To investigate the relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Subjective Wellbeing among Rural and Urban, Scheduled Caste and Non-Scheduled Caste School Student

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ABSTRACT

It has been drawn from extensive literature and community-based studies that in developing nations Socioeconomic status (SES) is a strong predictor of mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, Socioeconomic status can affect the subjective wellbeing of school students in different ways. This study was designed to investigate the relationship between Socioeconomic status and subjective wellbeing (SWB) in a sample (n = 480) of senior secondary school students age ranged from 15-18 years, almost equal number of male and female participants belonging to urban and rural areas of Himachal Pradesh, India. The subjects were administered with measures of SES and SWB. The findings of the study revealed a negative correlation between SES and SWB, where SC and NSC, school students differ in SWB according to the low and high SES and this difference was noticeable among urban and rural students as well. The research implications recommend government and non-government organizations should come forward and look at the policy formulation and law enforcement in a strict manner for the upliftment of socio-economically deprived students in urban and rural backgrounds of Himachal Pradesh.

KEY WORDS

Socioeconomic status, Subjective wellbeing, Mental Health, Urban, Rural. School students

INTRODUCTION

The Construct of socioeconomic status (SES) is multidimensional and complex that has its direct impact on one's quality of life, wellbeing, and mental health (Pandey & Singh, 1985) as well as on family (Patel, 2000) and community mental health (Singh, 2004). SES is an important determinant of health, nutritional status, mortality, and morbidity of an individual (Agarwal et., al, 2005). SES is conceptualized as a position or an identity of a person in a society or a group that includes clusters of factors like occupation, caste, income, and cultural features of the home. In the present scenario, competition in every sphere has increased tremendously in which the fittest students survive effectively by balancing their thought, emotions, and actions whereas the weakest face a lot (Sethi, 2012). Researchers endevours in developed countries too reort that people of low SES often experience classism that denotes negative attitudes and behaviors directed toward the poor by the nonpoor where people with low SES are dehumanized by others (Loughnan, Haslam, Sutton, & Spencer, 2014) and

India is home to 17 % of the world's population (Misra, 2000) spread over 3,287,590 sq. Km. with a population of 1,21,01,93,422 (Census 2011). The majority of the population (80%) lives in rural areas and 16.2% SC; 8.20% ST, and 41.1% OBC people reside here and 15% population belonging to high caste and rich families dominates the rest of others (Rana, 2012). But the poverty here is a widespread malaise where a larger proportion of the population including school-going students are forced to pass their life under impoverished circumstances and is responsible for their decay in general as well as worsened physical and mental health. Further, this situation leads to social discrimination (Maheshwari & Kumar, 2008; Bishwokarma, 2010; Dhavan, 2012). Numerous research studies show that in India inequalities can be seen among high and low-status people e.g. social class, caste, and religion. The students with low SES are far more likely to suffer from health and developmental consequences than their more affluent counterparts. Poverty is considered to associate with deprivation of health, education, food, knowledge, which can affect an individual's environment to makes the difference between truly living and merely surviving (Philip and Rayhan 2008). Researchers such as Stevenson and Wolfers 2013; Diener and Biswas-Diener 2001 investigated that the strength of the relationship between income and subjective well-being decreases as wealth increases and this outcome is also validated by a early review of the literature by Cooper and Stewart (2013) around links between money and outcomes for children - increases in money were found to positively influence outcomes for all children, but effects were stronger in poorer households.

On the other hand, SWB refers to a person's overall evaluation of the quality of life from his

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or her perspective. People with high SWB tend to function better as compared to people having low SWB. It incorporates global judgments, momentary mood reports, physiology, memory, and emotional expression. Subjective experience can also be its indicator that includes physiological characteristics, behavioral reactions, and memories. A good example of this is the satisfaction with life (Pavot & Diener, 1993) which is closely associated with positive outcomes (Snyder, 2002; Seligman, 2006).

According to Inglehart (1990), this phenomenon deals with the satisfaction of the basic needs among people e.g. healthcare, education, and housing. In this series, Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) tried to differentiate between SWB and Psychological well being. They believe SWB is an evaluation of life in terms of satisfaction and balance between positive and negative affect while the psychological well being involves the perception of engagement with existential challenge of life that may include the component such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and other inner resources. Similarly, Diener and Diener (1995) found that the SWB was correlated with social, economic, and cultural characteristics such as high income, individualism, human rights, and societal equality of the people. Additionally, SES is one of the important determinants of SWB.

