



The Role Of Socio-Economic Background In Influencing The Confidence Of A Student

Siddhi Jairath
Pathways School Noida

INTRODUCTION

Post-Independence India remains segregated based on sociocultural differences, which over time have only been exacerbated by the surge of technological advancements and globalisation. Despite this rapid development rate, individuals within the borders defined by differences in income, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities share different realities. These realities could be as basic as the inability to afford stationery for school or as complex as facing social isolation due to their perceived social status, like caste. These realities, alongside background, economic status, opportunities, and social class, all influence people's outlook of themselves, often resulting in the Confidence Gap¹. Confidence is powerful as it governs the way individuals perceive themselves and their potential, how they interpret problems and seize opportunities. Thus, playing a major role in facilitating career advancements. It also impacts the way individuals interact with one another and their willingness to engage in conversation with less-known individuals. Therefore, it also impacts social (both professional and personal) relationships.

The 'confidence gap' or the difference between individuals' abilities and the confidence within their abilities, emphasises how people from low-income areas and women tend to believe in themselves less². This concept is mainly moulded by the rhetoric of the West, and primarily applied in the context of gender, which covers the influence of gender and social stereotypes on one's self-conviction. The patriarchal setup of society results in women having lower self-confidence due to societal pressures which set an expectation for them to remain "perfect", while men are provided with more room to make mistakes. This results in women often avoiding new opportunities due to the fear of failure. This difference in confidence is also prevalent among students (as well as teachers) from rural and urban areas within India. The influence of their backgrounds, ability to speak English, and socioeconomic status can all sway their confidence, which often results in their perceiving themselves as inferior compared to individuals from urban areas. This can lead to limited exposure to socio-economic opportunities and development, which in turn only further exacerbates the divide between urban and rural individuals.

¹ User, G. (2021, March 9). How Much Does Your Socio-Economic Background Affect Your Confidence? — The Everyday. The Everyday. <https://theeverydaymagazine.co.uk/opinion/how-much-does-your-socio-economic-background-affect-your-confidence>

² Fox, M. F., & Firebaugh, G. (1992). Confidence in Science: The Gender Gap. In *Social Science Quarterly* (Vol. 73, Issue 1, pp. 101–113). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42862992>

The education system, being one of the primary systems through which students are first exposed to the concept of confidence, plays a major role in shaping the self-belief of students³. As confidence stems from the environment, with a more stable and reassuring schooling environment, as well as a home environment wherein education is prioritised, students often tend to have better confidence. Additionally, teachers play a major role as students tend to take after them. Thus, showcasing a direct correlation between the education system and the confidence of students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Right to Education' Act (Article 26) in India is an internationally recognised right which directly states that "Everyone has the right to education" (United Nations, n.d.). Chapter II states "the right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till the completion of his or her elementary education"⁴

Yet, there are inefficiencies due to corruption and economically based partiality displayed by the government. It is important to "reestablish the trust within the Indian Education System", taking into account the lack of quality (especially for government schools) and provision (concerning cases of exam leaks). The 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act' must be reiterated, which ensures that each child is entitled to, benefits from and receives 12 years of publicly funded education. Despite its established presence as an act, the implementation is usually extremely unproductive and does not take into account the socioeconomic status of underprivileged families. While the act mandates free education, it fails to take into account the socioeconomic barriers which exist within several low-income households, which require students to economically contribute to the family, thus limiting their ability to attend school and thrive (SINGH, n.d.). There is a widening gap between political policies and the implementation of such policies due to corrupt or impractical errors which results in individuals not reaping the benefits of such policies, thus resulting in low income families unable to send their children to school, resulting in the continuation of the illiteracy cycle which then establishes the gap between rural and urban societies.

There is a proven influence of societal beliefs, systems and pressures on the way that individuals perceive their place and identity within society. Women tend to fear failure as a result of societal pressure, which criticises mistakes (Fox & Firebaugh, 1992). Similarly, societal pressures and systems which dictate social hierarchies, establishing individuals from rural areas as inferior in comparison to individuals from urban areas, influence the way that people see themselves, thus resulting in a confidence gap.

