



Analyzing Depression in Children (6-12 Years): A Gender Perspective

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Abstract: This study examines depression in children (6-12 years) across socio-economic groups, focusing on gender differences in behavioral and emotional problems. A total of 150 children (50 in each socio-economic group, with 25 boys and 25 girls) were assessed. Results showed that boys in lower socio-economic groups exhibit higher levels of high-intensity behavioral problems (60%) compared to girls (48%), while girls show more emotional problems (64% vs. 48%). Similar patterns were observed in middle and higher socio-economic groups as well, with boys showing higher behavioural problems and girls showing more emotional issues. These findings highlighted the need for gender-sensitive interventions to address both behavioral and emotional aspects of childhood depression.

Keywords: Childhood Depression, Socio-Economic Groups, Behavioral Problems, Emotional Problems, Gender Differences.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Childhood depression is a growing concern worldwide, with increasing recognition of its long-term impact on emotional well-being, social functioning, and academic performance. Depression during formative years is not only a psychological challenge but also a factor influencing physical and cognitive development. Recent studies emphasize the importance of understanding the multifaceted nature of childhood depression, particularly the role of socio-economic status (SES) and gender in shaping its prevalence and manifestations.

Socio-economic factors significantly influence a child's mental health. Children from lower SES backgrounds are often exposed to financial instability, limited access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare, making them more vulnerable to psychological distress, including depression. Conversely, children from higher SES groups may experience pressure to excel academically or socially, contributing to their mental health challenges. Middle SES groups often present a mix of these stressors, offering unique insights into how socio-economic conditions contribute to childhood depression.



Gender differences further compound the complexity of childhood depression. Research suggests that boys and girls may exhibit distinct patterns of depressive symptoms, with boys often externalizing through behavioral problems and girls internalizing through emotional issues. Studies like those of **Smith et al. (2022)** and **Gupta et al. (2023)** highlight these variations, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive approaches in understanding and addressing childhood depression.

Despite increasing research, few studies comprehensively examine how SES and gender intersect to influence depression levels in children. This gap is particularly evident in the Indian context, where socio-economic diversity is vast, and cultural factors further shape mental health outcomes. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing depression levels in children aged 6-12 years across three socio-economic groups (lower, middle, and higher), with a focus on the behavioral and emotional dimensions of depression and gender-based disparities.

Using Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Scale (**revised by Wani, 2019**) as the framework for categorizing SES, this research involves a sample of 150 children equally distributed across SES groups and genders. By examining behavioral and emotional problems separately, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how socio-economic and gender factors contribute to childhood depression. Findings from this research will inform targeted interventions and policies to address childhood depression, emphasizing the need for socio-culturally sensitive and gender-inclusive approaches.

2. Objectives :

- To analyze gender disparity in childhood depression across socio- economic groups of depression

3. Methods and materials :

Study Design and Population: This research employed a cross-sectional design to analyze and compare depression levels in children aged between 6-12 years across three socio-economic groups (lower, middle, and higher). A total of 150 children participated, with 50 children from each socio-economic group, equally divided into 25 boys and 25 girls in each socio-economic group.

Sampling Procedure: Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across socio-economic groups. The socioeconomic classification was determined using Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Status Scale: Re-revised by Wani et al. (2019), which considers the educational, occupational, and income parameters of the family.

Data Collection Tools:

1. Childhood depression inventory

- a) **Behavioral Assessment Scale:** A self-designed tool was used to assess the behavioral problems, focusing on intensity levels categorized as high, above average, average, low, and poor.
- b) **Emotional Assessment Scale:** Another self-designed tool was employed to evaluate emotional problems across the same intensity categories.

2. **Socio-Economic Classification:** Kuppuswamy's Scale was used to classify the socio-economic status of the participants' families.

Data Collection Procedure: Data was collected over three months from schools representing each socio-economic group. Parents provided consent, and teachers facilitated the process. The scales were administered in the presence of trained researcher to ensure reliability and address any queries during the assessment.

Statistical Analysis: The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The prevalence of behavioral and emotional problems was calculated as percentages. Comparative analyses between boys and girls within each socio-economic group were conducted using chi-square tests to identify significant gender differences.