Numerous studies have reported that unequal distribution of income across different participants in an economy is a predictor of SWB and a decrease in this inequality leads to boosting SWB (Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K., 2010; Oishi, S., Kesebir, S., & Diener, E., 2011). Several studies on the correlation between SES and SWB reported that high SES is associated with quality of life, low physiological stress, and markers of immune functioning (Evans et al., 2000; Steptoe, Wardle, & Marmot, 2005). Whereas low SES could bring alienation that encompasses feeling like uneasiness, the discomfort,

exclusion from social and cultural participation, breaking value; norms, roles, etc. (Asthana 2005). Some studies that establish a negative correlation between SES and SWB show that individuals having an increase in their income leads to more demand for material goods and services that further leads to the no increase in satisfaction level (Easterlin, 2003). The positive effect of SES on SWB is strongest among low-income developing economies rather than developed (Ryan, Howell, and Colleen 2008).

In developing nations like India, the difference between SES and SWB could also be seen in the difference in caste status and area of living. It has been observed that marginalized castes (i.e. Scheduled castes) were significantly different from NSC students in respect of higher on deference, order, affiliation, nurturance, and aggression and lower on achievement, exhibition, autonomy, and dominance needs (Jha, Shankar, and Sudha 2008). These differences can be observed more in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Therefore, the socio-culturally deprived sections of students in India are stills soaring from the basic amenities within and outside the families (Narayan, 2012).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to see how the low and high SES is correlated with SWB among Urban and Rural, Scheduled Caste and Non-Scheduled Caste School Students of Himachal Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted on a total number of N=480 school students, 240 (rural) and 240 (urban) further divided into 120 rural SC, 120 rural NSC and 120 urban SC, 120 Urban NSC, Sr. Secondary Schools students of Shimla, Solan, Bilaspur, Mandi, and Hamirpur districts of Himachal Pradesh, India. *Research Tools*: The following measures have been used in the present study.

SES Measure: The Scale developed by O.P. Aggarwal, S.K. Bhasin, A.K. Sharma, P. Chhabra, K. Aggarwal; O.P. Rajoura (2005) translated into Hindi language by the researcher was used to measure the SES of the urban and rural population in India.

Subjective wellbeing measures:

PGI General Well-Being (PGI GW): This scale was developed by Verma and Verma (1989) in the Hindi language. It consists of 20 items and the score ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 20. The measure has been standardized on the North Indian population.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-HX-I and II): The Hindi versions of state and trait anxiety inventory have been used. It was translated into the Hindi language by Spielberger, Sharma, and Singh in 1973.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): It was developed by Pavot and Diener and translated into Hindi version by Lalit Kumar in 2008. The scale is already used among students by the Department of Psychology Himachal Pradesh University, therefore, it has been adopted in the present study.

Research Process: The measures were administrated with unified instructions to the subjects, and collected on the spot, and checked one by one. This research employed correlation analysis by using SPSS V-20, for statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion: The correlation analysis and average scores have been performed to see the relationship between socio-economic status and, subjective well-being.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5.1.1: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Dimensions of Subjective Wellbeing among Rural Scheduled Caste School Students

Varia-	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING			
bles	PGI GW	SWL	STAI-I	STAI-II
SES	032	159	12	.264**

*Notation: SES= Socio-economic status scale, PGIGW= PGI General well being, SWL = Satisfaction with life, STAI-I= Trait anxiety, STAI-II= State anxiety, ** <.01 * <.05.

From table 5.1.1 it is clear that there emerged a positive and highly significant relationship (r = .264, p < .01) between SES and STAI-II, among the rural SC school students.

Table 5.1,2: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Dimensions of Subjective Wellbeing among Urban Scheduled Caste School Students

VARIA-	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING			
BLES	PGI GW	SWL	STAI-I	STAI-II
SES	.289**	.203*	309**	380**

*Notation: SES= Socio-economic status scale, PGIGW= PGI General well being, SWL = Satisfaction with life, STAI-I= Trait anxiety, STAI-II= State anxiety, ** <.01 * <.05.