Socio-economic differences may pose challenges or opportunities for individuals. Education can empower individuals and facilitate further opportunity and potential for growth. Despite its flourishing economy, India holds a ranking of 105th out of 195 in the literacy index, with the female literacy rate being 73% and the male literacy rate being 81.8% (Desk, 2024). This literacy rate, alongside one of the largest rural-urban divides and male-female education gaps, inefficient government processes, and leaving room for corruption, are all major factors contributing to the unfair distribution of resources and opportunities. The unequal distribution of money, coupled with corruption, results in richer populations having larger control over a wider span of things, often resulting in the underrepresentation or injustice of less financially secure populations, resulting in low-income families perceiving themselves as inferior (Samuel, 2003). Political and social systems tend to favour financially secure individuals, which in turn impacts the way less secure individuals see themselves. They correlate money with power, and so see themselves as inferior, thereby resulting in a reduction in self-confidence.

³ User, G. (2021, March 9). How Much Does Your Socio-Economic Background Affect Your Confidence? — The Everyday. The Everyday. <https://theeverydaymagazine.co.uk/opinion/how-much-does-your-socio-economic-background-affect-your-confidence>

⁴ "R. Rajagopal vs State Of Tamil Nadu." Indian Kanoon, 19 May 1994, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/30032725/>.

There is a correlation between a student's familial socio-economic status and their self-confidence. There is also a strong difference between upper and lower middle, and upper middle and lower middle, with a significantly lower self-concept on all scales (Math, Verbal, Academic, Problem Solving, Emotional stability, General Esteem, etc) except spiritual values and physical ability. "Parents' education, occupation and income" influences a student's beliefs, behaviour and expectations; and this leads to providing better financial, social and educational support." The socioeconomic background of a family can impact their perceived priorities as a family. A lower socio-economic status tends to provide children with only basic needs, whereas self-concept and self-actualisation are more multifaceted concepts which highly depend upon home environment, social norms and emotional experiences. Thus, living in stressful environments or situations such as poverty, hostile living environments with reduced parental involvement can impact the overall self-concept of the student. Students correlate their families' socio-economic status with their worth, which influences their confidence and thus results in the belief that they are not enough. In addition, as stated by the *Cultural Capital*⁵. Theory, individuals from high-income families have better access and exposure to opportunities which build soft skills and other such holistic people skills. Access to such resources (skills, knowledge and experiences) influences the success and social mobility of individuals. The unequal distribution of these resources results in low-income individuals competing at a disadvantage. Due to this lack of exposure, low-income students often are unable to compete, resulting in low confidence⁶.

There is a significant decrease in terms of self-confidence among members of the upper, middle and lower classes, signifying a certain impact of socio-economic status on the confidence of an individual (Dheeraj et al., 2019)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted to decipher the influence of socio-economic factors on the self-actualisation of students through the comparison between rural and urban areas. To what extent is there a difference between the self-confidence of students in rural areas and urban areas? How may socio-economic factors and systematic differences contribute to this, and how may this difference in confidence influence their future? To answer this question, this research paper delves into understanding the perspectives and lifestyles of both rural and urban students and teachers, to then draw correlations between socio-economic and systematic differences, with their self-confidence. A range of secondary and primary resources, such as first-hand interviews and surveys with students from both urban and rural backgrounds, alongside the analysis of previous research papers and books written on the subject of education in India (more specifically, the differentiation of education between rural and urban areas), have been used as sources for the research paper.

Secondary Research - Analysis of Existing Research

The secondary research involved a detailed analysis of numerous articles, research papers and books written on the subject of the status of education in India, alongside the interplay of class and economic differentiation in the realm of education. The following listed factors contribute to the existing confidence gap among rural and urban students, as previously discussed by Agarwal, Shivani (2017); American Psychological Association, Fox, M. F., & Firebaugh, G. (1992); User, G. (2021, March 9).

