Comparative Study of Academic Motivation, Self-esteem and Academic Performance according to Socioeconomic Status among Students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Perbezaan Motivasi Akademik, Penghargaan Kendiri dan Prestasi Akademik Berdasarkan Status Sosioekonomi dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

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Article history:

Received date: 16.05.2025
Revised date: 04.07.2025
Accepted date: 10.09.2025
Published date: 28.11.2025

ABSTRACT

Academic motivation, self-esteem, and academic performance are important factors that collectively influence students' overall success and development. However, these factors often differ according to socioeconomic backgrounds, as socioeconomic status (SES) shapes students' access to resources, learning environments, and support systems. This study aimed to examine the differences in academic motivation, self-esteem, and academic achievement based on socioeconomic status among Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) students. This study used a cross-sectional survey design. A total of 401 students from various faculties were selected as respondents through stratified random sampling technique. A set of questionnaires were used to collect data containing demographic information, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Academic Motivation Scale – College Version (AMS-C 28). The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The findings showed that B40 students scored higher in several aspects of intrinsic motivation such as desire to know and enjoyment of academic stimuli. However, no significant differences were found in self-esteem and academic performance between the B40 and non-B40 groups. For B40 students, self-esteem was found to be closely related to academic achievement. This study highlights the need for targeted interventions such as financial assistance and psychosocial support to ensure that all students have equal educational opportunities. The implications of this study also highlight the role of universities in developing inclusive motivational and self-esteem support programmes to reduce educational disparities based on socioeconomic background.

Keywords: *academic motivation, self-esteem, academic performance, socioeconomic status, B40*

ABSTRAK

Motivasi akademik, harga diri, dan prestasi akademik adalah faktor-faktor penting yang secara kolektif mempengaruhi kejayaan dan perkembangan keseluruhan pelajar. Walau bagaimanapun, faktor ini selalunya berbeza mengikut latar belakang sosioekonomi yang berbeza, kerana status sosioekonomi (SES) membentuk akses pelajar kepada sumber, persekitaran pembelajaran dan sistem sokongan. Kajian ini bertujuan meneliti perbezaan motivasi akademik, penghargaan kendiri dan pencapaian akademik berdasarkan status sosioekonomi dalam kalangan pelajar Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk survei keratan rentas. Seramai 401 pelajar daripada pelbagai fakulti dipilih sebagai responden kajian melalui teknik persampelan rawak berstrata. Satu set soal selidik digunakan untuk mengumpul data yang mengandungi maklumat demografi, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) dan Academic Motivation Scale – College Version (AMS-C 28). Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis statistik deskriptif dan inferensi. Dapatan menunjukkan pelajar B40 mencatat skor yang lebih tinggi dalam beberapa aspek motivasi intrinsik seperti keinginan mengetahui dan keseronokan terhadap rangsangan akademik. Walau bagaimanapun, tiada perbezaan signifikan ditemui dalam penghargaan kendiri dan prestasi akademik antara kumpulan B40 dan bukan B40. Bagi pelajar B40, penghargaan kendiri didapati berkait rapat dengan pencapaian akademik. Kajian ini menekankan keperluan intervensi bersasar seperti bantuan kewangan dan sokongan psikososial bagi memastikan semua pelajar mendapat peluang pendidikan yang sama. Implikasi kajian ini juga menekankan peranan universiti dalam membangunkan program sokongan motivasi dan penghargaan kendiri yang inklusif bagi mengurangkan jurang pendidikan berdasarkan latar belakang sosioekonomi.

Kata kunci*: motivasi akademik, penghargaan kendiri, prestasi akademik, status sosioekonomi, B40*

1. Introduction

The socioeconomic status (SES) of individuals and families is a critical factor influencing various aspects of life, particularly in the context of education. SES is often assessed through a combination of occupation, income, and education, which collectively determine an individual's financial and social standing relative to others (Jen, 2023). In Malaysia, the Department of Statistics classifies income earners into three categories: B40 (the lowest 40%), M40 (the middle 40%), and T20 (the top 20%) (DOSM 2024). Understanding these classifications is essential for recognizing disparities in academic opportunities and resource accessibility among students.

