Skilled workers / Technicians, while a smaller percentage (8.2%) are Business owners / Professionals. Only 4.1% are listed as Unemployed. This suggests that professional and skilled occupations dominate among fathers in this sample, with teaching and civil service being particularly prevalent.

Figure 4: Mothers' primary occupation



The pie chart shows the primary occupation of respondents' mothers, based on 50 responses. The data reveals a stark distribution: 88% of mothers are classified as Homemakers , indicating that the majority do not engage in formal employment outside the home. The remaining occupations are distributed as follows: 8% are Teachers or Civil servants, while smaller proportions (less than 4%) are Business owners / Professionals . This suggests that traditional roles, where mothers primarily manage household responsibilities, are predominant in this sample.

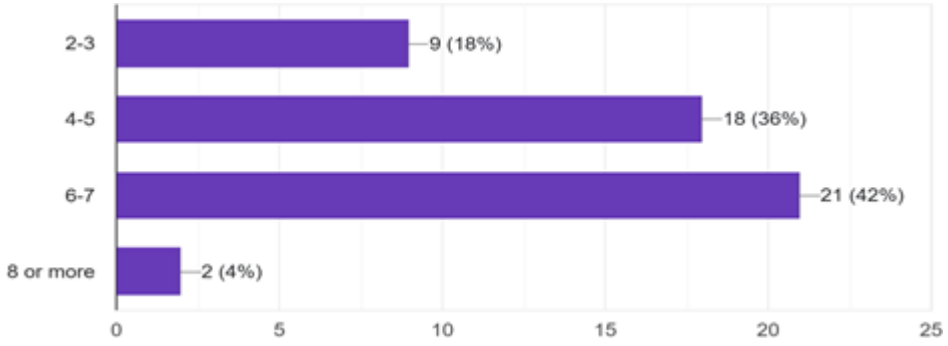
Figure 5: Monthly family income



The pie chart illustrates the distribution of respondents' monthly family income based on 50 responses. A majority (52%) preferred not to disclose their income, highlighting sensitivity

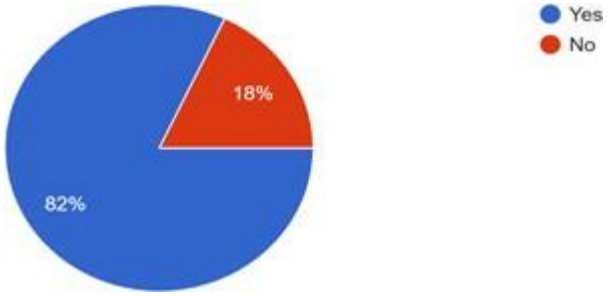
around financial matters. Among those who provided information, 22% reported earning between 40,001–70,000 DZD , 12% earned more than 70,000 DZD , 10% earned 20,000–40,000 DZD , and only 4% earned less than 20,000 DZD . This suggests that most respondents belong to moderate to higher income brackets, with very few in the lowest category.

Figure 6: Number of people living in your household



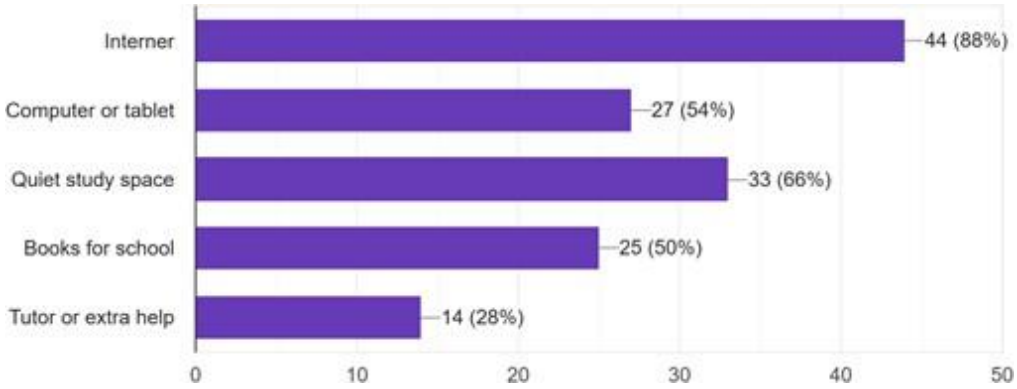
The bar chart shows the distribution of household sizes based on 50 responses. The data reveals that the most common household size is 6–7 people , accounting for 42% of respondents. This is followed by households with 4–5 people (36%), while smaller households with 2–3 people make up 18%. Only 4% of resondents reported living in households with 8 or more people . This suggests that medium to large households are prevalent in this sample, indicating a tendency toward larger family units or shared living arrangements.

Figure 7: study room availability at home



The pie chart shows the responses to the question, "Do you have your own room to study in at home?" based on 50 respondents. The data reveals a stark contrast: 82% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating they have their own room for studying, while only 18% answered "No." This suggests that the majority of respondents have access to a dedicated study space at home, which could positively impact their academic performance and focus.

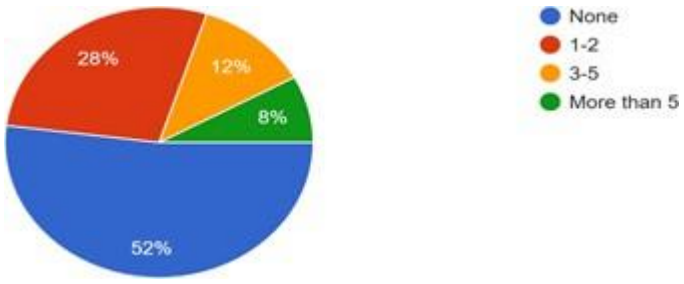
Figure 8: The availability of some resources at home



The bar chart, based on responses from 50 students, highlights varying levels of access to educational resources at home. Internet access is the most common, with 88% of respondents having connectivity, and 66% reporting a quiet study space, indicating generally supportive learning environments. However, access to supplementary tools like tutoring is limited, with only 28% receiving extra help, while just half have access to school-related books. Around half also have a computer or tablet available, pointing to moderate access to digital devices. Overall, the data reveals that while basic resources are largely present, more specialized support remains less accessible for many students.

