



The Influence of EFL Students' Socioeconomic Background on English Learning Motivation: A Lesson from Rural Indonesian High Schools

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Abstract

Motivation is a critical factor in English language acquisition, and its significance is widely acknowledged. However, disparities in income and resources, particularly in rural schools, strongly affect how motivated students feel. Socioeconomic status (SES) is recognized as a factor that influences academic achievement. The effect of SES on students' motivation to learn English in rural Indonesia has not been widely studied. This study aims to investigate how socioeconomic status (SES) influences students' English learning motivation. This study used a qualitative case study method with 15 participants, selected and grouped according to the Modified Kuppusswamy Scale. This qualitative case study looks at how SES influences the motivation of students at a senior high school in a rural area. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, employing Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of cultural capital and habitus, as well as Gardner and Lambert's (1972) Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition. The findings suggest that SES does not directly influence motivation. Instead, SES affects motivation indirectly through access to learning resources, family support, self-confidence, and social perception. Despite limited resources, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds frequently remain motivated by aspirations for improved future opportunities. The study demonstrates that students who possess personal agency and receive support from teachers are more capable of addressing economic challenges. The findings further recommend the implementation of inclusive teaching methods and ensuring equitable access to resources for rural learners.

Keywords: English learning; Indonesian rural schools; Motivation to learn; Socioeconomic status

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INTRODUCTION

The global significance of learning English as a second language (L2) is widely acknowledged, as it facilitates social and academic advancement in developing countries. Socioeconomic status (SES) influences academic performance and engagement; however, limited research examines its effects on students in rural schools. SES significantly influences this process, exerting a considerable impact on both academic performance and students' engagement in their studies. Khan (2016) observes that SES influences both academic performance and students' attitudes toward the learning process. Oduro-Ofori et al. (2023) suggested that SES has a strong impact on students' motivation to learn a second language. Hui and Chen (2025) argue that while SES may not directly shape

motivation, it does play an important role in students' practical language awareness and their long-term academic goals.

Although previous research has provided valuable insights, a significant gap persists in the literature. Most studies have concentrated on urban educational settings or international contexts, as exemplified by Sohidi and Rifai (2022) in Sidoarjo and Hovhannisyan et al. (2022) in Greek universities. This study was conducted in Kecamatan Megang Sakti, Musi Rawas Regency, South Sumatra. According to BPS Kabupaten Musi Rawas (2022) the rural subdistrict has 21 villages, and each one has varying levels of infrastructure and communication access. As a result, there are gaps in education and a digital divide. Rural areas, like senior high schools in South Sumatra, often receive less attention in academic research. Students in this context have limited access to digital resources and opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Many students also cannot afford private tutoring due to financial constraints. The schools encounter several research challenges, such as a digital divide that limits students' access to digital resources.

Additionally, financial constraints prevent many students from affording private tutoring. Students in rural Indonesia encounter distinct motivational challenges compared to their urban counterparts, who typically benefit from greater language exposure and enhanced institutional support. Economic challenges and limited resources in these areas make it harder for students to learn English. Ghorbani and Golparvar (2019) found that students from wealthier backgrounds have greater access to technology, which helps them learn independently. There is still little research on how rural students deal with these challenges, especially when their motivation is tied to hopes for social mobility. This study examines several factors, such as limited digital access, a lack of private tutoring, family expectations, social comparison, confidence gaps, and students' future career goals. Many recent studies, such as those by Ariani and Ghafournia (2016) and Hosen (2021), rely on quantitative methods. These methods might not fully capture the complex nature of students' real experiences.

This study integrates Bourdieu's (1986) ideas of cultural capital and habitus with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) socio-educational model to better explain how socioeconomic conditions affect students' motivation. This study integrates multiple theoretical frameworks to move beyond basic correlations and examine how structural inequalities, conceptualized as cultural capital, are internalized as personal beliefs known as habitus. These beliefs are linked to psychological factors such as integrative and instrumental motivation, which shape student learning. Employing this dual theoretical approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how rural students utilize limited resources to develop meaningful educational opportunities and objectives. For the methods, the study uses the Modified Kuppaswamy Scale to categorize students by SES and conducts semi-structured interviews to understand their motivation better (Saleem & Jan, 2021). This study of a rural Indonesian high school also shows that personal agency and teacher support help students from low socioeconomic backgrounds overcome challenges, as noted by Moskowitz and Dewaele (2019). This study explores how socioeconomic status affects English learning motivation among students at a rural Indonesian high school, using a qualitative approach. It combines Bourdieu's theory with the socio-educational model to better understand the factors that drive students' motivation in schools with limited resources.