⁵ By Ramsey, G., on U., 14, F. and Grace Ramsey, Journalist, Master in Public Policy (MPP)

By et al. "Cultural Capital Theory Of Pierre Bourdieu." Simply Psychology, 14 Feb. 2024, www.simplypsychology.org/cultural-capital-theory-of-pierre-bourdieu.html. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

⁶ Nath, Shyam. "Freedom of Press and the Law in India." Indian Journal of Political Science, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 38–45. Indian Journals, <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijp2&volume=5&issue=1&article=005&type=pdf>.

The Socio-Economic Barrier

When the term 'socio-economic' is used, it refers to income, educational attainment, occupational prestige, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class⁷. This status reflects the background of the individual, as well as their quality of life. While the socio-economic divide is a key factor which may limit an individual from accessing quality education, ironically, the lack of quality education also contributes to the furthering of the socio-economic divide. Factors such as education, employment status, income, housing and food security are all indicators of SES.

In a society so dependent on financial security and progress, education, regarded as a bridge to capitalist success, without doubt, has high social weight. It is considered to be a vital aspect of an individual's overall importance within society, and thus, their social role within society. This is the cyclical theory - the access to quality education reflects the ability to afford secure education, which then reflects the background of an individual. As well as this, education has also been linked to increasing life expectancy⁸. Because of the social emphasis given to education within modern society, less educated individuals tend to face stress, insecurity and concern regarding their place within society, often contributing to a degrading mental and physical wellbeing⁹. Since several other factors, such as employment, marriage, and ability to afford housing and healthcare, are dependent on literacy, the lack of education often poses a barrier for individuals to thrive. Individuals with relatively less education or less quality education are placed in an environment where education is regarded as a vital requirement to ensure professional and social growth. There is induced social anxiety as individuals tend to see themselves as less qualified in comparison to others. This social anxiety then translates into the way that students and teachers see themselves, resulting in lower self-confidence.

Another aspect is employment status. Work and job ranking are often strong social factors. Individuals tend to correlate specific characteristics with specific jobs and forms of employment. For example, low-class jobs are manual labour-based, low-skill jobs which don't require high educational or professional qualifications. Such jobs include domestic labourers and construction workers. When students see their parents working such jobs, which are considered to be low-class, they begin associating themselves with a less financially inferior section of society, resulting in low self-confidence and self-worth.

A third aspect is housing and food security. Being unable to afford necessities such as secure housing and food results in stress, which is when families begin to get desperate. This often results in students having to give up their education to partake in low-class jobs just to afford necessities for their families. This contributes to or even worsens the poverty cycle with no socio-economic progress.

The Systematic Setback

Our society's systematic setup also significantly contributes to the self-confidence of individuals. Issues such as corruption, lack of emphasis on soft skills throughout the education industry, and the lack of effectiveness of government schemes for low-income individuals are all examples of such cavities within the system.

⁷ American Psychological Association. "Socioeconomic Status." American Psychological Association, <https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

⁸ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. "Socioeconomic Status and Cardiovascular Disease." CDC, 3 Oct. 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsdp/health_equity/socioeconomic.htm. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

⁹ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, October 3). Socioeconomic status and cardiovascular disease. https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsdp/health_equity/socioeconomic.htm

India is a state which ranks '7th most corrupt' by Transparency International¹⁰. With one of the largest divides between rich and poor, individuals are desperate for a livelihood and to thrive comfortably. This hunger often leads to people partaking in crimes for monetary returns, choosing such a path and considering it their last resort. This increase in crime is often not combated due to poor law enforcement. An example of such cases is the large National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) scandal wherein, due to internal corruption, the paper was leaked, which led to the breach of public trust within the National Testing Agency (NTA)¹¹. Approximately 2 lakh students prepared for the exam, dedicating their time, effort and money. Though due to the leaked paper, their rankings were deemed irrelevant. Such paper leaks are quite common, with over seventy paper leaks in the past seven years, impacting 1.7 crore aspirants¹². Such scandals impact thousands, resulting in a breach of trust within government schemes and authorities, yet due to weak law enforcement, more often than not, action against the lawbreakers is not taken. With the frequency of such crimes, students, especially low-income students who often perceive such exams as the only bridge to financial progress, often lose hope and trust within the system, resulting in choosing not to even try and continue to live in the cycle of poverty, forever perceiving themselves as inferior.