Table 5.1.2 shows a positive relationship (r = .289, p <.01) between SES and GWB among the urban SC students. Similarly, a positive relationship of SES was found to the GWB, and SWL (r=.203, p<.05) with SES, whereas STAI-I (State Anxiety) and STAI-II (Trait Anxiety) r = -.309, p<.01, r = -.380, p<.01 shows a negative and highly significant relationship with SES.

Table 5.1.3: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Dimensions of Subjective Wellbeing among Rural Non-Scheduled Caste School Students

	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING			
Varia- bles	PGI GW	SWL	STAI-I	STAI-II
SES	.153	.069	156	08

*Notation: SES= Socio-economic status scale, PGIGW= PGI General well being, SWL = Satisfaction with life, GHSES= General Hindi self-efficacy scale, STAI-I= Trait anxiety, STAI-II= State anxiety, ** <.01 * <.05. From table 5.1.3 it is evident that there is a nonsignificant relationship between SES and all other dimensions of SWB among rural scheduled caste school students of Himachal Pradesh.

Table 5.1.4: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Dimensions of Subjective Wellbeing among Urban Non-Scheduled Caste School Students

Variables	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING			
	PGI GW	SWL	STAI-I	STAI-II
SES	.133	165	215*	04

*Notation: SES= Socio-economic status scale, PGIGW= PGI General well being, SWL = Satisfaction with life, STAI-I= Trait anxiety, STAI-II= State anxiety, ** <.01 * <.05.

Table 5.1.4 shows that there emerged a negative and significant relationship (r = -.215, p <.01) between SES and STAI-I among the urban NSC students. All other dimensions have non-significant relationships.

Average Scores

Table 5.2.1: Average Score of Scheduled Caste and Non-scheduled Caste Rural and Urban Students on SES and SWB Measures

SES	SC	NSC	AVG
U	39.21	46.17	42.69
R	42.23	45.27	43.75
AVG	40.72	45.72	43.22
GWB	SC	NCS	AVG
U	14.22	13.66	13.94
R	13.84	17.92	15.88
AVG	14.03	15.79	14.91
SWLS	SC	NCS	AVG
U	29.42	29.67	29.54
R	29.63	27.86	28.74
AVG	29.52	28.76	29.14
STAI-I	SC	NCS	AVG
U	37.55	38.9	38.22
R	41.53	35.42	38.47
AVG	39.54	37.16	38.35
STAI-II	SC	NCS	AVG

U	42.42	42.58	42.5
R	42.43	40.57	41.5
AVG	42.42	41.57	42

*Notation: Groups= SC (Scheduled Caste); NSC (Non-Scheduled Caste); U (Urban); R (Rural); Measures= SES (Socioeconomic Status); SWLS (Satisfaction with Life); STAI-I (State Anxiety); STAI-II (Trait Anxiety).

The average scores given in Table 5.2.1 revealed that NSC school students have better SES as compared to their SC counterparts, Similarly, urban school students showed better SES as compared to their rural counterparts, the table further shows that rural NSC students have better SES as compared to their rural SC counterparts. Further, the SES of urban NSC students is much better than their urban SC counterparts and urban NSC students have much better SES as compared to their rural SC counterparts.

Literature studies also support that in our country there exist inequalities wherein the low caste students suffer from inequalities in education, income, and employment (Sonalde & Kulkarni, 2008). The people in general, as well as the students, in particular, living in urban areas, have more resources, opportunities, facilities, and exposures as compared to the rural counterpart whereas urban students perform better, experience better wellbeing as compared to their rural counterparts. (Shalu and Audichya, 2006). It has been observed that low SES could bring alienation that encompasses the feeling like uneasiness, discomfort, exclusion from social and cultural participation, breaking value; norms, roles, etc (Asthana, 2005). Similarly, Pells (2010) also observed disparities between urban and rural locations, poor and non-poor children, between different ethnic groups and regions, well-being, health, and education.