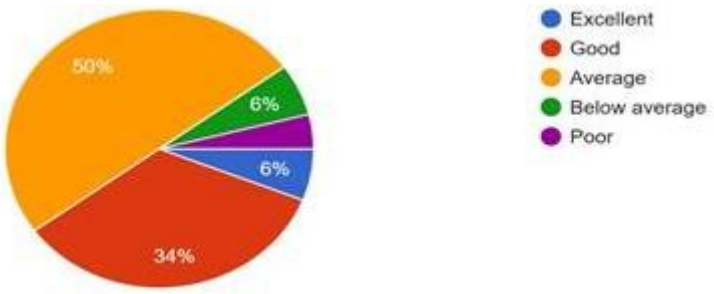
<u>Section three</u>: School Attendance and Performance

Figure 9: Number of days missed per month



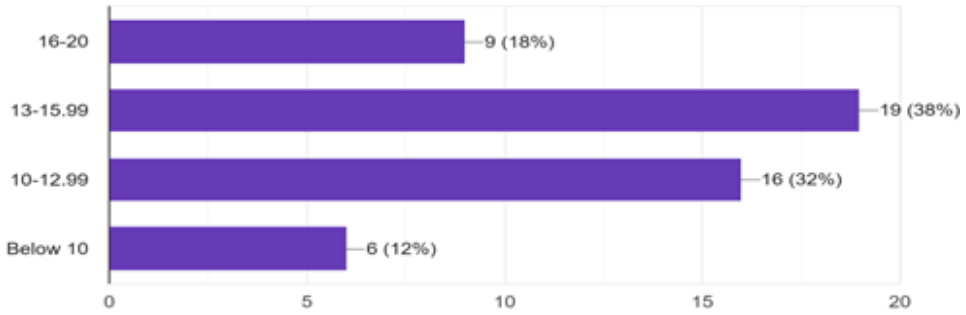
The pie chart, based on responses from 50 students, shows the frequency of school absences per month. Over half of the respondents (52%) report not missing any school days, reflecting a generally high level of attendance. However, nearly half (48%) do experience some absenteeism, with 28% missing 1–2 days and 12% missing 3–5 days each month. A small but notable 8% miss more than five days, indicating that while most students attend regularly, a significant minority face ongoing challenges that affect their school attendance.

Figure 10: Self-assessment of academic performance



The pie chart, based on 50 students' self-assessments of their academic performance across five categories—Excellent , Good , Average , Below average , and Poor —reveals that a large majority (84%) perceive their performance as either "Average" (50%) or "Good" (34%) , indicating a generally moderate yet positive self-evaluation. This central tendency suggests that most students view themselves as performing within expected academic norms without significant overestimation or underestimation of their abilities. Only a small proportion (6%) rate themselves as "Excellent" , which may reflect humility, high personal standards, or social desirability bias, wherein high-achieving students avoid appearing overly confident. Meanwhile, 12% classify themselves as "Below average" or "Poor" , signaling potential issues related to academic self-confidence, motivation, or access to support systems. These perceptions may be influenced by learning challenges, external stressors, or insufficient academic resources, underscoring the need for targeted interventions such as differentiated instruction, tutoring, or counseling. Overall, the data reflects a largely balanced perception of academic performance among students, with implications for educators in tailoring pedagogical strategies and support mechanisms to address diverse learning needs and enhance both achievement and self-concept.

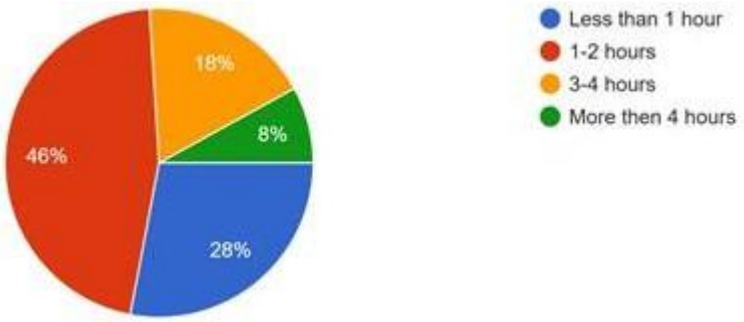
Figure 11: Average grades in core subjects



The bar chart, based on data from 50 students, shows the distribution of average grades in core subjects such as Arabic, Math, and French. A small but notable 18% achieve top grades between 16 and 20, while the largest group—38%—falls within the 13–15.99 range, indicating solid performance without reaching the highest level. A significant portion (32%) scores between 10 and 12.99, reflecting moderate achievement, and only 12% score below 10, suggesting that few students are struggling academically. Overall, the data reflects a generally positive academic performance across the group, with most students scoring above average, though a minority may benefit from additional support to improve further.

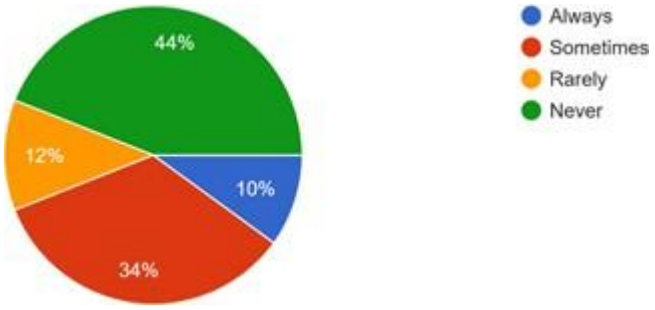
Section four: Attitudes and Study Habits

Figure 12: Study habits outside of school



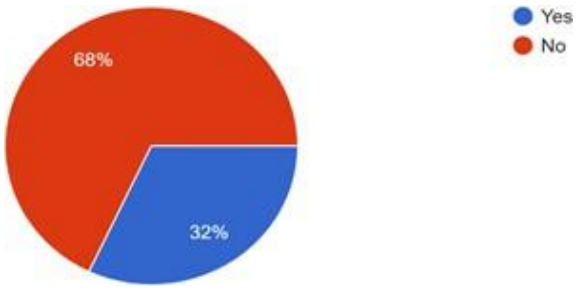
The pie chart, based on responses from 50 students, reveals varying study habits outside of school. Nearly half (46%) spend 1–2 hours studying daily, while 18% dedicate 3–4 hours and 8% study more than 4 hours, indicating a general trend toward moderate to high commitment. However, a considerable minority—28%—study less than an hour each day, highlighting notable differences in time management or motivation among students. Overall, 74% fall within the 1- to 4-hour range, suggesting that while most engage in regular self-study, there remains a significant portion with limited study time.

Figure 13: parental involvement in homework



The pie chart, based on 50 responses, reflects the frequency of parental involvement in students' homework. A majority of students—78%—report that their parents either never (44%) or only sometimes (34%) check or help with homework, indicating a general trend toward independence in managing academic tasks. Only a small fraction, 12%, say their parents rarely assist, while just 10% receive consistent support from their parents. This data suggests that while most students take primary responsibility for their homework, a minority experience regular parental engagement, highlighting varying levels of home-based academic support.