Previous research has established a general correlation between SES and academic achievement. However, few studies have examined the impact of SES on English-learning motivation among students in rural Indonesian public high schools. This investigation examines students' experiences and motivations within a relatively under-researched context. The findings aim to inform the development of more equitable language education policies and more inclusive pedagogical approaches. The central research

inquiry is: “How does students’ socioeconomic status affect their motivation to learn English at the senior high schools?”

Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Educational Outcomes

Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to a person’s or family’s social and economic position, usually based on income, education, and occupation. These factors influence the resources, opportunities, and living conditions that affect students’ education. Many studies have found a strong link between SES and students’ academic results (Hernández et al., 2019; Munir et al., 2023). Students from higher-SES backgrounds often do better in school because they have greater access to resources such as private tutoring, digital tools, and supportive home environments (Munir et al., 2023). Recent research shows that EFL learners’ SES background is a significant predictor of their experience of language learning at school and in private institutes, since it affects the quality of educational resources they can use (Ghorbani & Golparvar, 2019). These benefits improve learning conditions and help students focus more on their studies (Hernández et al., 2019). Research also shows a clear link between “learners’ family education, parents’ occupation, and family income and their achieved scores in English” (Hosen, 2021). This means that SES, through education, occupation, and income, influences students’ academic success (Munir et al., 2023).

SES impacts more than the resources available to a family. It also shapes the learning environment by affecting parental support, expectations, and the academic culture at home (Liu et al., 2023). Parental education, a key component of SES, strongly affects how students learn. Parents with higher levels of education are often better equipped to guide and support their children in school. Students from families with higher SES usually receive more encouragement and structured support, since parents with higher education have the skills and information to help their children learn (Munir et al., 2023). Students from lower SES backgrounds often have limited access to learning materials and support outside school (Owoseni et al., 2020). These gaps create unequal learning conditions, and low family SES is seen as a crucial and relevant risk factor for children’s negative academic performance (Liu et al., 2023).

SES affects not only students’ academic performance but also their motivation and self-perception. Here, motivation refers to the internal and external factors that push students to engage in learning and continue working toward their goals. Access to resources shapes students’ attitudes, expectations, and the value they place on education (Munir et al., 2023). Students from families with higher SES often have bigger academic goals, since the SES of parents encourages students to have high aspirations in education and gives students confidence to aim higher in the academic ladder (Oduro-Ofori et al., 2023). SES can influence motivation indirectly, including through psychological factors. For example, instilling internal motivation in students irrespective of their socioeconomic background can boost their self-esteem and self-actualization (Owoseni et al., 2020). This means that although social background affects learning, internal psychological factors may help reduce some economic disadvantages (Hernández et al., 2019).

However, motivation is not only shaped by economic background. Students from lower-SES backgrounds can show strong motivation, especially when education is linked to long-term benefits such as social mobility. In numerous contexts, “education is a major and direct pathway to achieve social mobility” (Liu et al., 2023), serving as a significant source of intrinsic motivation for disadvantaged students. Although SES is a notable contextual factor, it does not consistently represent the strongest predictor of academic success. Research shows that “prior academic achievement, university experience, and working status are more strongly related to academic performance than SES” (Hernández et al., 2019). Because of this, it is important to examine how SES, external resources, and

internal factors such as resilience and motivation interact to explain differences in students' academic outcomes.

Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is widely acknowledged as a central factor in second language acquisition because it substantially affects learners' engagement, persistence, and overall achievement (Seven, 2020; Sun & Gao, 2020). In general, motivation can be defined as the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain learners' behavior toward achieving specific learning goals. It also refers to the processes that determine the intensity of effort, the duration of engagement, and the level of commitment learners demonstrate in the learning process (Reeve, 2012, as cited in Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018). According to Seven (2020), motivation plays a key role in determining the extent to which learners participate actively and maintain their efforts over time. Those who are more motivated tend to be more persistent and involved, achieving better results when learning a second language (Bailey et al., 2021).

According to Gardner (1985, as cited in Huwari, 2021), the socio-educational model, English language learning can be explained by distinguishing between integrative motivation, which reflects a desire to connect with the language's culture and people, and instrumental motivation, which focuses on practical benefits such as passing exams, gaining employment, or achieving social advancement. In many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, especially in developing or rural areas, students are motivated mainly by instrumental reasons, seeing English as a tool to improve their economic prospects (Darvin & Norton, 2023). This shows the close link between learners' motivation and their goals, expectations, and the perceived value of English.