Students from higher SES backgrounds may benefit from enriched educational opportunities and parental support, while those from lower SES groups may face constraints that hinder motivation and confidence, ultimately affecting their academic outcomes. A research by Wong et al. (2023) indicates that students from lower-income families, particularly those in the B40 group, face significant challenges that can hinder their academic success. For instance, a study by Munir et al. (2023) found that limited access to educational resources and financial stress can adversely affect their academic motivation and self-esteem. Conversely, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds often benefit from greater access to resources and support, which can enhance their academic performance (Munir et al., 2023). The relationship between

SES and academic outcomes has been well-documented, with studies showing that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds exhibit varying levels of motivation and achievement (Izuchi & Onyekuru, 2017). For example, low SES students often experience higher levels of financial stress, which can negatively impact their academic engagement and motivation (Izuchi & Onyekuru, 2017). Furthermore, self-esteem, defined as an individual's subjective assessment of their worth, is significantly influenced by SES and can, in turn, affect academic performance.

A comparative study examining these variables across socioeconomic groups provides valuable insights into how economic and social disparities contribute to differences in academic achievement and psychological well-being. Understanding these relationships is essential for educators and policymakers to design targeted interventions that promote equity and enhance learning experiences for students from diverse socioeconomic contexts. Therefore, this study aims to explore the intricate relationships between SES, academic motivation, self-esteem, and academic performance among B40 and non-B40 students at UKM. By addressing the research questions regarding the differences in academic motivation, self-esteem, and performance between these groups, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of educational equity in Malaysia. Additionally, this study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). SDG4 emphasizes the importance of providing quality education to all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status, and seeks to address the barriers that hinder access to education. By exploring the relationship between socioeconomic status and key educational variables, this study contributes to identifying educational gaps and informing strategies to achieve equity and inclusion in higher education, which are core principles of SDG 4. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

i. compare the difference of academic motivation according to socioeconomic status;
ii. compare the difference of self-esteem according to socioeconomic status; and
iii. examine the relationship between academic performance and socioeconomic status.

2. Literature Review

Socioeconomic status (SES) has long been recognized as a crucial determinant of students' academic motivation, shaping their attitudes, aspirations, and engagement in learning. Students from higher SES backgrounds often exhibit stronger intrinsic and extrinsic motivation due to greater access to educational resources, supportive home environments, and exposure to positive role models (Fadhil & Zulkefli, 2021). In contrast, students from lower SES families may experience motivational deficits stemming from limited financial means, inadequate learning materials, and lower parental involvement (Ahmad & Saad, 2022). According to Self-Determination Theory, motivation is fostered when individuals' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met; however, these needs are often compromised among students facing socioeconomic disadvantage (Ryan & Deci, 2020). As a result, the disparities in motivational support between SES groups contribute significantly to achievement gaps in educational contexts. Self-Determination Theory identifies three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation (driven by interest), extrinsic motivation (driven by rewards), and amotivation (lack of drive) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is linked to deeper engagement and better academic outcomes (Schiefele, 1991; Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 1989). In contrast, extrinsic motivation may lead to short-term gains but could reduce long-term

interest (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). A balance of both motivations, supported by mastery-oriented learning environments, helps optimize performance (Subaşi, 2020).

Empirical studies in Malaysia and other developing contexts have consistently highlighted the link between SES and academic motivation. For instance, a study by Rahman and Khairuddin (2023) found that students from middle- and high-income families demonstrated higher levels of academic self-determination and goal orientation compared to those from low-income households. Similarly, research by Lim and Hassan (2022) revealed that financial strain and limited parental education negatively influenced students' learning motivation, particularly in rural schools. These findings suggest that socioeconomic challenges not only restrict access to material resources but also affect students' psychological readiness and belief in their academic capabilities. Therefore, understanding how SES influences academic motivation is essential for developing targeted interventions such as motivational support programs and equitable resource distribution to bridge the motivational divide and foster academic resilience among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Having higher academic motivation thus increases the academic performance among students. Socioeconomic status (SES) can be considered a critical determinant of students' academic performance, influencing both access to educational opportunities and the quality of learning experiences. Students from higher SES backgrounds typically enjoy advantages such as better educational resources, parental involvement, and exposure to intellectually stimulating environments, which contribute to stronger academic achievement (Aziz & Yusof, 2021). Conversely, those from lower SES households often face barriers such as financial stress, limited access to learning materials, and lower-quality schooling, all of which can hinder cognitive and academic development (Hamid & Rahman, 2022). B40 students also face challenges such as digital inequality, part-time work, and limited resources, which can hinder academic success (Muhamad Ali et al., 2024). According to the Family Investment Model, families with greater financial and cultural capital are able to invest more in their children's education, both materially and emotionally resulting in better performance outcomes (Conger et al., 2010). Therefore, disparities in SES not only reflect differences in income but also in the educational and psychosocial resources that shape students' academic success.