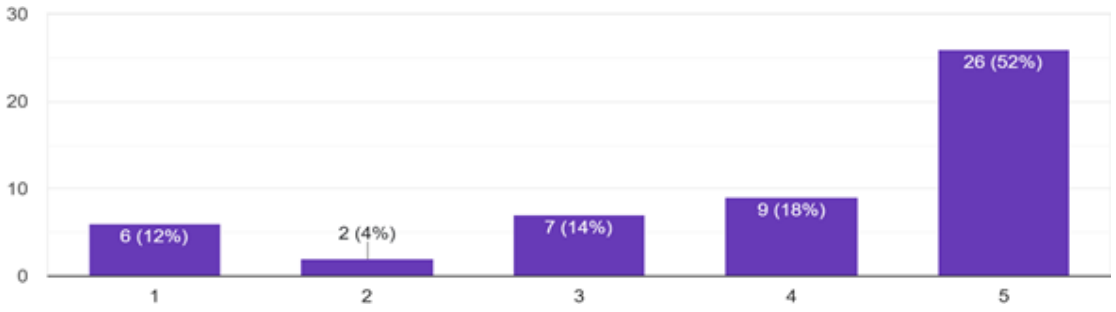
Figure 14: Participation in private lessons outside of school



The pie chart, based on responses from 50 students, shows that 68% do not take private lessons outside of school, while 32% do, indicating that although the majority rely solely on classroom

instruction, a significant minority seek additional academic support through tutoring. This reflects differing levels of investment in external learning resources, with some students accessing extra help to supplement their education beyond the standard school curriculum.

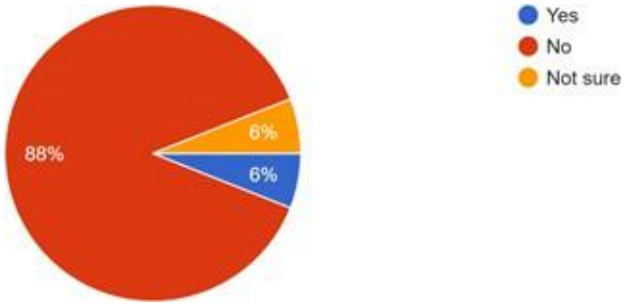
Figure 15: Academic motivation levels



The bar chart, based on responses from 50 students, shows a generally high level of academic motivation, with 52% rating their motivation at the highest level (5 out of 5), indicating strong enthusiasm and commitment to academic success. A further 18% rated their motivation as 4, reflecting a solid drive to perform well. However, a smaller but notable portion—16%—rated their motivation at the lowest levels (1 or 2), suggesting that some students may lack engagement or face challenges that affect their drive. Overall, while most students express high motivation, there remains a minority who could benefit from additional encouragement or support.

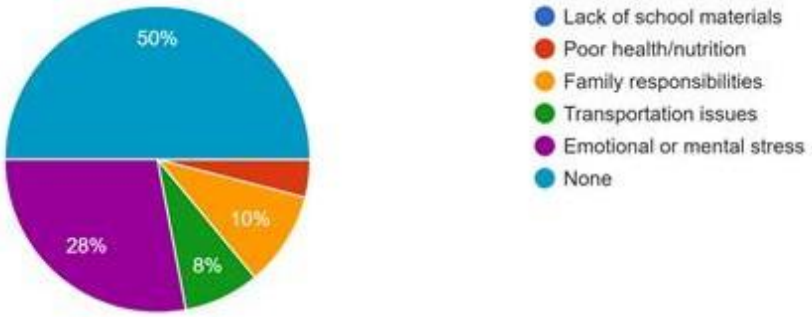
<u>Section five</u>: Attitudes and Study Habits

Figure 16: Impact of family financial situation on school performance



The pie chart, based on 50 responses, reveals that 88% of students believe their family's financial situation affects their school performance, pointing to a strong perception that socioeconomic factors play a key role in academic outcomes. A small minority (6%) feel that finances have no impact, while another 6% are unsure, highlighting the varying degrees of awareness and experience among respondents. This data underscores the significant influence of economic conditions on education and suggests the importance of addressing financial barriers to support student success.

Figure 17: Key challenges affecting student learning



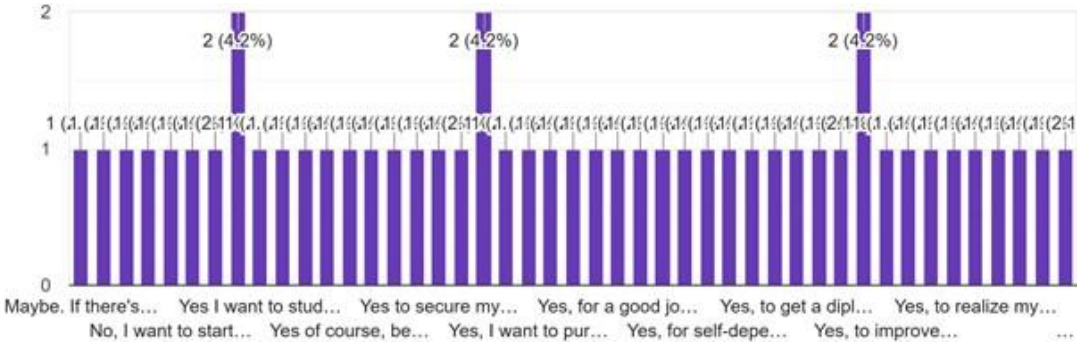
The pie chart, based on 50 responses where multiple selections were allowed, shows that half of the students (50%) do not perceive any major challenges affecting their learning, suggesting a generally supportive learning environment for many. However, among those who did identify obstacles, emotional or mental stress was the most common issue at 28%, followed by family responsibilities (10%) and transportation difficulties (8%), indicating that personal and logistical factors play a notable role in disrupting learning for some students. Fewer respondents cited poor health or nutrition (4%) or a lack of school materials (2%), pointing to relatively minor concerns in comparison. Overall, the data highlights the need for comprehensive support systems that address both psychological well-being and practical barriers to ensure equitable educational outcomes.

Figure 18: Support strategies for low-income students (Insights)

The bar chart, based on 45 responses to a question about how schools or the government can help low-income students perform better, reveals a range of suggested interventions. While most ideas received only one response each, indicating diverse opinions, the most frequently mentioned suggestion—selected by 6.7% of respondents—was providing scholarships, highlighting the perceived importance of financial support in addressing educational inequality.

Other proposals included offering free school supplies, books, and psychological support, as well as broader measures like financial aid for families and access to necessary resources. Together, these responses reflect an understanding that improving outcomes for disadvantaged students requires a multifaceted approach, combining financial assistance, material support, and emotional well-being initiatives.

Figure 19: Intentions to Pursue Higher Education



The bar chart, based on 48 responses regarding the intention to pursue higher education, indicates that a strong majority (39 respondents, or approximately 81.25%) are motivated to continue their studies at the university level. The primary reasons cited include securing better job opportunities, enhancing skills, personal development, and intellectual growth, reflecting a combination of practical, intrinsic, and aspirational motivations. A smaller group (approximately 18.75%) expressed uncertainty or indicated plans to enter the workforce directly, often due to financial or personal constraints. These findings highlight both the high value placed on higher education as a pathway to success and the presence of contextual barriers that influence students' decisions. The diversity in aspirations and circumstances underscores the need for flexible institutional support systems—such as career counseling, financial aid, and alternative learning pathways—to accommodate varying educational and vocational goals.