Another factor is the emergence of education as a business diversification avenue. Indian culture highly prioritises education and views it as the utmost priority and key to success. This belief has been highly exploited, leading to the commercialisation of education. This exploitation manifests itself in several ways: the exclusion of low-income individuals from private institutions with unaffordable tuition and the emphasis upon credentials and course requirements to access higher education. This, in turn, can be seen as reserving quality education only for those who can afford it - unlike what Article 26, Right To Education Act, intended to achieve. The free education as promised by the government is often of low quality and does not take into account modern practices and soft skills. This results in graduating students being left unemployable and with outdated knowledge. An example of this is the recent Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI), which stated that in 2022-23, 0.2% of unemployed individuals were uneducated, while 7.3% were educated¹³. This clearly shows that the level of education is simply not enough for employability. The modern public education syllabus doesn't recognise soft skills and presentability; it doesn't take into account employability skills, which means that even if students are educated, they are still unable to thrive within professional settings, resulting in low confidence and inferiority in comparison to their colleagues who come from high-income backgrounds.

Furthermore, the inefficiency of government schemes for low-income individuals plays a major role in the self-actualisation of low-income students. Often, the schemes and funds allocated for low-income individuals are not enough or do not effectively reach the individuals. A primary example of this is the

¹⁰ Khan, M. A. "Corruption in India." J.K. College, https://jkcc.ac.in/admin/cms_images/corruptioninIndia_1513407238.pdf. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

¹¹ "Exam Paper Leaks Cause Deeper Damage, Pose Larger Questions for Government." NDTV, 7 Apr. 2024, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/exam-paper-leaks-cause-deeper-damage-pose-larger-questions-for-government-6080700>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

¹² "Paper Leaks in India: Over 1.7 Crore Aspirants Affected in 7 Years." India Today, 20 June 2024, <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/paper-leaks-in-india-over-17-crore-aspirants-affected-in-7-years-2555716-2024-06-20>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

¹³ Jairath, Siddhi. "The Indian Education System: Unemployment Amongst IITians." Democracy News Live, <https://democracynewslive.com/leadstory/the-indian-education-system-unemployment-amongst-iitians-1321045>. Accessed 18 Apr. 2025.

'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (Save the daughter, educate the daughter) Indian government scheme. While intended to increase the female literacy rate within low-income areas, the Indian parliamentary committee reported that 80% of the funds for the scheme were utilised for marketing rather than the actual provision of education.

Primary Research: Through the lens of Students - Interviews

The primary research included various interactions with numerous students through interviews that targeted the subject of the correlation between economic background and perception of self-potential of the student. The research also involved a self-reflection survey, which attempted to uncover the relative perception of potential compared to students from differing economic backgrounds.

Questionnaire Development and Design

The questionnaire consisted of 10 main questions with appropriate follow-up questions. The questions were focused on getting to know the aspirations, current situations and self-identified potential of each respondent. Their answers help conclude the confidence of the individual and their plans, with their background and current situations.

Sampling

A total of 30 students were involved in the process, with 15 belonging from urban backgrounds and 15 from rural backgrounds, attending village-based schools or government schools.

Administration of Instrument

The interviews were physically conducted as this gave a better scope of grasping the confidence and the background of the student. The majority of the respondents were female.

What school are you from? How old are you? What is your school like? How does a normal school day look for you? What's your favorite subject? What are the different ways your teachers teach you? Do you think knowing English is important to succeed in life?	Understanding the background and current socio-economic state of the student.
What do you think is the difference between your school and a government/private (village/city) school? What does your dream school look like? What's something you want to achieve in the future? A potential goal? Do you want to study further after school? What do you want to study? What does your dream future job look like? What is the best part of your day?	Understanding the difference perceived by the respondent with regard to their situation and opportunities as compared to students from differing backgrounds.