Emotional and psychological factors play a key role in shaping students' motivation. Feelings like anxiety, enjoyment, and self-confidence have a strong impact on how engaged learners are in language (Lou & Noels, 2019; Song & Song, 2023). When students enjoy learning and feel they are achieving something, they become more motivated and participate more. In contrast, negative feelings like being afraid to make mistakes can make them less likely to join in (Lou & Noels, 2019). These psychological factors are also linked to students' socioeconomic status (SES). Students with supportive environments and enough learning resources usually feel more confident and positive. Those with fewer resources may feel more anxious and less capable, which can lower their motivation (Bailey et al., 2021).

Students' motivation is strongly influenced by how relevant they perceive English to be for achieving their future goals. Those who recognize the importance of English for personal and professional development are more likely to remain motivated, even when facing difficulties (Darvin & Norton, 2023). Motivation comes from a mix of socioeconomic circumstances, psychological factors, and personal goals. This study looks at how socioeconomic status affects students' motivation to learn English, especially in rural areas with limited resources. The next section shares the findings and explains them using this approach.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study approach to explore how students' socioeconomic status (SES) affects their motivation to learn English at SMA Negeri Megang Sakti. A qualitative approach is best for understanding complex attitudes and lived experiences because it helps reveal deeper influences beyond what is immediately visible. According to Creswell and Poth (2017, as cited in Dodgson, 2017), qualitative research allows for a thorough exploration of participants' views in their real-life settings.

This study used a case study design, which makes it possible to closely examine a specific system in its natural environment. Focusing on SMA Negeri Megang Sakti, this research examines the unique dynamics of a rural Indonesian school and clarifies the influence of SES on students' motivation.

This study investigated English learners as a bounded case, concentrating on a single rural school within a defined social context, time frame, and participant group. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the research explored the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' motivation, confidence, family support, and access to English-language learning resources in real-world settings. Semi-structured interviews facilitated the articulation of students' experiences, perspectives, and challenges, which are often neglected by quantitative approaches, and provided students with the opportunity to express their views. This study applies the theoretical frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Robert Gardner (1985) to examine the relationship between social structures and motivation in second language acquisition. A case study design is suitable for this research question as it enables an in-depth examination of the relationship between SES and English learning motivation within a specific educational context, rather than facilitating broad generalizations.

Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted at senior high schools, a rural senior high school selected because its students come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The study focused on students in grades XI and XII. Out of 25 students initially considered, 15 who fit the criteria for SES categories 2 to 4 were selected as participants. The sample consisted of 15 students from grades XI and XII, including both male and female participants from SES categories 2, 3, and 4. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of participants by grade, gender, and SES category. Participants were limited to grades XI and XII because these students have had more exposure to English instruction and are better able to reflect on their learning experiences and motivation. The selection process used purposive sampling, enabling the researcher to select participants with characteristics relevant to the study (Guest et al., 2006). Purposive sampling was employed to select students who demonstrated willingness to participate, the ability to articulate their experiences, and representation of the required socioeconomic diversity for the study.

This study classified participants' socioeconomic status using the Modified Kuppaswamy Scale (1976), which sorts SES by parents' education, occupation, and income. Categories 2 to 4 were selected to represent the actual socioeconomic differences among eligible students. Categories 1 and 5 were excluded due to the absence of students from these groups at the outset. Before data collection, students were informed of the study's purpose and provided consent. The study received approval from the school. To ensure confidentiality, participant names were replaced with codes (P1 to P15), which are referenced in the findings and discussion.

Table 1. Modified Kuppaswamy Socioeconomic Status Scale

Component	Category	Score
Education of the Head of Family	Professional / Honors	7
	Graduate / Postgraduate	6
	Intermediate / Diploma	5
	High School Certificate	4
	Middle School	3
	Primary School	2
	Illiterate	1
Occupation of Head of Family	Legislators, senior officials, managers	10
	Professional	9

Component	Category	Score
	Technicians/associate professionals	8
	Clerks	7
	Skilled workers and shop and market sales workers	6
	Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	5
	Craft and related trade workers	4
	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3
	Elementary occupation	2
	Unemployed	1

This study used the Modified Kuppuswamy Scale for income classification, with adjustments to match the economic conditions in South Sumatra. A conversion factor from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was used to make sure the income categories reflect current living costs. According to 2024 data, the CPI reached 105.78, with 2022 as the base year. Therefore, a conversion factor of 1.0578 was used to update the income ranges. In addition, several regional economic indicators were considered to determine appropriate income levels. The Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP) for 2024, which is Rp3,456,874, was used as a reference point for the middle category. Lower income levels were determined using the regional poverty line, whereas the highest category was defined by regional labor productivity data. Gradual increases for middle-income groups were calculated using appropriate multipliers to reflect variations in living standards and spending patterns. All income ranges were converted into Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) and substantiated with official data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2024) and Bank Indonesia (2024). This methodology ensures that the income table remains relevant to the local context and meets academic standards.