Several studies conducted in Malaysia and other developing contexts provide robust evidence for the influence of SES on academic performance. For example, Salleh and Abdullah (2023) found that students from high-income families consistently outperformed their low-income peers in national examinations, primarily due to differences in parental educational attainment and home learning support. Similarly, a study by Lim and Hassan (2022) demonstrated that students from low-SES backgrounds exhibited lower academic achievement, which was mediated by reduced motivation and limited access to private tutoring. Moreover, socioeconomic disadvantage has been linked to increased absenteeism, reduced concentration, and lower self-efficacy—all of which further exacerbate academic disparities (Omar & Tan, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of addressing socioeconomic inequality through targeted educational policies and community-based interventions that enhance learning support for underprivileged students, ensuring equitable academic outcomes across social strata.

In addition, socioeconomic status (SES) also plays a significant role in shaping individuals' self-esteem, as it influences access to social, emotional, and material resources that contribute to self-worth and identity formation. Self-esteem refers to one's perception of self-worth and has been positively associated with academic achievement (Rosenberg, 1965).

Students with high self-esteem tend to be more confident and resilient, which supports their academic efforts (Baumeister et al., 2003). The relationship is bidirectional, which success boosts self-esteem and vice versa (Marsh & Craven, 2006). Individuals from higher SES backgrounds often experience greater social recognition, parental support, and access to opportunities, all of which enhance their sense of competence and self-esteem (Nor & Ahmad, 2021). Conversely, those from lower SES groups may encounter financial hardship, social exclusion, and academic struggles, leading to feelings of inferiority and diminished self-regard. According to the Social Comparison Theory, individuals evaluate their self-worth by comparing themselves to others; thus, those from disadvantaged backgrounds may internalize negative self-perceptions when exposed to higher-status peers (Festinger, 1954; Mahmud & Lee, 2023). This pattern has been observed across multiple contexts, where economic deprivation correlates with lower self-esteem and reduced psychological well-being among students and adolescents.

Past studies in Malaysia and other developing nations, support the link between SES and self-esteem. For instance, a study by Aziz and Omar (2022) found that adolescents from high-income families scored significantly higher on measures of global self-esteem compared to those from low-income families, attributing the difference to parental involvement and perceived social support. Similarly, research by Chong and Ismail (2023) indicated that students from lower SES households reported higher levels of self-doubt and social anxiety, which negatively impacted their academic and emotional development. Moreover, interventions targeting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds—such as mentorship programs and peer support groups—have been shown to mitigate self-esteem disparities by fostering belongingness and personal efficacy (Lim & Thang, 2021). These findings highlight the enduring influence of socioeconomic inequalities on psychological outcomes, emphasizing the need for supportive educational environments that nurture positive self-esteem across all SES levels.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using cross-sectional survey design to gather and the data. The main technique used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Respondents were asked to complete a set of standardized questions which allowed for objective measurement and comparison. The survey method was selected due to its practicality and effectiveness, especially when physical access to respondents was limited. This method was deemed the most appropriate for collecting data from university students.

3.2 Study Location and Respondents

The research was conducted at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), with the respondents comprising undergraduate students enrolled across various faculties. The population size included 17,021 undergraduate students. To ensure representative sampling, a probability sampling method which was stratified random sampling was employed. This technique ensured proportional representation of students from the B40 and non-B40 socioeconomic groups. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a total sample size of 384 respondents was identified as sufficient for the study. The sample size was increased to 460 to

cater for potential of non-response subjects (Bujang, 2021). Finally, the total number of respondents who participated in this study was 401 respondents.