Primary Research: Through the lens of Students - Data Collection

Questionnaire Development and Design

A total of 15 questions were asked which give insight on the perceived potential of the student and the perceived potential of the student in comparison to students from differing backgrounds.

Sampling

A total of 250 students were involved in the process with 140 belonging from urban backgrounds and 110 from rural backgrounds, attending village-based schools or government schools.

Administration of Instruments

The questions were answered via Google form and through physical printout for convenience of rural students. The google form was shared via WhatsApp to schools across Delhi NCR.

General Beliefs	• I believe that English is an important part of becoming successful in life. • I believe that a family background influences the beliefs and potential of the child. • I believe that I come from a privileged background. • I believe that with good intention and adequate effort, anyone can achieve their dreams. • I believe that success is a direct outcome of hard work. • I believe that there is no difference between the education within private and government/village schools. • I trust the Indian Education System.
Perceived Potential	• I believe that I am good at Mathematics. • I believe that I am good at English. • I believe that I am socially intelligent, and can converse with strangers well. • I believe that I have enough willpower to achieve all my dreams.
Perceived Potential in comparison to rural area based students	• In comparison to students from village/government schools, I believe that I am good at Mathematics. • In comparison to students from village/government schools, I believe that I am good at English. • In comparison to students from village/government schools, I believe that I am socially intelligent and can converse with strangers. • In comparison to students from village/government schools, I believe that I have enough willpower to achieve all my dreams.

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Perceived Potential	• I believe that I am good at Mathematics. • I believe that I am good at English. • I believe that I am socially intelligent, and can converse with strangers well.

	I believe that I have enough willpower to achieve all my dreams.
Perceived Potential in comparison to urban area based students	- In comparison to students from private schools, I believe that I am good at Mathematics. - In comparison to students from private schools, I believe that I am good at English. - In comparison to students from private schools, I believe that I am socially intelligent and can converse with strangers. - In comparison to students from private schools, I believe that I have enough willpower to achieve all my dreams.

DISCUSSION

This study finds that socio-economic background significantly influences the confidence of the student. Such results can be explained through the lens of several sociological and economic effects, such as the Bandwagon Effect¹⁴, False Consensus¹⁵ Effect and Learned Helplessness¹⁶ - all of which emerged as per the results of 200 Indian Urban and Rural students between the ages of 10-16.

The discussion below is based on the results of the survey undertaken. The questionnaire can broadly be divided into three sections with a certain focus: general beliefs, perceived potential, and perceived Potential in comparison to students from the opposing end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Section I: General Beliefs

Section I focused on the General Beliefs of students from both rural and urban areas. These questions surrounded themes such as: correlation between English and success, the role of family background in determining children's potential, personal definition of privilege, correlation between effort and success, difference between rural and urban learning environments, and trust in the Indian education system.

The bandwagon effect is defined as a psychological phenomenon where individuals adopt beliefs, behaviours, or trends because they perceive that others are doing the same¹⁷. This effect can be perceived in the results. A great number of rural students, 91.6% (chose 8-10)¹⁸, showed strong agreement with the

¹⁴ "Bandwagon Effect." Obo, www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0113.xml. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

¹⁵ By Nickerson, C., on U., 29, S. and Charlotte Nickerson, Research Assistant at Harvard University, Undergraduate at Harvard University. Charlotte Nickerson is a student at Harvard University obsessed with the intersection of mental health.
By et al. "False Consensus Effect: Definition and Examples." Simply Psychology, 29 Sept. 2023, www.simplypsychology.org/false-consensus-effect.html. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

¹⁶ By Nickerson, C., on U., 2, M. and Charlotte Nickerson, Research Assistant at Harvard University, Undergraduate at Harvard University. Charlotte Nickerson is a student at Harvard University, obsessed with the intersection of mental health.
By et al. "Learned Helplessness: Seligman's Theory of Depression." Simply Psychology, 2 May 2024, www.simplypsychology.org/learned-helplessness.html. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025

¹⁷ Octet Design
"The Bandwagon Effect: Definition And Psychology." Octet Design Journal, Octet Design, 9 Apr. 2025, octet.design/journal/bandwagon-effect/. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