2.4.1.2 Analysis of the teachers' questionnaire

This part deals with the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire findings:

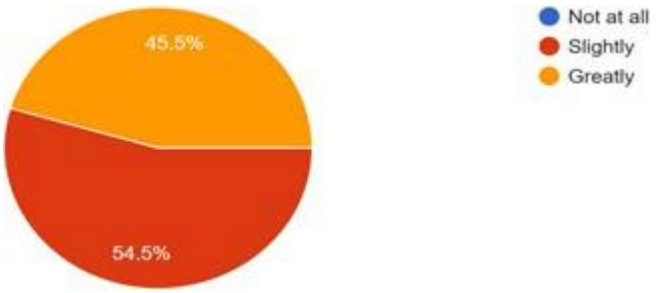
<u>Section one</u>: Demographic Information

Q1,2 and 3

This section provides a concise overview of the demographic and professional characteristics of a group of 11 educators. The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with a slight majority being male (54.5%) compared to female (45.5%), indicating a relatively diverse sample in terms of gender representation. When it comes to teaching experience, the majority of respondents have more than 10 years of experience (63.6%), while only a small proportion fall into the 1–5 or 6–10 years categories (each at 18.2%), highlighting that the group is largely composed of experienced educators. In terms of the grade levels they teach, the data shows that most teachers are involved in instructing both second-year and third-year students (72.7% for each), while fewer are responsible for first-year classes (36.4%). This suggests a concentration of expertise at the more advanced grade levels, which may reflect subject specialization or institutional structure. Overall, the data paints a picture of an experienced and predominantly male teaching body, primarily engaged in upper-grade instruction, offering insights into the composition and potential focus areas for professional development or resource allocation within the educational setting.

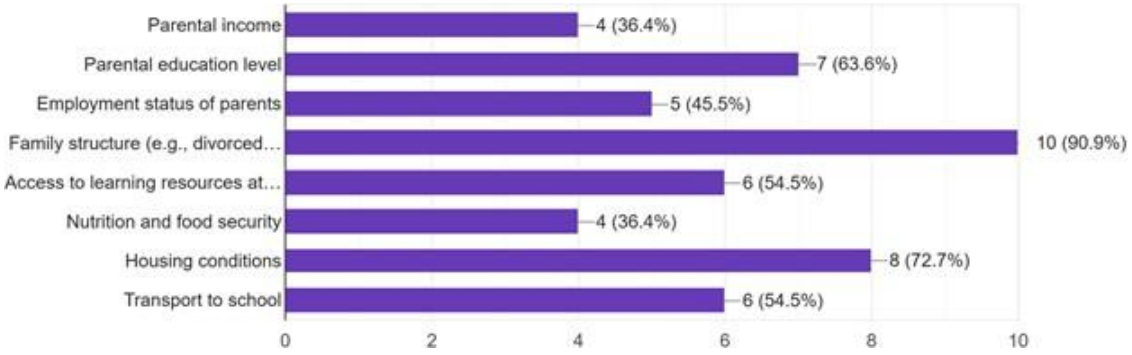
<u>Section two</u>: General observations

Figure 20: Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Academic Performance



The pie chart, based on responses from 11 participants, shows a general consensus that socioeconomic factors influence academic performance, with 54.5% believing the impact is moderate ("Slightly") and 45.5% viewing it as significant ("Greatly"). Notably, no one selected "Not at all," indicating that all respondents recognize some level of effect. The data highlights an overall awareness of the role that economic and social conditions play in education, though opinions vary on the extent of their influence.

Figure 21: Key Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Learners

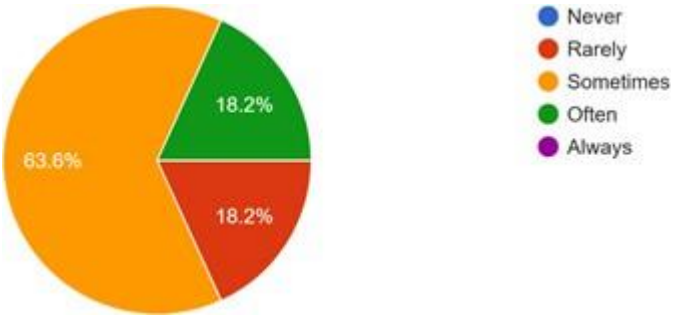


The bar chart, based on responses from 11 participants, highlights the key socioeconomic factors perceived to affect learners. Family structure (e.g., single-parent or divorced households) was identified as the most influential factor, with 90.9% (10 out of 11 respondents) selecting it. This suggests that household dynamics significantly impact students' emotional

stability and academic engagement. Housing conditions followed closely at 72.7% (8 respondents), indicating concerns about unsafe or unstable living environments affecting student well-being. A majority also pointed to parental education level (63.6%, 7 respondents) and access to learning resources at home (54.5%, 6 respondents), underscoring the role of home-based academic support in educational outcomes. Transportation challenges and parental employment status were also notable, each selected by over half of the respondents, reflecting logistical and economic barriers to consistent school attendance and engagement. Fewer respondents cited nutrition (36.4%) and parental income (36.4%), though these still represent essential basic needs that influence cognitive development and overall readiness to learn. The data reveals an interconnected web of social and environmental influences, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach in educational planning and intervention design.

<u>Section three</u>: Specific Impact on Academic Performance

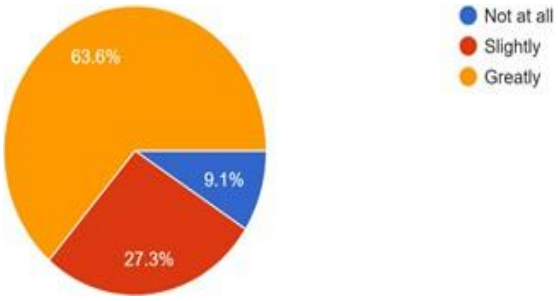
Figure 22: Frequency of Observing Academic Struggles Among Low-Income Students Compared to Their Peers



The pie chart illustrates the responses based on 11 respondents. The data reveals a clear pattern in how frequently educators observe academic struggles among students from low-income backgrounds. A significant majority (63.6%) reported noticing this issue "Sometimes," indicating that it is a recurring but not constant challenge. Additionally, 18.2% of respondents noted that they "Rarely" observe such struggles, while another 18.2% indicated that they

"Often" see these academic disparities. Notably, no respondents selected "Never" or "Always," suggesting that while the issue is acknowledged as present, it is not perceived as universally pervasive or entirely absent. Overall, the data highlights that educators recognize academic struggles among low-income students as a frequent occurrence, though the frequency varies across individuals, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the impact of socioeconomic factors on educational outcomes.