Table 2. Family Total Monthly Income Based on 2024 Regional Adjustment (South Sumatra)

Total Monthly Income (IDR)	Score
≥ Rp15,000,000	12
Rp13,000,000 – Rp14,999,999	11
Rp8,600,000 – Rp12,999,999	10
Rp7,500,000 – Rp8,599,999	9
Rp6,500,000 – Rp7,499,999	8
Rp5,900,000 – Rp6,499,999	7
Rp5,500,000 – Rp5,899,999	6
Rp4,500,000 – Rp5,199,999	5
Rp3,456,874 – Rp4,499,999	4
Rp2,250,000 – Rp3,456,873	3
Rp1,200,000 – Rp2,249,999	2
< Rp1,200,000	1

Data Collection Technique

This study used semi-structured interviews as the main method for collecting data, as they are suitable for exploring complex topics such as students' socioeconomic background and their motivation to learn English. This type of interview allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions while still keeping a similar structure for all participants. This approach helps researchers to gain a better understanding of participants' personal experiences (Adeooye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The study focused on what affects students' motivation, such as family support, access to learning resources like the internet and devices, study habits, and future goals. The interviews also looked at

two types of motivation: instrumental motivation, such as learning English for future careers, and integrative motivation, such as interest in culture, following the ideas of Gardner (2010). In addition, a demographic form based on the Kuppaswamy framework was used to ensure the participants came from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Data collection began with the identification of 25 potential participants from grades XI and XII. Following purposive sampling and consideration of socioeconomic status, 15 students were selected for interviews. Each participant was interviewed individually in a quiet room at the school to promote comfort and openness. Interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian to enable students to express themselves naturally and confidently. With informed consent, interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. During reporting, any excerpts translated into English were cross-checked with the original Indonesian transcripts to ensure accuracy of meaning.

Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis to find patterns about students' socioeconomic status and their motivation to learn English. The process followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Each interview was transcribed word for word and reviewed several times to fully understand the content. Key statements from participants (P1–P15) were then highlighted and given initial codes based on topics like financial constraints, family support, access to resources, motivation, and self-confidence. These codes were grouped into broader categories by looking for similarities and connections. For example, codes related to financial limitations, resource scarcity, and the learning environment were consolidated into a single category to illustrate their collective impact on learning opportunities. The categories were combined into main themes such as structural factors that affect access to learning, family influence, personal motivation, and confidence in learning. These themes were reviewed and adjusted to make sure they reflected participants' experiences and answered the research question. Table 3 gives an example of how the coding process developed from raw data to themes.

Table 3. Example of Coding Process in Thematic Analysis

Participant Statements	Initial Code	Category	Theme	
"It is difficult because my teacher suggested taking extra lessons... but I don't always have the money."	Financial constraints increase difficulty	Financial barriers	Structural Shaping Access	Factors Learning
"My parents do not demand it, but I personally want to be good at it."	low family pressure self-motivation	Personal motivation	Family Influence in Learning Orientation	
"My confidence is still low because I am not very good at it."	Low confidence limits participation	Self-confidence	Confidence and Social Perception in Learning Engagement	
"They seem to know more because they have better support."	Social comparison reduces confidence	Social perception	Confidence and Social Perception in Learning Engagement	
"It may require additional lessons such as private tutoring, which can be limited by family financial conditions."	Financial Limitations create learning barriers	Financial Barrier	Structural Shaping Access	Factors Learning

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Structural Factors (Learning Access)

A student's family finances, access to learning materials, and support from their environment all play a big role in how motivated they feel and what challenges they face when learning English. Financial difficulties especially make it hard for students to join extra classes, get tutoring, or use paid online resources. Many students said they cannot always follow their teachers' advice for extra lessons because their families cannot afford it. As one student explained,

"It is difficult because my teacher suggested taking extra lessons or courses. But because I don't always have the money, it becomes a bit difficult... I also often use Ruangguru. But if there is no money, then I cannot use it" (P2).

"Yes, it is a big challenge because it is difficult and learning English can also require additional costs" (P13).