3.3 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed in four sections: Section A contained the informed consent form, Section B gathered demographic information, Section C featured the Academic Motivation Scale College Version (AMS-C 28) to measure academic motivation, and Section D used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to assess self-esteem. The questionnaire was available in both Malay and English to ensure clarity and accessibility.

3.4 Data Analysis

The responses collected through the structured questionnaires were subsequently analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. As this study employed a quantitative research approach, the data were processed using appropriate statistical techniques to examine patterns, relationships, and differences among the variables. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to analyse the data and interpret the findings to draw meaningful and evidence-based conclusions from the data set.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

The study analyzed the demographic profile of respondents based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, faculty, monthly household income, and GPA academic standing. A total of 384 undergraduate students from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) participated in this study.

In terms of age, respondents ranged from 20 to 29 years old. The most frequent age group was 22 years, with 160 respondents (39.9%), followed by 23 years (21.2%), and others across different age groups. The age range (20–29) is typical for undergraduates, but the dominance of 22-year-olds (39.9%) might reflect a peak study year. For gender, the respondents consisted of 204 female students (50.9%) and 197 male students (49.1%). The sample had balanced gender representation, which strengthens generalizability across male and female students. In the race/ethnicity category, the majority were Malay (79.6%), followed by Chinese (11.7%), Indian (7.5%), and other ethnicities (1.2%). The predominantly Malay ethnicity (79.6%) aligns with Malaysia's demographic composition and UKM's enrollment patterns, but may limit cross-ethnic comparison.

Regarding faculty, respondents were selected from various academic faculties at UKM. The distribution is as follows, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSK): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Economics and Management (FEP): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Science and Technology (FST): 42 students (10.5%), Faculty of Education (FPEND): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Health Sciences (FSK): 33 students (8.2%), Faculty of Islamic Studies (FPI): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Technology and Information Science (FTSM): 37 students (9.2 %), Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment (FKAB): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Pharmacy:

32 students (8%), Faculty of Medicine: 33 students (8.2%), Faculty of Law (FUU): 32 students (8%), Faculty of Dentistry (FPERG): 32 students (8%). All faculties were represented.

In terms of monthly household income, respondents were categorized into low-income (B40) and high-income (M40/T20) groups. The majority were from the low-income group, with 267 respondents (66.6%), while 134 respondents (33.4%) were from the high-income group. The majority being from the B40 group (66.6%) is significant and aligns well with the study's focus on SES differences. For GPA academic standing, scores were divided into high GPA (3.5 and above) and low GPA (below 3.5). A total of 253 respondents (63.1%) reported a high GPA, while 148 respondents (36.9%) had a low GPA. A high proportion of students with GPA ≥ 3.5 (63.1%) might suggest that many respondents are academically strong.

TABLE 1: Respondent Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	20	28	7.0
	21	58	14.5
	22	160	39.9
	23	85	21.2
	24	37	9.2
	25	23	5.7
	26	7	1.7
	27	1	0.2
	28	1	0.2
	29	1	0.2
Gender	Female	204	50.9
	Male	197	49.1
Race/Ethnicity	Malay	305	79.6
	Chinese	45	11.7
	Indian	29	7.5
	Others	5	1.2
Faculty	FSSK	32	8.0
	FEP	32	8.0
	FST	42	10.5
	FPEND	32	8.0
	FSK	33	8.2
	FPI	32	8.0
	FTSM	37	9.2
	FKAB	32	8.0
	Pharmacy	32	8.0
	Medicine	33	8.2
	FUU	32	8.0
	FPERG	32	8.0
Household Income	Low-income (B40)	267	66.6
	High-income (M40/T20)	134	33.4

GPA Academic Standing	High GPA (≥ 3.5)	253	63.1
	Low GPA (< 3.5)	148	36.9

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

The descriptive analysis results in Table 2 show main variables of the study, which included the academic motivation subscales, self-esteem, CGPA category, and socioeconomic status (SES) category. The academic motivation subscales were divided into three intrinsic and three extrinsic dimensions, along with an amotivation subscale.