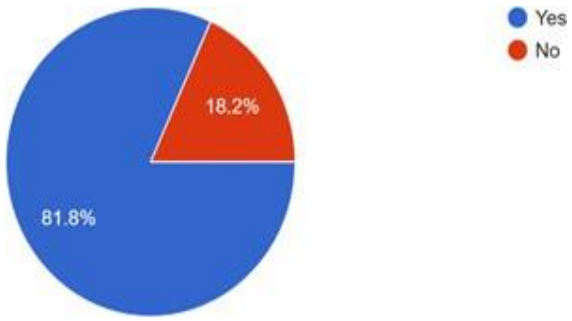
Figure 23: Impact of Lack of Basic Resources on Students' Learning in Classes



The pie chart illustrates the responses based on 11 respondents. A majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated that the lack of such resources impacts students' learning "Greatly," suggesting a strong perception among educators that access to fundamental materials at home plays a crucial role in academic performance. A smaller portion (27.3%) reported a "Slight" impact, implying that while they acknowledge the presence of resource limitations, they may not view it as severely hindering learning in their classrooms. Only one respondent (9.1%) believed that the absence of basic resources had no noticeable effect, indicating a near-universal recognition of the challenges associated with material deprivation. Overall, the data reflects a prevailing consensus among educators that insufficient access to essential learning tools at home significantly hampers students' ability to engage effectively with classroom instruction,

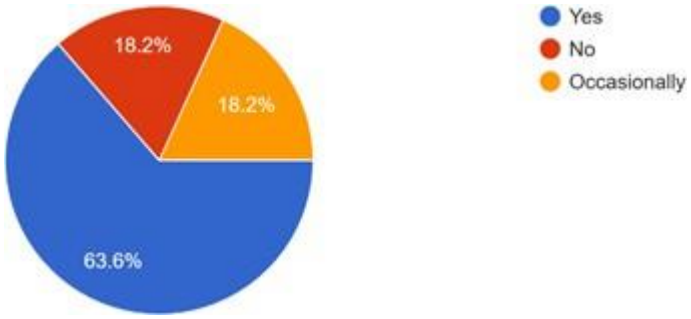
reinforcing the broader understanding that socioeconomic factors play a critical role in shaping educational outcomes.

Figure 24: Impact of Limited Parental Support on Students' Academic Performance



The pie chart presents the results based on 11 responses. The data reveals a clear consensus among educators regarding the impact of reduced parental support on academic performance. A substantial majority (81.8%) agreed that students with less parental support due to factors such as illiteracy or long work hours tend to perform lower academically. This indicates a strong belief among respondents that parental involvement plays a critical role in student success. Conversely, only 18.2% of respondents disagreed, suggesting that while not all educators view this issue as universally impactful, the overwhelming majority recognize its significance. Overall, the findings highlight the perceived correlation between limited parental support and academic underperformance, emphasizing the importance of addressing family-related challenges to improve educational outcomes for vulnerable students.

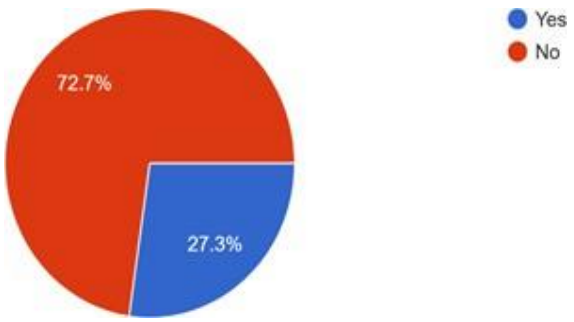
Figure 25: Observation of Emotional or Behavioral Issues in Students Related to Socioeconomic Background



The pie chart presents responses based on 11 respondents. A majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated that they have indeed observed such issues, highlighting a strong perception among educators that socioeconomic factors significantly influence students' emotional and behavioral development. A smaller portion (18.2%) reported not noticing these patterns, while the remaining 18.2% responded with "Occasionally," suggesting that while the link is not always apparent, it is still recognized as a recurring concern. Overall, the data reflects a prevailing awareness among respondents of the psychological and social challenges faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, reinforcing the need for targeted support mechanisms within the educational environment.

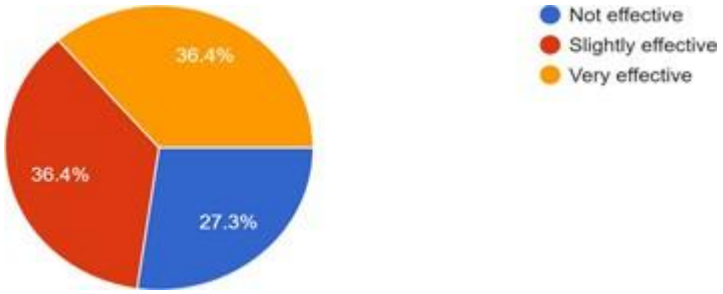
<u>Section four</u>: Support and Interventions

Figure 26: Availability of Support Programs for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Learners at School



The pie chart illustrates the responses based on 11 respondents. A majority (72.7%) indicated that their schools do not have such support programs, suggesting a significant gap in addressing the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Conversely, 27.3% reported that their schools do offer support programs for these learners. This data highlights a concerning lack of systemic support for disadvantaged students in many educational settings, emphasizing the need for increased investment in targeted interventions and resources to bridge socioeconomic disparities in education.

Figure 27: Perceived Effectiveness of School Interventions in Mitigating Socioeconomic Disadvantages



The pie chart, based on 11 responses, illustrates varied perceptions regarding the effectiveness of school-based interventions in addressing socioeconomic challenges. A notable portion (36.4%) perceives these interventions as "Slightly effective," acknowledging some positive impact while recognizing their limited reach or sustainability. An equal percentage (36.4%) views them as "Very effective," indicating strong support for their role in mitigating educational disparities. However, 27.3% of respondents consider the interventions "Not effective," expressing skepticism about their capacity to meaningfully address deep-rooted socioeconomic barriers. This skepticism may stem from factors such as insufficient funding, lack of long-term planning, inadequate alignment with students' real-life challenges, or inconsistent implementation across different contexts. These mixed perceptions underscore the complexity of tackling socioeconomic disparities through school programs, highlighting the need for more targeted, adaptable, and adequately resourced interventions.

Q12. What additional support do you think schools or education departments could provide to help these learners?

This open-ended question aims to capture participants' perspectives on potential institutional interventions to mitigate the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on student learning.

Responses from nine participants reveal a consensus around the need for holistic, multi-tiered support systems. A significant proportion (33%) advocated for enhanced academic support, including tutoring programs and remedial "booster" lessons to reinforce foundational skills. An equal share (33%) underscored the critical role of psychological and social services — particularly school-based counseling and emotional support — to address the non-academic stressors affecting disadvantaged learners. Financial assistance, such as scholarships or targeted aid for low-income families, was cited by 22% of respondents as a vital intervention. A smaller but notable group (12%) recommended structural investments, such as equitable funding for under-resourced schools and the provision of free learning materials, to level the playing field.

Collectively, these responses reflect a clear demand for comprehensive, integrated support strategies that simultaneously address academic, emotional, and material barriers to educational success. The findings suggest that effective intervention must extend beyond the classroom to encompass social welfare and institutional equity measures.

Q13. Could you provide examples or instances where socioeconomic factors have noticeably influenced student academic performance?