P14 also noted that getting extra help, like private tutoring, depends on the family's finances. P9 said learning *"feels quite difficult because I do not take private courses while some of my friends do"*. These findings show that financial limits not only block access but also lead to differences in students' learning experiences and confidence.

Access to learning resources can reduce the perceived difficulty of studying and enhance student motivation. For example, P1 and P3 said learning English was *"easier"* because they could use smartphones and televisions to explore on their own. P14 mentioned that learning can improve without *"spending money"* by using books at home. P10 continued learning by using offline apps when there was no internet access. However, disparities in resource availability persist among students. P2, for example, only had a dictionary and no computer, which made it harder to use different materials. These differences mean that students do not all have the same learning opportunities.

Besides financial and technological factors, the environment also shapes how students learn. Some students, such as P12 and P8, said that English is rarely spoken in their community, so they do not get much practice outside of school. Because of this, they mostly rely on school lessons or their own efforts to use English. For example, P4 uses digital tools as the main way to get English exposure. These results show that socioeconomic status affects students' motivation by influencing their access to resources, learning settings, and chances to participate.

Family Influence and Orientation

Family situations play a big role in how motivated students are to learn English, especially when it comes to expectations, support, and how the language is used at home. For some students, explicit expectations from their families serve as a significant source of motivation. P3 reported that learning English is challenging because their parents and siblings, who already speak English proficiently, expect them to achieve similar success. This finding illustrates that family expectations can generate both pressure and a sense of responsibility. Similarly, P14 associated learning English with future family obligations, stating that it is necessary *"so that I can later teach my younger siblings."* Other students, like P5 and P11, also said their families expect them to know English. These examples show that for many learners, family expectations shape their learning habits and encourage a sense of duty to succeed.

Motivation often increases in families where learning English happens naturally rather than being forced. In these situations, students feel supported without pressure, which encourages them to take responsibility for their learning. For example, P1 shared

that their family is supportive: *"my parents are fine with it. They even support me, so it feels natural."* This suggests that family encouragement can make learning more comfortable and enjoyable. P8 also said that English is sometimes used at home: *"my siblings and I communicate in English."* Using English in daily life can help reduce anxiety. P2 described English as *"something natural to learn,"* which shows that when a language is part of daily life at home, students may feel motivated without needing strict rules. In these examples, families help by creating a supportive environment where learning feels meaningful and manageable.

The different amounts of family pressure students experience show how important it is for them to have their own motivation and independence. For example, P10's family encourages English language learning, but their expectations remain moderate, and English proficiency is *"It is expected so that I can speak English, but it is not strongly demanded."* This indicates a balance between parental guidance and individual autonomy. In contrast, P12 and P6 report that their parents do not exert pressure; however, these students remain motivated by personal goals. As they stated:

"My parents do not demand that I be good at English, but I personally want to be good at it." (P12)

"My parents do not demand that I be good at English, but I personally want to be good at it" (P6)

These cases demonstrate that students may be motivated by intrinsic interests, ambitions, or a desire for self-improvement, rather than solely by external expectations.

The results indicate that the influence of family varies according to each student's background and circumstances. Some students experience pressure or support from their families, while others are less impacted. High expectations can push students to work hard out of duty. A supportive and relaxed home helps them find their own motivation. This shows that family can affect both how involved students are in learning English and what drives them to learn.

Personal Agency and Motivation

The findings show that students take an active role in keeping themselves motivated to learn English, even when they face financial or structural challenges. Their motivation mostly comes from looking ahead and seeing English as useful for practical and economic reasons in a globalized world. Many students said English is important for their future, especially for getting a job. P3 said, *"English will be very important in the future as the world continues to develop,"* and P6 said, *"English will definitely be needed in the future. English is an international language, so we need to learn the basics"*. Some students felt a sense of urgency because they worried about having fewer job options. P9 shared that the *"fear of not getting a good job"* motivates them to study harder. P8 said learning English *"will help with future employment,"* and P14 noted that English should be a priority since it is *"often needed in many jobs."* These responses show that students are motivated by practical reasons and long-term goals.

Beyond these future goals, students also demonstrate a high level of independence in their learning as a way to deal with limited resources. Many participants said they use simple and affordable ways to keep improving their English. P1 learns by watching English movies and listening to English songs, which helps them understand the language more naturally. P14 uses books at home, so they do not have to spend money on learning. Digital resources also play a big role in independent learning. P7 learns from the internet or other websites, and P10 pointed out that some apps work offline, making it possible to learn even without data. These examples show that students keep finding ways to learn and adapt, even when money is limited.