For the intrinsic motivation subscales, the results showed that the mean score for Intrinsic Motivation (To Know) was 21.14 (SD = 5.50), indicating a moderately high level of motivation to acquire knowledge. Intrinsic Motivation (Toward Accomplishment) had a mean of 20.85 (SD = 5.36), suggesting students were generally motivated by achieving academic success. The Intrinsic Motivation (To Experience Stimulation) subscale had a mean of 20.42 (SD = 5.55), indicating that students moderately enjoyed engaging in stimulating and challenging academic activities.

In the extrinsic motivation subscales, Extrinsic Motivation (Identified) had the highest mean among all subscales, at 21.59 (SD = 5.30), suggesting that many students pursued academic goals because they personally valued them. Extrinsic Motivation (Introjected) recorded a mean of 21.10 (SD = 5.40), reflecting some internal pressure or self-obligation in their motivation. Extrinsic Motivation (External Regulation) had a mean score of 20.99 (SD = 5.48), indicating that some students were driven by external rewards or pressures.

The Amotivation subscale, which reflects a lack of motivation, recorded a lower mean of 17.29 (SD = 7.22), suggesting that, overall, the respondents exhibited a low level of amotivation. Meanwhile, the Self-Esteem scores had a mean of 27.44 (SD = 5.20), indicating a generally healthy level of self-esteem among participants.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Analysis for the Variables

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Intrinsic Motivation (To Know)	401	6.00	28.00	21.1446	5.49673
Intrinsic Motivation (Toward Accomplishment)	401	6.00	28.00	20.8504	5.35981
Intrinsic Motivation (To Experience Stimulation)	401	4.00	28.00	20.4214	5.54522

Extrinsic Motivation (Identified Regulation)	401	5.00	28.00	21.5885	5.29885
Extrinsic Motivation (Introjected Regulation)	401	7.00	28.00	21.0998	5.40417
Extrinsic Motivation (External Regulation)	401	6.00	28.00	20.9875	5.47516
Amotivation	401	4.00	28.00	17.2893	7.22192
Self Esteem	401	12.00	38.00	27.4414	5.20069

The descriptive results of this study revealed that UKM undergraduate students generally demonstrate moderately high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Specifically, the highest mean was recorded for Extrinsic Motivation (Identified), indicating that many students are driven by personally valued goals such as career aspirations, academic success, or family expectations. This type of regulation reflects a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that identified regulation is associated with better academic engagement and persistence.

Among the intrinsic subscales, Intrinsic Motivation (To Know) received the highest guidance, indicating that students are sincerely interested in learning and expanding their knowledge. Vallerand et al. (1992) observed that university students, especially those in structured academic systems, tend to score best in this subdomain. According to Komarraju et al. (2009), students who exhibit higher levels of conscientiousness and self-esteem also typically exhibit higher levels of intrinsic and identified motivation. This finding supports the relationship between the self-determined motivation patterns in the current study and the moderate-to-high levels of self-esteem that were observed. According to the comparatively low levels of amotivation, the majority of UKM students are actively involved in their academic endeavors and have a distinct goal in mind. This is consistent with findings by Noels et al. (2000) in multicultural educational settings, where students often report higher levels of identified regulation and intrinsic interest, driven by internalized cultural values around education and self-betterment.

Nonetheless, the literature contains some contradictory results. For example, Levesque et al. (2004) argue that students may be more extrinsically motivated but also less autonomous and intrinsically interested in settings with strict evaluation procedures or regulatory structures. Furthermore, some students may exhibit high levels of identified motivation while still reporting feelings of amotivation, especially if they lack confidence or experience uncertain results, according to research by Ratelle et al. (2007). These humbling viewpoints imply that although UKM students express high levels of motivation and self-worth, these sentiments could be influenced by cultural responsibilities and outside expectations, especially in a Malaysian setting (Tanaka & Yamauchi, 2000).

4.3 Difference of Academic Motivation according to Socioeconomic Status

The first objective was tested using an independent sample *t-test that was* conducted to examine the differences in academic motivation between B40 and non-B40 students across the seven subscales of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS).