This question invites participants to reflect on concrete, lived experiences in which socioeconomic conditions directly shaped academic trajectories. Qualitative responses illuminated how material deprivation — including unstable housing, lack of access to textbooks or technology, and familial economic pressures — frequently led to chronic absenteeism, disengagement, or early school exit, often in favor of employment or enlistment as perceived survival strategies. In several cases, students described being compelled to prioritize household responsibilities or income generation over academic commitments, revealing how poverty actively reconfigures educational priorities.

Notably, a subset of students articulated narratives of resilience, framing adversity as a motivational force that fueled academic determination. Yet even these accounts revealed tensions: students often succeeded *despite* — not because of — institutional structures, highlighting misalignments between school expectations and the socioeconomic realities students navigate daily.

These narratives not only corroborate quantitative patterns of achievement disparity but also expose the dialectic between structural constraint and individual agency. They underscore that academic performance cannot be understood in isolation from the broader socioeconomic ecosystem in which learners are embedded — calling for educational policies that recognize and respond to this complexity.

Q14. Do you have any suggestions for how educators can better support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds?

This question elicited practitioner-informed strategies for pedagogical responsiveness to socioeconomic disparity. Participants consistently emphasized that effective support begins with relational pedagogy — the intentional cultivation of trust, empathy, and mutual respect between educators and students. As one teacher noted, *"When a student knows you see them — not just their grades, but their struggles and strengths — they begin to believe in their own potential."* This aligns with theories of culturally responsive and trauma-informed teaching, which position emotional safety and identity affirmation as prerequisites for academic engagement.

Beyond interpersonal connection, respondents identified structural classroom practices as critical: differentiated instruction, flexible assessment, provision of material resources (e.g., stationery, textbooks, digital access), and integration of socioemotional learning into daily pedagogy. Several participants stressed the importance of "seeing the whole child" —

recognizing that hunger, housing insecurity, or familial stress manifest as behavioral or cognitive challenges in the classroom, not as deficits in ability or motivation.

Crucially, educators highlighted the need to bridge the institutional-family divide through proactive, non-judgmental communication with caregivers — even when parental involvement is limited by work schedules or literacy barriers. Strategies such as home visits, multilingual updates, and community liaisons were proposed as mechanisms to build collaborative support networks.

The data suggest that while individual teacher commitment is powerful, its impact is amplified — and sustained — only when embedded within institutional frameworks: professional development in equity-centered pedagogy, reduced class sizes, and administrative backing for holistic student support. As such, empowering educators requires not only moral encouragement but systemic investment.

Ultimately, participants framed the educator's role not merely as instructor, but as advocate and ally — one who can disrupt cycles of disadvantage by combining high expectations with high support, thereby transforming classrooms into sites of resilience and possibility.

2.4.2 Interpretation

The findings of this study confirm a strong and multifaceted relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and students' academic performance at Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School. Drawing from student self-reports, teacher perceptions, the data illustrate how various socioeconomic factors—including parental education, family income, access to learning resources, and household structure—interact to shape students' educational experiences and outcomes.

The disparity in parental education levels observed in this study reflects broader patterns of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values. Forty-four percent of fathers had completed secondary school, while 14% reached university level, suggesting that many families possess some degree of formal education. However, only 16% of mothers attained university-level education, and 8% had no formal schooling, highlighting a gendered gap that likely affects the home learning environment. Students whose parents have higher levels of education are more likely to be exposed to academic language, literacy-rich environments, and school-aligned values—all of which enhance their ability to navigate formal education successfully. Conversely, students from less-educated households may struggle to decode implicit academic expectations or engage confidently in learning processes, reinforcing cycles of educational disadvantage. This finding corroborates Bourdieu's assertion that cultural capital functions as an invisible yet powerful asset in educational settings, often privileging students from higher SES backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1986)

It is noteworthy that students report low levels of parental support. Due to long working hours, financial pressure, or limited familiarity with the curriculum, a striking 78% of students reported no parent support with homework. This weakens the home-school partnership and diminishes chances for advocacy as well as academic enhancement. Teachers confirmed that these students tend to have worse academic performance along with greater emotional difficulties. These results highlight the lack of strong familial and community structures that help mitigate the impact of socioeconomic hardship (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). The absence of such structures exacerbates the negative impact of social capital deficits on educational outcomes among disadvantaged learners (Lareau, 2003).

Students' aspirations and motivations are closely tied to perceived returns on educational investment. Despite material constraints, over 80% of students expressed a desire to pursue higher education, citing personal growth, skill enhancement, and improved

employment prospects as key motivators—reflecting an understanding of education as a pathway to upward mobility consistent with human capital theory (Becker, 1964). However, structural barriers such as inadequate access to tutoring (only 32% of students take private lessons) and inconsistent digital tool access (66% have internet but only 50% own a computer) significantly limit the realization of these aspirations. This aspiration-realization gap aligns with empirical evidence demonstrating how resource disparities constrain educational mobility even among highly motivated students from marginalized backgrounds (Reardon, 2011). Furthermore, 52% of students preferred not to disclose family income , suggesting sensitivity around financial matters and potential underreporting of economic hardship.

Psychological and behavioral challenges were frequently noted by teachers, underscoring the non-economic dimensions of poverty . For instance, 28% of students cited emotional or mental stress as a key barrier to learning , while 63.6% of teachers confirmed observing emotional or behavioral issues linked to socioeconomic background . These findings resonate with contemporary extensions of cultural reproduction theory, particularly Reay's (2018) concept of "habitus," which explains how lived experiences of inequality shape students' internalized beliefs about their capabilities and futures. Chronic stress related to housing instability, food insecurity, and family dynamics was identified as a major impediment to concentration, motivation, and resilience—factors essential for academic success.

Despite widespread recognition of these challenges, 72.7% of teachers reported that their schools do not have formal support programs for disadvantaged learners , indicating a critical institutional gap. Of those that do exist, perceptions of effectiveness were mixed : 36.4% found them slightly effective , 36.4% considered them very effective , and 27.3% viewed them as ineffective , often citing insufficient funding, lack of planning, or misalignment with real-life needs. This highlights the urgent need for reforms grounded in both equity and context-sensitive policy design.

Both students and teachers called for multidimensional interventions to redress educational inequities. Students prioritized scholarships (6.7%), unrestricted access to learning materials, and psychological support — strategies grounded in evidence: need-based aid boosts college enrollment for low-income students (Baum et al., 2013); book access programs narrow literacy gaps in under-resourced settings (Neuman & Celano, 2001); and school-based mental health services enhance engagement and reduce behavioral issues among disadvantaged youth (American Psychological Association, 2012). Teachers emphasized responsive, culturally sustaining pedagogy and family engagement — practices shown to build academic resilience (Ladson-Billings, 2014) and improve outcomes through trust-based partnerships (Epstein, 2018). These convergent perspectives highlight the need for integrated systems that address both material and psychosocial barriers. Specifically, students ranked scholarships as the most impactful intervention, followed by book provision and counseling. Teachers focused on inclusive, trauma-informed instruction and deep family collaboration — framing trust-building and resilience as central to equitable education

In conclusion, this study confirms that socioeconomic status significantly influences academic performance at Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School, not only through direct economic means but also via cultural, psychological, and institutional pathways. By linking empirical findings to established theoretical frameworks, the research illustrates how systemic inequities are reproduced within the educational system and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, culturally responsive, and well-resourced interventions that address the broader social determinants of learning.