The results indicate that many students think personal effort matters more than socioeconomic background when it comes to learning English. Some participants also

highlighted the importance of determination and self-motivation. For example, P3 said, *"It depends on the person. If someone is really determined, they should still be able to learn"*. P4 agreed, saying that reaching learning goals *"depends on personal motivation."* P1 also pointed out that while financial conditions matter, individual effort is just as important. These responses show that although socioeconomic status can affect learning, students do not see it as a permanent barrier. They believe motivation can continue through commitment, independence, and having clear goals for the future.

Social Perception and Confidence

The results indicate that students' confidence and self-image are closely linked to their socioeconomic background. These aspects have a strong impact on how motivated they are to learn English. Many students also compare themselves to classmates who have more support or better resources. This is especially noticeable when some students get private lessons, extra help, or access to better materials, which can make others feel less confident. P2, for example, saw that some of his or her classmates seem to know more because they are supported by those tools... they may have private lessons or courses. Because of this, a lot of students feel nervous and not sure of themselves, especially when they have to talk. P8 said, *"I feel a little nervous because I think I am not as good as them,"* and P13 said the same thing for the same reasons. P14 said that other kids *"learn English more deeply, while I mostly learn it only at school and sometimes at home."* Some others, including P7, P10, and P6, also said they were worried or not very confident, and they linked this to feeling less ready than their classmates. These results indicate that socioeconomic disparities can influence motivation by affecting students' confidence and emotions during the learning process.

Many students see English as a valuable social asset that can shape how others view them. Some people believe that being able to speak English can make you more popular. For example, P14 said that English *"can help improve social status,"* and P11 agreed, saying, *"Yes, I believe that."* P6 added that English skills might affect how others see them, saying, *"people may view us differently."* These comments show that students recognize the social importance of English, which may motivate them to learn it. But not everyone thought this was a good thing. Some people were afraid that their friends would condemn them or think they were too affected by other cultures. P15 said this, *"Sometimes people just see it as someone trying to look 'very English.'"* P4 said that knowing English can have a social impact depending on the situation. They said, *"in some environments yes, but in others maybe not."*

These findings show that confidence and social perception are key factors connecting socioeconomic conditions and motivation. When students have different access to resources, they compare themselves to others, which affects how they view their abilities. The social value placed on English can either encourage or discourage students from taking part. This means that students' motivation depends not just on their material situation, but also on how they see their own abilities and how they think others see them.

Discussion

This study looked at how students' socioeconomic status (SES) affects their motivation to learn English at SMA Negeri Megang Sakti. The results show that SES does not influence motivation in a simple or direct way. Instead, its impact comes through several connected factors, especially access to learning resources and family background (Hui & Chen, 2025). Financial challenges often limit students' access to important tools like smartphones, stable internet, and extra learning materials, which are now key for language learning. Because of this, students from lower SES backgrounds have fewer chances to use English outside the classroom, while those from higher SES families get

more exposure through private lessons or digital platforms (Iwaniec, 2020). These differences not only reduce learning opportunities but also make English seem harder to master (Alhamami, 2023), which leads to unequal learning experiences. How long someone stays in school, or the time they spend gaining cultural knowledge, depends on how long their family can support them without needing them to work. (Bourdieu, 2001, as cited in Farrell, 2010). The findings have important implications for rural English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where students often face restricted access to English instruction due to low household income, geographic isolation, inadequate school resources, and unreliable internet connectivity. In line with previous studies, the current research indicates that socioeconomic inequality primarily leads to unequal educational opportunities rather than merely a lack of motivation.

The findings show that SES does not directly lower students' motivation. Instead, it affects the conditions in which motivation grows and lasts. According to Dörnyei (2019), the idea of the L2 Learning Experience, motivation is closely linked to a learner's immediate environment, such as access to meaningful learning opportunities. Family influence also shapes the connection between SES and motivation, since parental expectations and attitudes guide students' early approach to learning (Madya et al., 2019). According to Hui and Chen (2025), having high expectations can encourage students to improve. However, creating a supportive and low-pressure environment is more likely to help students develop their own motivation, as self-determination theory suggests. This shows that SES alone does not decide motivational outcomes. Instead, how families understand and react to their socioeconomic situation plays a key role in whether students' engagement is driven by outside factors or comes from within (Iwaniec, 2020). The findings suggest that a student's home environment strongly shapes their attitude toward learning, since family expectations affect their habits. Some students learn English to meet their family's expectations, making the language part of their identity and reflecting their cultural values. This supports Gardner's (2006) view that social pressures can turn into personal motivation. However, other students stay motivated without family pressure, showing a more self-aware habitus (Bourdieu, 2000, as cited in Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) that helps them direct their own learning, even when it is difficult.