The results in Table 3 shows that B40 students (M = 21.63, SD = 5.47) scored significantly higher than non-B40 students (M = 20.18, SD = 5.44) on the Intrinsic Motivation to Know subscale, $t(399) = 2.51$, $p = .013$. Similarly, a significant difference was found on the Intrinsic Motivation to Experience Stimulation subscale, where B40 students (M = 20.95, SD = 5.40) scored higher than non-B40 students (M = 19.37, SD = 5.69), $t(399) = 2.70$, $p = .007$. No significant difference was found between B40 (M = 21.16, SD = 5.40) and non-B40 students (M = 20.22, SD = 5.25) on the Intrinsic Motivation Toward Accomplishment subscale, $t(399) = 1.66$, $p = .097$.

For the Extrinsic Motivation subscales, no significant differences were found. On the Identified Regulation subscale, B40 students (M = 21.81, SD = 5.37) did not differ significantly from non-B40 students (M = 21.15, SD = 5.15), $t(399) = 1.18$, $p = .240$. Similarly, on the Introjected Regulation subscale, B40 students (M = 21.39, SD = 5.45) did not differ significantly from non-B40 students (M = 20.52, SD = 5.29), $t(399) = 1.52$, $p = .130$. For External Regulation, no significant difference was observed between B40 (M = 21.22, SD = 5.47) and non-B40 students (M = 20.52, SD = 5.47), $t(399) = 1.21$, $p = .229$. Finally, a significant difference was found in Amotivation, where B40 students (M = 18.96, SD = 7.27) scored higher than non-B40 students (M = 13.96, SD = 5.87), $t(399) = 6.91$, $p < .001$.

TABLE 3. Independent Samples t-Test for Academic Motivation by Socioeconomic Status

Academic Motivation Subscale	SES Group	M	SD	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation (To Know)	B40	21.63	5.47	2.51	.013
	Non-B40	20.18	5.44		
Intrinsic Motivation (Toward Accomplishment)	B40	21.16	5.40	1.66	.097
	Non-B40	20.22	5.25		
Intrinsic Motivation (To Experience Stimulation)	B40	20.95	5.40	2.70	.007
	Non-B40	19.37	5.69		
Extrinsic Motivation (Identified Regulation)	B40	21.81	5.37	1.18	.240
	Non-B40	21.15	5.15		
Extrinsic Motivation (Introjected Regulation)	B40	21.39	5.45	1.52	.130
	Non-B40	20.52	5.29		
Extrinsic Motivation (External Regulation)	B40	21.22	5.47	1.2	.229
	Non-B40	20.52	5.47		
Amotivation	B40	18.96	7.27	6.91	.001
	Non-B40	13.96	5.87		

The findings indicate that B40 and non-B40 students differ significantly in their levels of academic motivation. Higher levels of intrinsic motivation were indicated by B40 students, particularly in their desire to learn and enjoy the process. This implies that students from lower-income families might value education more personally, perhaps because they believe it will help them in the future. Gottfried et al. (2007) and Oyserman et al. (2001) discovered that students from underprivileged backgrounds are more motivated to learn when they perceive that education may help them succeed in life, which supports this finding. In a similar vein, Ismail et al. (2021) discovered that a large number of Malaysian B40 students believe that education may transform their lives.

However, even though B40 students showed strong internal motivation, they also reported higher levels of amotivation. This means that some of them may feel unsure or unmotivated about their studies. This could be due to challenges like financial stress, lack of resources, or heavy responsibilities, which make it harder for them to stay engaged in learning. This idea is supported by Sirin (2005) and Howard and Arbreton (1991), who found that low-income students often face barriers that reduce the impact of motivation on academic performance. Interestingly, there were no major differences in extrinsic motivation between B40 and non-B40 students. This shows that both groups respond similarly to external rewards like grades or praise. According to Vansteenkiste et al. (2006), external motivators affect most students, but their long-term impact depends on whether students also feel personally connected to their goals.