4. Results and discussion

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Behavioral Problems Across Socio-Economic Groups

Socio-economic Groups	Gender	High (%)	Above average (%)	Average (%)	Low (%)	Poor (%)	chi-square
Lower socio-economic status	Boys	60	24	8	4	4	10.5
	Girls	48	16	16	8	12	8.7
Middle socio-economic status	Boys	56	12	20	4	8	12.3
	Girls	52	16	16	8	8	9.8
Higher socio-economic status	Boys	68	12	12	8	0	14.2
	Girls	56	8	20	12	4	11.4

Table 1 reveals comparative analysis of behavioral problems across different socio-economic groups, categorized by gender and evaluated on five behavioral severity levels: High, Above Average, Average, Low, and Poor. The data reveal distinct patterns, highlighting disparities based on socio-economic status and gender. Boys from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibit the highest percentage (60%) of "High" behavioral problems, followed by girls in the same group at 48%. In the middle socio-economic group, behavioral issues are more evenly distributed, with boys and girls showing slightly lower percentages in the "High" and "Above Average" categories compared to the lower group. Interestingly, in the higher socio-economic group, boys again display a significant proportion (68%) of "High" behavioral problems, while girls are relatively evenly distributed across all categories, with the lowest percentage in the "Poor" category (4%). The chi-square values indicate statistical significance in the variation of behavioral problems across socio-economic groups, emphasizing the impact of socio-economic factors on youth behavior. Boys from higher socio-economic status exhibit the more behavioural issues, with the highest chi-square value (14.2) and 68% falling in the "High" category. In contrast, girls from lower socio-economic status show the least variation in behavioral problems, with a chi-square value of 8.7 and a more balanced distribution across categories.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Emotional Problems Across Socio-Economic Groups

Socio-economic Groups	Gender	High (%)	Above average (%)	Average (%)	Low (%)	Poor (%)	chi-square
Lower socio-economic status	Boys	48	8	16	12	16	9.6
	Girls	64	12	16	4	4	11.8
Middle socio-economic status	Boys	40	16	20	12	12	8.5
	Girls	64	16	12	4	4	10.3
Higher socio-economic status	Boys	44	20	16	8	12	9.2
	Girls	48	20	12	12	8	10.7

Table 2 highlights a comparative analysis of emotional problems across socio-economic groups, categorized by gender and assessed across five severity levels: High, Above Average, Average, Low, and Poor. The data reveal notable trends in emotional problems influenced by socio-economic status and gender. Among lower socio-economic groups, girls exhibit a higher percentage (64%) of "High" emotional problems compared to boys (48%), indicating a pronounced



gender disparity. In the middle socio-economic group, girls again show a higher percentage (64%) in the "High" category, while boys demonstrate a more balanced distribution across all levels. In higher socio-economic groups, the "High" category is comparatively lower for both genders, with boys at 44% and girls at 48%. The chi-square values suggest statistically significant differences in the distribution of emotional problems across socio-economic groups, emphasizing how socio-economic and gender factors intersect to influence emotional well-being. Girls from lower socio-economic status exhibit the more emotional issues, with the highest chi-square value (11.8) and 64% falling in the "High" category. In contrast, boys from middle socio-economic status show the least variation in emotional problems, with a chi-square value of 8.5 and a balanced distribution across categories.

5. Conclusion :

This study provides valuable insights into the depression levels of children aged 6-12 years across different socio-economic groups, with a particular focus on gender-based differences in behavioral and emotional problems. The findings reveal distinct patterns across socio-economic groups, demonstrating that boys generally exhibit higher levels of high-intensity behavioral problems, particularly in the higher socio-economic group, whereas girls tend to experience more severe emotional problems, especially in the lower and middle socio-economic groups. The chi-square values suggest statistically significant differences in the distribution of emotional problems and behavioural problems across socio-economic groups. Boys from higher socio-economic status exhibit the most behavioral issues (Chi-Square = 14.2, 68% "High"), while girls from lower socio-economic status show the least variation (Chi-Square = 8.7). Similarly, girls from lower socio-economic status face the most emotional problems (Chi-Square = 11.8, 64% "High"), whereas boys from middle socio-economic status show the least variation (Chi-Square = 8.5). These differences underscore the complex interplay between socio-economic status, gender, and childhood depression. The results highlight the need for targeted interventions that address both behavioural and emotional dimensions of childhood depression, ensuring that strategies are gender-sensitive and socio-culturally appropriate. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on childhood mental health, emphasizing the importance of early detection and intervention, particularly for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may be more vulnerable to severe emotional distress. Further research is recommended to explore the underlying causes of these gender and socio-economic differences and to develop effective, tailored support systems for children facing mental health challenges.

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