Students are not just passive recipients of structural and social conditions. Even with limited resources, they find ways to stay engaged, showing how individual agency works within larger social systems (Darvin & Norton, 2023). This finding adds to earlier research on digital inequality. While many studies point to a lack of access as the main barrier, this study shows that some rural learners adapt by using low-cost or limited resources. As a result, having fewer resources does not always stop students from staying motivated and taking initiative. This means motivation is shaped by both outside pressures and personal choices. In Indonesia, these findings show that tackling inequality requires more than better access to school materials and digital tools. Sabri and Hamid (2023) also support programs that involve families, aiming to ensure that children's ambition and determination are not limited by their socioeconomic background.

Socioeconomic status (SES) can influence students' motivation by affecting their access to resources and the quality of their learning environment (Hui & Chen, 2025). Financial difficulties can make it harder for students from lower SES backgrounds to get things like cell phones and reliable internet. Iwaniec (2020) adds that children from wealthier families often have access to extra resources, private tutoring, or digital platforms that other students may not. However, research from Indonesia shows that these challenges do not always reduce motivation. Many students remain highly motivated, seeing English as a way to get better jobs and improve their social standing (Sabri & Hamid, 2023). The research shows that students see English as important for getting jobs and improving their economic security. This means their motivation is mostly practical,

which matches Gardner's Socio-Educational Model. From Bourdieu's (2001, as cited in Farrell, 2010) perspective, English acts as cultural capital that can turn into economic benefits. Learning the language becomes an investment for social mobility and standing out in a global job market.

This approach is based on the idea of the Ideal L2 Self, where learners imagine themselves as skilled English speakers to achieve their long-term goals (Dörnyei, 2019). If resources are limited, students look for other ways to learn, such as using offline apps, online media, or any materials they can find. This shows that they are active participants who keep working on their learning and identity, even with economic challenges (Darvin & Norton, 2023). While socioeconomic status affects learning conditions, it does not completely control students' motivation. Motivation can come from external pressures as well as from our own hard work. In Indonesia, these results suggest that schools should focus on providing digital and material resources and encourage learner independence, so that socioeconomic background does not remain a barrier to effective language learning. When students use accessible resources on their own, it shows they are developing a reflexive habitus. This means they find ways to overcome structural barriers by making the most of the opportunities they have, which Bourdieu (1996, as cited in van Maanen, 2009) calls the "space of possibles." This idea also fits with Gardner's concept of motivational intensity (1985, as cited in Taie & Afshari, 2015), which shows that steady effort and persistence can help students succeed in language learning, even if formal opportunities are limited.

Besides structural and individual factors, social perception and confidence also affect students' motivation to learn English. According to Iwaniec (2020), students often compare themselves to peers who have better access to educational resources, which can lower their confidence and increase anxiety. Hui and Chen (2025) point out that how students see themselves is strongly linked to their access to technology. The digital divide means some children struggle to study because they lack important tools such as smartphones or reliable internet. These gaps in access are sometimes confused with differences in ability, which can make students less likely to take part, especially in activities that require communication.

Many people see strong English skills as a type of social capital that can raise a person's status and help them find better jobs in today's global market (Vu & Do, 2021). This belief can strongly motivate students to learn the language. However, the findings show a more complex situation. According to Madya et al. (2019), concerns about social and economic bias are some of the reasons why certain students avoid social situations where they might face negative judgment from their peers. This suggests that the social meaning of English is not always positive and can sometimes discourage students from taking part. According to Bourdieu (2001, as cited in Farrell, 2010), this tension shows that language acts as symbolic capital in a competitive social setting. The wish to stand out can be limited by the fear of being excluded. This perspective also questions a simple, linear view of integrativeness, since identifying with the target language community depends on local social norms and how peers judge each other.