4.4 Difference of Self-Esteem according to Socioeconomic Status

The second objective was tested using an independent-samples t-test that was conducted to compare self-esteem scores between students in the B40 and Non-B40 socioeconomic categories. There was no significant difference in self-esteem scores between the B40 (M = 27.64, SD = 5.24) and Non-B40 (M = 27.05, SD = 5.11) groups; t(399) = 1.06, p = .289.

TABLE 4. Independent Samples t-Test for Self-Esteem by Socioeconomic Status

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
B40	267	27.64	5.24		
Non-B40	134	27.05	5.11	1.06	.289

The findings indicate that there was no significant difference in the self-esteem of B40 and non-B40 students. This implies that students' perceptions of their own value may not be significantly impacted by their social status. One explanation could be that university support networks like peer support, mentorship, or student services shield students from the detrimental impacts of income differences. It is also possible that adolescents in both groups have developed their sense of self-worth by other means, such as hard work, friendships, or overcoming obstacles. This is consistent with earlier studies like Orth et al. (2012) and Twenge and Campbell (2002), which discovered that personality and a sense of belonging are two more elements than wealth that influence self-esteem. These findings suggest that while SES can affect academic motivation and performance, its influence on self-esteem is less direct and more complex.

4.5 Relationship between Academic Performance and Socioeconomic Status

The third objective was tested using a chi-square test of independence that was shown in Table 5 to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status (B40 vs. Non-B40) and CGPA category (below 3.5 vs. 3.5 and above). The relationship was not statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 0.60$, $p = .437$, indicating that CGPA did not differ significantly between the two socioeconomic groups.

The results indicated that there was no significant association between CGPA and socioeconomic status, indicating that family income level may not have a substantial impact on academic performance at UKM. This finding suggests that both B40 and non-B40 kids can achieve good academic results, possibly as a result of personal resilience, equitable learning settings, or institutional support systems. Coleman (1966) demonstrated that once students have access to education, elements like peer pressure and school resources take precedence over family income, while Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) research emphasizes how college experiences can lessen academic performance gaps linked to SES. Duckworth and Seligman (2005) also stress that motivation and self-control are more powerful indicators of academic achievement than socioeconomic status. Tinto (1993) further argues that institutional support and integration into the academic community contribute significantly to student persistence and performance. Thus, it is possible that motivation, study habits, and social support play a more significant role than SES in determining academic success at the university level, supporting the idea that universities can serve as equalizing spaces where performance disparities related to SES are minimized.

TABLE 5. Chi-Square Test Results for CGPA and Socioeconomic Status

Test	Value	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	0.60	1	.437
Continuity Correction (Yates)	0.45	1	.504
Likelihood Ratio	0.60	1	.438
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)			.445

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES), academic motivation, self-esteem, and academic performance (GPA) among undergraduate students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). The findings provide meaningful insights into how socioeconomic background may influence various psychological and academic variables.

The first objective examined whether B40 and non-B40 students differed significantly in their academic desire. The findings showed that B40 students had higher mean scores than their non-B40 peers on several academic motivation subscales, particularly Intrinsic Motivation to Know and To Experience Stimulation. Other motivation subscales, however, did not reveal any significant differences. The significant difference in self-esteem between B40 and non-B40 students was also investigated. The results of the analysis showed no statistically significant difference, indicating that students' levels of self-esteem were mostly independent of their

socioeconomic background. The third objective evaluated whether B40 and non-B40 students' academic achievement (GPA) vary significantly. No statistically significant difference was found in the data, suggesting that students' GPA performance was solely influenced by their socioeconomic status.

Overall, the results showed how socioeconomic status affects academic performance and motivation. Although there were some clear motivational differences between B40 and non-B40 students, their levels of academic success and self-esteem seemed to be very similar. To sustain the intrinsic desire seen among B40 students, universities should improve support initiatives like mentorship and scholarships. The institution should also put in place programs that encourage students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and help them build their sense of self. To increase generalizability, future studies should use a longitudinal design to examine the ways in which SES affects academic factors over time and expand the sample to include students from different institutions. Future researchers are also recommended to explore how other psychological concepts, such emotional intelligence, influence the relationship between academic success and SES.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to express gratitude to the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for providing support for this research. The researchers also would like to thank all the respondents involved in the study.

Conflict of Interest: The researchers have no conflict of interest in this study.

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