2.5 Limitations of the study

This study, while offering valuable insights into the relationship between socioeconomic factors and academic performance at Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School, has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size is relatively small (n = 50 students and n = 11 teachers) , which limits the generalizability of findings beyond the selected classes and school context. The use of purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, as participants were chosen based on accessibility and availability rather than randomization.

Second, the self-reported nature of the student questionnaire may affect the accuracy and objectivity of responses, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as family income or parental involvement. Similarly, teacher perceptions, while insightful, reflect subjective viewpoints and may not fully capture the lived experiences of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Third, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between socioeconomic variables and academic outcomes. Longitudinal data would provide a more robust understanding of how these factors evolve and influence learning trajectories.

Despite these limitations, the findings contribute meaningfully to the growing body of literature on educational inequality in the Algerian context and provide a foundation for future research and policy development.

2.6 Pedagogical implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for teaching practices and school-based support systems. Teachers play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage by fostering empathetic relationships , creating inclusive classroom environments , and addressing both academic and emotional needs of learners. Educators can benefit from professional development programs that enhance their understanding of the social determinants of learning and equip them with strategies to support diverse learners.

Schools should consider implementing targeted academic interventions , such as after-school tutoring, peer mentoring, and differentiated instruction, especially for students who lack access to external resources like private lessons or digital tools. Additionally, integrating psychological support services , including counseling and mental health awareness, can help address the emotional strain linked to poverty and instability.

Moreover, schools should strive to strengthen home-school partnerships , even when parental involvement is limited. This could include flexible communication channels, parent workshops, and community outreach initiatives aimed at building trust and increasing family engagement in education.

Finally, curriculum delivery should reflect an awareness of students' realities, incorporating culturally relevant materials and promoting a growth mindset to encourage resilience and motivation among disadvantaged learners

2.7 Recommendations for further research

Given the exploratory nature of this study, several directions for further research are suggested:

1- Expand the Sample Size and Geographic Scope: Future studies should include larger, more representative samples across multiple secondary schools in Algeria to allow for broader generalizations and comparative analysis.
2- Longitudinal Studies: Investigating the long-term impact of socioeconomic factors on academic achievement using longitudinal designs can provide deeper insights into how early disadvantages accumulate over time.
3- Qualitative In-Depth Case Studies: Conducting in-depth interviews with students, parents, and teachers could offer richer narratives about how socioeconomic challenges manifest in daily life and learning.
4- Policy Impact Analysis: Researchers could examine the effectiveness of existing educational policies and interventions targeting disadvantaged learners in Algeria, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.
5- Digital Divide and Remote Learning: Given the increasing reliance on technology in education, future research should explore how socioeconomic disparities affect access to digital learning tools, especially in rural and under-resourced communities.
6- Teacher Training Programs: Investigate how pre-service and in-service training prepares educators to work with socioeconomically diverse classrooms and what additional support they need to be effective.

These recommendations aim to deepen understanding of the complex interplay between socioeconomic status and education in the Algerian context and inform evidence-based reforms.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the mixed-methods research design used to examine how socioeconomic factors influence the academic performance of Algerian students, Djoudi Ahmed Secondary School as a case study. Combining quantitative surveys and qualitative insights from both students and teachers, along with classroom observations, allowed for a well-rounded understanding of the issue. The study focused on a purposive sample of 50 students from three different classes, selected based on their varying academic levels and branches. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic interpretation. Findings revealed that while many students come from moderate to high socioeconomic backgrounds, disparities in access to educational resources and parental support significantly affect academic outcomes. Teachers largely agreed that socioeconomic status impacts student performance, particularly due to lack of materials, limited parental involvement, and emotional challenges. Despite these obstacles, some students demonstrated resilience and strong motivation. These insights provide a solid foundation for interpreting the broader implications of socioeconomic influences on education and will inform evidence-based recommendations aimed at promoting equity within the school system.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of socioeconomic status on academic performance among secondary school students at Djoudi Ahmed School in M'sila, Algeria, with the aim of addressing three interconnected objectives: identifying the key socioeconomic determinants of academic outcomes, evaluating the extent of their impact, and proposing context-sensitive, evidence-based policy responses. Grounded in Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and Coleman's conceptualization of social capital, the research draws on systematically gathered survey data from 57 students and 11 teachers to examine how material conditions, familial resources, and institutional structures collectively shape educational trajectories.

Findings confirm that household income, parental education, family composition, and access to learning supports are decisive factors in academic achievement. A striking 88% of students explicitly link their academic challenges to economic constraints — a perception corroborated by teachers, 63.6% of whom identify resource limitations as a primary barrier to learning. Structural disadvantages manifest concretely: half of the students lack access to computers; 18% study in shared or non-conducive environments; and 78% report minimal or no parental assistance with schoolwork — often due to low literacy or demanding work schedules. These material and relational gaps are compounded by psychological strain, with emotional stress cited by 28% of students as a major impediment to concentration and motivation. Teachers further observe that socioeconomic hardship frequently translates into behavioral and emotional challenges, reinforcing the lived, material reality of educational disadvantage.

Critically, the study reveals that disadvantage operates not merely through income but through overlapping cultural and institutional pathways. Students from households with limited educational capital struggle to navigate implicit academic norms, while those lacking social

capital — mentors, advocates, peer networks — face isolation in negotiating institutional demands. Despite this, student aspirations remain high: over 80% express intent to pursue higher education, signaling a profound belief in education as a vehicle for mobility — even as institutional support weakens. Alarmingly, 72.7% of teachers report the absence of formal support programs for disadvantaged learners, and among existing interventions, nearly one-third are perceived as ineffective — often due to misalignment with students' daily realities or chronic under-resourcing.

In response, this research proposes targeted, multidimensional interventions: need-based scholarships to reduce financial strain; free learning materials and digital access to close resource gaps; school-based mental health services to address trauma; teacher training in culturally responsive, trauma-informed pedagogy; and trust-based home-school partnerships that respect — not penalize — diverse family structures and capacities.

These measures are not marginal additions but foundational to transforming schools into equitable spaces where background does not dictate destiny.

While the study validates both hypotheses — that socioeconomic status significantly influences performance (H1) and that higher-income students benefit from cumulative advantages (H2) — it also acknowledges methodological constraints, including sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, expand geographic scope, and pilot the proposed interventions to assess their feasibility and impact. Ultimately, this work contributes to a growing body of localized scholarship that refuses to treat educational inequality as inevitable. Instead, it insists that with deliberate policy, institutional courage, and pedagogical empathy, Algeria's secondary education system can become not a mirror of societal disparities, but a mechanism for their redress.