These results show that motivation depends not just on how useful students think English is, but also on how they experience and understand their learning environment. According to Dörnyei (2019), the idea of the L2 Learning Experience, confidence, and engagement are shaped by both the resources available and the social setting of learning. In Indonesia, this means schools should focus on more than just material gaps like access to digital tools. They should also support students socially and emotionally by creating classrooms that build confidence and help students avoid negative comparisons. The findings suggest that English teachers should foster student confidence and encourage inclusive participation, while reducing activities that promote comparison among

students. Schools are encouraged to offer affordable and accessible learning materials, including both offline and shared digital resources, to address disparities in access. Policymakers are urged to prioritize equitable resource allocation and provide support for teachers in rural areas to ensure that students' socioeconomic backgrounds do not limit their opportunities to learn English. This suggests that motivation develops through the interaction between a person's traits and their social environment. Learners are always adjusting their identities and roles within the learning setting.

The results show that a student's socioeconomic position affects their motivation to study English, mainly because it influences their access to physical and social resources (Hui & Chen, 2025). Students who face financial difficulties often cannot access important learning tools like smartphones or reliable internet, which creates a digital divide. These challenges lead to unequal learning opportunities, as students from wealthier backgrounds can more easily use extra materials, private tutoring, and digital platforms that support language learning (Azubuike et al., 2023). Dörnyei (2019) explains that in this context, motivation depends on the quality of the immediate L2 learning experience, including how many meaningful learning opportunities and chances to use the language are available.

Learners do not simply accept their circumstances. The findings show that students take an active role, adjusting how they engage and learn in response to their socioeconomic challenges (Darvin & Norton, 2023). Even with limited access, many students find alternative ways to continue learning. This suggests that motivation is shaped not only by economic background but also by personal effort and adaptability. While SES influences how motivation develops, it does not completely decide learning outcomes. In Indonesia, these results highlight the importance of educational policies that make digital and material resources at school more accessible. This can help ensure that a student's socioeconomic background does not become a lasting obstacle to engaging with and succeeding in learning English. In the end, this supports the idea that language learning is an active process where students build their own educational paths. They do this by using both the opportunities around them and their own motivation within their social and cultural setting. Future research may expand upon this study by incorporating a larger sample of rural schools, comparing students from both rural and urban settings, and employing quantitative as well as qualitative methodologies to capture general patterns and individual experiences. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies would provide insight into how students' motivation shifts in relation to changing learning conditions, educational attainment, and evolving future aspirations.

CONCLUSION

This case study looked at how socioeconomic status (SES) relates to students' motivation to learn English at SMA Negeri Megang Sakti, a rural high school in Indonesia. The findings show that SES does not directly affect students' motivation to learn English. However, SES does influence things like access to learning resources, self-confidence, and learning opportunities, which can all shape motivation. Students from higher SES families usually have more access to digital devices and private lessons. Students from lower SES families often have a strong practical motivation to learn English, viewing it as a way to secure better employment and improve their lives. They depend on their own efforts to continue learning. Still, having fewer resources can make students compare themselves negatively to others and lose confidence. The study points out that personal effort and support from teachers are important in helping students face these challenges. This study contributes to research on rural EFL education by showing that students' motivation is influenced by their economic background, learning conditions, support systems, and the opportunities they have in rural schools. This study analyses a

rural school using Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Gardner's socio-educational theory to demonstrate how a student's economic background affects learning. The research shows that students with intrinsic resilience and motivation overcome obstacles more effectively. The study recommends that educational institutions and policymakers ensure all students have equitable access to educational resources. Educators should adopt inclusive teaching methods that engage every learner and support their self-esteem. The findings also indicate that language acquisition depends on the environment and available opportunities, not just a student's financial situation. Because this study focused on one rural school, the results might not apply to all settings. Due to the small sample size and reliance on interview data, the study primarily represents participants' reported perspectives rather than their observed long-term behaviors. To better understand how motivation changes over time, we need more long-term and in-depth research. Future research should include a larger number of schools and participants to enhance understanding of how socioeconomic factors influence English learning motivation across various rural areas. Additionally, implementing inclusive teaching methods, ensuring equitable access to learning resources, and providing targeted classroom support are essential for fostering confidence and sustained motivation among students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in rural EFL education.

RECOMMENDATION

This study has some limitations. It was carried out in just one rural high school, which means the findings might not apply to other settings. The sample size was also small, so the results may not reflect students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Future research should include more schools from different regions to gather more comparative data. Using mixed methods in future studies could also help give a fuller picture of how socioeconomic status affects motivation to learn English.

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DECLARATION OF USING AI TOOLS

The authors state that OpenAI ChatGPT and Grammarly were used exclusively for language refinement, grammar checking, and improving the manuscript's organization. These AI tools were not used for conceptual development, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or the development of scholarly arguments. All conceptual development, data analysis, interpretation, and scholarly arguments are the authors' own. The use of AI tools complied with academic integrity and ethical publication standards.

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