¹⁸ "Chose 8-10" refers to the survey wherein survey takers were asked to pick a number 1-10 based on how much they agree with the given prompt. 8-10 is relatively high, which connotes strong agreement with the given prompt.

importance of English skills, despite limited access, in determining future success in life as compared to the 82.3% (chose 7-10)¹⁹ of urban students. This can be linked to the adoption of societal views on the importance of English as a class marker, attainable through private schooling and exposure to urban environments. English is often viewed as 'urban/elite' and is tied to privilege. This showcases the perception of English speaking skills as aspirational, as it is deemed as a marker of success, yet unattainable due to limited access within rural schools. This, in turn, contributes to the confidence gap with rural students underestimating themselves due to the lack of English speaking skills. The perceived importance of English speaking skills reinforces the argument that education extends beyond just the syllabus and content, but also includes access to culture.

Both rural (92% chose 8-10) and urban (84% chose 8-10) students showed strong agreement with the role of family background in influencing the potential of a student. This shows that both student groups recognise how systemic differences and inequalities may influence outcomes for future generations. Learned helplessness is defined as when an individual continuously faces a negative, uncontrollable situation and stops trying to change their circumstances, even when they can do so.²⁰ Rural students tend to internalise fatalism, leading to lower confidence in comparison to urban students by default. This showcases internalised class-based identity, thus validating the claim about how socio-economic status influences perception, confidence and therefore access to resources. This phenomenon can also be explained through the cultural capital theory. With the lack of exposure to gain skills, the ability to comprehend social and popular culture is reduced. This incompetence poses a barrier to gaining success and opportunities for success, excluding the low-income class from moving up the socioeconomic ladder.

In question 3, there was a stark difference between the responses from rural and urban students. About 75% of rural students (chose 1-4)²¹. Viewed themselves as coming from less privileged backgrounds, while 86% of urban students (chose 7-10) viewed themselves as privileged. An important point to consider here is the difference in the definition of privilege. Privilege is defined as a special advantage or benefit granted to individuals or groups, often due to their social identity or position within a society²². Privilege is a subjective concept which may differ for individuals based on their socio-economic status. For some, privilege may be the ability to afford luxury trips or expensive designer bags, while others may see privilege as the ability to have stable access to necessities such as shelter, clothing and food. Yet, an underlying common theme across each definition is the aspiration to be privileged. It is better to be privileged than to be underprivileged. Rural students are aware of their systematic setback, while urban students are confident in their privilege compared to the rural schooling system. This illustrates the cyclical thesis, showcasing how privilege facilitates better education, therefore reproducing further privilege.

¹⁹ "Chose 7-10" refers to the survey wherein survey takers were asked to pick a number 1-10 based on how much they agree with the given prompt. 7-10 is relatively high, which connotes strong agreement with the given prompt.

²⁰ "Learned Helplessness." Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/learned-helplessness#:~:text=Learned%20helplessness%20occurs%20when%20an,try%20and%20fail%20to%20quit. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

²¹ "Chose 1-4" refers to the survey wherein survey takers were asked to pick a number 1-10 based on how much they agree with the given prompt. 1-4 is relatively low, which connotes strong disagreement with the given prompt.

²² "Q&A: What Is Privilege?" Duke Today, today.duke.edu/2024/02/qa-what-privilege. Accessed 19 Apr. 2025.

Once again, in question 5, a stark difference between rural and urban students can be noted. 69% of urban students (chose 7-10) seem to believe in the meritocratic ideal wherein success is equivalent to the hard work put in. In contrast, 65% of rural students (chose 1-3) believe that success is dependent on several other factors, connoting that effort does not always translate into opportunity, possibly due to systematic differences. These results connote the ideology that consistent systematic failures - such as the NEET scam and general corruption in the education domain - have led to the discouragement and demoralisation among rural students, reflected by their low correlation between success and hard work. Urban students' continued belief in the effort-success model can be attributed to a lack of awareness of the inadequacies of the Indian education system, since most of them pursue higher education in institutions abroad.