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APPENDICES

- **Appendix A :**

Students' questionnaire:

Section One: Demographic

Information Q1. What is your

gender?

- Female
- Male

Q2. What is your age?

- 15–16 years
- 16–17 years
- 18–19 years
- Over 20 years

Q3. Which grade level are you in?

- First year
- Second year
- Third year

Not specified in the data (implied to be high school levels)

Section Two: Family Background and Socioeconomic Status

Q4. What is the highest level of education your father has completed?

- University or higher
- Secondary school
- Middle school
- Primary school
- No formal education

Q5. What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?

- University or higher
- Secondary school
- Middle school
- Primary school
- No formal education

Q6. What is your father’s primary occupation?

- Teacher / Civil servant
- Farmer / Laborer
- Skilled worker / Technician
- Business owner / Professional
- Unemployed

Q7. What is your mother’s primary occupation?

- Homemaker
- Teacher / Civil servant
- Business owner / Professional
- Other (not specified in detail)

Q8. What is your family's approximate monthly income?

- Less than 20,000 DZD
- 20,000–40,000 DZD
- 40,001–70,000 DZD
- More than 70,000 DZD
- Prefer not to disclose

Q9. How many people live in your household?

- 2–3 people
- 4–5 people
- 6–7 people
- 8 or more people

Q10. Do you have your own room to study in at home?

- Yes
- No

Q11. What educational resources are available at your home? (Multiple choice – select all that apply)

- Internet access
- Quiet study space
- Books related to school subjects
- Computer or tablet
- Tutoring support

Section Three: School Attendance and Performance

Q12. On average, how many school days do you miss per month?

- None
- 1–2 days
- 3–5 days
- More than 5 days

Q13. How would you rate your overall academic performance?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Below average
- Poor

Q14. What is your average grade range in core subjects such as Arabic, Math, and French?

- 16–20
- 13–15.99
- 10–12.99
- Below 10

Section Four: Attitudes and Study Habits

Q15. How many hours do you spend studying outside of school each day?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–2 hours
- 3–4 hours
- More than 4 hours

Q16. How often do your parents help or check your homework?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Always

Q17. Do you take private lessons outside of school?

- Yes
- No

Q18. On a scale from 1 to 5, how motivated are you to succeed academically?

- 1 (Not motivated at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Highly motivated)

Section Five: Additional Factors Affecting Education

Q19. Do you believe your family's financial situation affects your school performance?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q20. What challenges affect your learning the most? (Multiple choice – select all that apply)

- Emotional stress

- Family responsibilities
- Transportation difficulties
- Poor health/nutrition
- Lack of school materials
- None of the above

Q21. What do you think schools or the government can do to help students from low-income families perform better?

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Q22. Do you plan to pursue higher education (e.g., university)? Why or why not?

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❖ **Appendix B :**

Teachers' questionnaire

Section One: Demographic

Information Q1. What is your

gender?

- Female
- Male

Q2. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

- 1–5 years
- 6–10 years
- More than 10 years

Q3. Which grade level(s) do you teach? (Multiple choice – select all that apply)

- First year secondary
- Second year secondary
- Third year secondary

Section Two: General Observations

Q4. How significantly do socioeconomic factors affect learners' academic performance?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Greatly

Q5:Which socioeconomic factors do you believe most affect your learners? (Multiple choice – select all that apply)

- Family structure
- Parental education level
- Housing conditions
- Access to learning resources at home
- Transportation difficulties
- Parental employment status
- Nutrition
- Parental income

Section Three: Specific Impact on Academic Performance

Q6. How often do you observe academic struggles among students from low-income backgrounds compared to their peers?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Q7. How does the lack of basic resources at home affect students' learning in class?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Greatly

Q8. Do students who receive limited parental support (e.g., due to illiteracy or long work hours) tend to perform lower academically?

- Yes
- No

Q9. Have you observed emotional or behavioral issues in students that are related to their socioeconomic background?

- Yes
- Occasionally
- No

Section Four: Support and Interventions

Q10. Are there any support programs at your school to assist socioeconomically disadvantaged learners?

- Yes
- No

Q11. How effective do you think school interventions are in mitigating the effects of socioeconomic disadvantages?

- Very effective
- Slightly effective
- Not effective

Q12. What additional support do you think schools or education departments could provide to help these learners?

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Q13. Please share any experiences or cases that highlight the impact of socioeconomic status on student academic outcomes. (Open-ended response)

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Q14. Do you have any suggestions for how educators can better support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds? (Open-ended response)

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……..…….

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل تأثير العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية في تشكيل الأداء الأكاديمي لطلبة التعليم الثانوي في الجزائر، وذلك من خلال دراسة حالة مدرسة جودي أحمد بولاية المسيلة، كنموذج يعكس الفوارق الهيكلية المتجذرة في النظام التعليمي الوطني. فالأمر لا يتعلّق فقط بمستوى التحصيل، بل بكيفية إنتاج النظام التعليمي نفسه لهذه الفوارق — وهو ما يستدعي الانتقال من مفهوم "الإنصاف" العام إلى العدالة التعليمية الهيكلية :أي تصميم سياسات تعويضية تستهدف إعادة توزيع الموارد والدعم وفقًا لاحتياجات الفئات الأكثر تهميشًا .اعتمدت الدراسة منهجًا مختلطًا، واستندت إلى بيانات استبيان شمل 57 طالبًا و11 معلمًا. وقد ساعد موقع الباحث كمعلّم في المدرسة نفسها على فهم أعمق للسياق، مع الحرص على فصل هذا الدور عن التحليل المنهجي، الذي اقتصر على البيانات المجمعة بطريقة منهجية .كشفت النتائج أن 88% من الطلبة يرون في وضعهم الاقتصادي عائقًا أساسيًا أمام تقدمهم الدراسي، فيما أشار المعلمون إلى نقص الموارد، والضغوط النفسية، وضعف الدعم الأسري كعوامل حاسمة. ورغم احتفاظ أكثر من 80% من الطلبة بدوافع قوية لمواصلة التعليم، فإن المؤسسات التعليمية لا توفّر لهم الحد الأدنى من الدعم — إذ لم يُبلغ سوى 27.3% من المعلمين عن وجود برامج مساعدة منظمة .وتُقدّم الدراسة في خاتمتها مقترحات تدخل مؤسساتي قائم على الأدلة، والتي تشمل: منحًا دراسية مستهدفة، وتوفير مواد تعليمية مجانية، ودمج خدمات الدعم النفسي في المدارس، وتأهيل المعلمين على أساليب تربوية شاملة ومستجيبة للاحتياجات الاجتماعية والنفسية. هذه التدخلات ليست تحسينات تكميلية، بل ضرورات هيكلية لبناء نظام تعليمي أكثر إنصافًا واستدامة — نظام لا يكافئ الامتيازات، بل يعوّض الحرمان .

الكلمات المفتاحية :العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، الأداء الأكاديمي، التعليم الثانوي، العدالة التعليمية الهيكلية، تأثير الوالدين على التحصيل الدراسي .