

The Effects of Socioeconomic Status and Materialistic Attitudes on Children's Self-Esteem

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INTRODUCTION

- How a child's self-esteem develops can lead to positive and negative opportunities throughout their life
- One factor that likely influences a child's self-esteem—especially in a materialistic society—is socioeconomic status (SES).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does SES affect children's self-esteem?
- Does SES' influence on materialistic thinking and acquisitions affect children's self-esteem?

PRIOR RESEARCH

- Prior work has examined how SES affects self-esteem development and has revealed that age and gender play a large role.

Article 1: Wells (2001)

- Children in grades 3 through 12
- Measured family social class and child's self-esteem
- Relationship depends on how variables are measured and whether individual values and prioritizes influences of social class.

Article 2: Twenge & Campbell (2002)

- 312,940 participants of all age groups
- Measured self-esteem, SES, age, gender, birth cohort, and race
- SES has a small but significant effect on self-esteem

Article 3: Muldoon & Trew (2000)

- Primary school children from Northern Ireland
- Examined interaction between age, gender, SES, and ethnicity and self-competence in children
- The influence of group membership along with gender and age have the most significant effects

Article 4: McLeod & Owens (2004).

- 10- to 15-year-olds
- Measured effects of SES, gender, and race/ethnicity on scholastic competence, self-worth, depression, and hyperactivity
- Levels of scholastic competence and self-worth increased over time while levels of depression and hyperactivity decreased

Article 5: Melchior, Chastang, Walburg, Arseneault, Galera, & Fombonne (2010)

- Children ages 4 through 18 (at baseline)
- Measured family income and youth depression and anxiety
- Youth from low income families had more internalizing symptoms

PROPOSED STUDY

Hypotheses

- SES will be positively correlated with self-esteem, and this relationship will be influenced by materialistic attitudes.
- Specifically, children from lower SES families will have lower self-worth because they attribute self-worth to material possessions and wish that they were able to have more material goods.

Participants

- 3rd – 5th graders in La Crosse, WI area. Children of all races, genders, SES's, emotional development classifications, and cognitive levels will be eligible.
- At least 150 children and 150 parents
- Teachers of the selected children

Measures and Procedure

- Questionnaires completed by parents, teachers, and children.

Examples of Questions:

	Questions		
	Self-Esteem	Materialistic Attitudes	SES
Children	Do you like yourself?	Do you want things that your parents cannot afford?	Do you wish your family had more money?
Parents	Does your child complain of being teased at school?	Does your child complain that others have more than them?	Which amount is closest to your annual income?
Teachers	Does this child usually appear happy?	Does this child dress well?	Does this child appear to have necessities?

Data Analysis & Predicted Results

- Questionnaire data will be scored & summed
- Relationships between SES, attitudes about materialistic goods, and self-esteem will be analyzed.
- 3rd – 5th graders expected to be positively affected by SES, but this will interact with materialistic attitudes.

		Materialistic Attitudes	
		High	Low
SES	High	Highest self-esteem	High self-esteem
	Low	Lowest self-esteem	Low self-esteem

CONCLUSIONS

- This study adds to prior research in that it explores the importance of materialistic goods and how that correlates with SES and in turn effects self-esteem.
- This will provides a better understanding of what promotes lower or higher self-esteem
- One implication: uniforms in schools



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