Both rural (80% chose 1-3²³) and urban (86% chose 1-3) students acknowledge that there is a strong difference between rural and urban learning environments. This explicit recognition that rural education is inferior to private/urban education shows a conscious recognition of systematic inequality. This connects back to how the commercialisation of education may lead to inequalities, resulting in a further gap between the resources and quality of education in rural and urban education environments.

Both rural (81.7% chose 1-3) and urban (45.8% chose 1-4) students show distrust in the Indian education system, with rural students showing a relatively stronger distrust. Urban students benefit overall from private schooling quality as compared to rural students, who suffer due to a lack of quality education (teacher absenteeism, outdated curriculum, lack of accountability, and little infrastructure) provided by the government.

Section II: Perceived Potential

Section II focuses on the self-actualisation of rural and urban students and their own perceived potential. It focuses on confidence in subjects such as Mathematics, English and Social skills.

81.7% of rural students (chose 7-10) showcased high confidence in math skills as compared to the 48% of urban students (chose 7-10). This showcases that rural students are much more confident in their mathematics skills as compared to urban students. This may be because this subject is less resource-dependent (as compared to English, which requires linguistic exposure and environment). Urban students may also face higher academic pressure due to the perceived importance of education in determining their future, which may result in overall lower confidence.

Nearly 98% of urban students (chose 7-10) reflected clear, high confidence in their English skills, compared to the 86.7% of rural students (chose 7-10). This high confidence from urban students may be due to stronger access to Western mainstream media and online exposure. Rural students' confidence may stem from limited peer comparison due to the lack of utilisation of English within their village environments. This perceived confidence and fluency may not translate into functional fluency, as discussed previously regarding the unemployability of seemingly "proficient" rural students.

Section III: Perceived Potential in comparison to students from the opposing end of the Socioeconomic spectrum

Section III focuses on the self-actualisation of rural and urban students in comparison to students from the opposing end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

²³ "Chose 1-3" refers to the survey wherein survey takers were asked to pick a number 1-10 based on how much they agree with the given prompt. 1-3 is relatively low, which connotes strong disagreement with the given prompt.

78% of rural students (chose 1-5) expressed relatively low comparative confidence compared to the 79% of urban students (chose 7-10) whose confidence remained high. This reflects that both rural and urban students are very much aware of the gap between rural and urban schooling. This suggests that rural students acknowledge the resource gap that contributes to their confidence gap.

Similarly, 60% of rural students (chose 1-4) expressed low comparative self-confidence compared to the 97% of urban students (7-10) whose self-confidence remained high. Considering the previous rating of English skill given by rural students was 86.7% (chose 7-10), there is a clear drop in confidence, with the majority now ranging from 1-4. This shift showcases the extent to which students feel their inadequacy in their English speaking skills in comparison to urban students.

Conclusion

This research paper studies the correlation between socio-economic background and the self-confidence of students. Through the analysis of 200 students from rural and urban backgrounds, the influence of a systematic setback and socioeconomic differences on the varying self-confidence of students is apparent.

The findings reflect several sociological phenomena such as the bandwagon effect, the false consensus effect, and learned helplessness. There is a massive existing confidence gap between rural and urban students, intertwined with systematic inequalities, societal expectations and resource availability.

The data paints a clear picture: rural students are not only aware of the disparity in resources, but have internalised this inequality, which negatively impacts their self-actualisation and perceived potential as compared to urban students. Rural and urban students had relatively similar confidence when approaching different subjects. However, when comparing their ability to students coming from the opposing end of the economic spectrum, rural students' confidence dropped while urban students' confidence increased or stayed the same.

There are few to no existing studies on the existing confidence gap among rural and urban students within India. This study, therefore, widens the scope for public policy in the domain of education to help achieve a higher literacy rate and reduce the existing economic divide among different social sections of society.

The findings of this student reiterate the importance of government interventions to amplify the quality of education within rural settings to eventually help increase the self-confidence of rural students, encouraging increased economic activity and therefore bridging the existing economic divide.

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