For the measure of PGI-GWB, NSC students were found slightly better than SC students. Similarly, Urban students report better GWB as

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compared to their rural counterparts. Further, rural SC students report slightly better GWB as compared to their rural NSC counterparts. Further, the Urban SC students report lesser GWB as compared to urban NSC school students and Rural SC students report less GWB as compared to urban NSC.

Literature studies show that the students belonging to poor families suffer from wellbeing and affect physical and mental health. Findings further state Poverty and the caste system involve complex phenomena and the students have to bear its serious repercussion on mental health and cognitive functioning both in rural as well as urban areas (Joseph, 2007). A low level of SES is directly related to higher levels of emotional and behavioral difficulties, including social problems, delinquent behavior symptoms, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder among adolescents (DeCarlo Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011; Russell, Ford, Williams, & Russell, 2016).

On the measure of SWLS, urban school students report more satisfaction than rural school students, and rural SC students were found slightly better than urban SC on SWLS. urban NSC students were found better as compared to rural SC. Rural NSC students report SWLS as compared to urban SC students.

The findings of Philip and Rayhan (2008) show that poverty is generally associated with deprivation of health, education, food, knowledge, influence over one's environment, and the many other things that make the difference between truly living and merely surviving. The study of Yadav (2004) found insecurity among scheduled castes that cause poor personality development and mental health problem.

On the measure of STAI-I, NSC students were found better than SC; Urban school students were found better than Rural students; Rural NSC was found better as compared to Rural SC;

Urban NSC was found better than urban SC, Urban NSC was found better than rural SC; Rural NSC was found better than urban SC school students.

Some studies suggest that persons with the low social status experience enhanced emotional and physiological (Lepore, Revenson, Weinberger, Weston, Frisina, Robertson, et al., 2006; Williams, Marchuk, Siegler, Barefoot, Helms, Brummett, et al., 2008) reactivity to stress, increasing the potentially deleterious consequences and allostatic load that in turn affect psychological well-being. The lower SES is responsible for social discrimination and differentiation (Dirk, 2007; Gatade, 2007).

The scores for STAI-II (trait anxiety) revealed that SC students report more trait anxiety as compared to NSC students, rural students reported more trait anxiety than urban students, rural NSC reports slightly less trait anxiety than rural SC, urban NSC counterparts report less trait anxiety than rural SC and Urban SC reports more anxiety than urban NSC students.

Literature studies show that prolonged deprivation has its long-lasting impact that affects one's mental health (Singh, 2004). Socioeconomic circumstances have an independent effect on adult health and health-related behavior (Bagheri, 2009). Magklara (2010) revealed that the associations of employing categorical representations of SES were far more pervasive; and stronger in magnitude. Wealth and the highest degree earned in the family showed the strongest associations across virtually all health functioning domains. Sutariya (2010) indicated that urban and rural SC adolescents are more depressed than their NSC counterparts. SC adolescents belonging to urban and rural areas are more anxiety-ridden than NSC adolescents. Kemer (2011) pointed out that in rural area students, informational support was the only predictor of hope levels and family

social support enhances the well-being of the students. Some studies support the notion that feeling disadvantaged in society may lead to the experience of personal relative deprivation and evoke the feelings of anger and recentment (Pettigrew, 2015; Smith & Huo, 2014). Studies conducted in Europian contries reports that childrens from mixed-income neigbourhood showed more conduct problems and children from poor families generally felt less safe and distressed (Flouri, Midouhas, Joshi, & Sullivan, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In this study, our objective was to find the relationship between SES and SWB among Urban and Rural, SC, and NSC school students of Himachal Pradesh. Findings suggest that there exists a significant difference between both groups on SES. Further, the level of SES has a negative as well as positive relationship with SWB. A positive and highly significant relationship between SES and STAI-II (Trait anxiety proneness to experience anxiety) was found among the rural SC school students that reveal the increases in SES will lead to more trait anxiety among rural SC students. It seems that an increase in income may lead to the satisfaction of basic needs but simultaneously the more demand for material things which results in the feelings of more anxiety. Similarly, a positive relationship of SES was found to the GWB and SWL among the urban SC students, which means that the increment and decrement in SES are positively associated with general wellbeing and satisfaction with life among the urban SC school students. It may be due to the facilities and opportunities being provided in urban areas as compared to the rural areas. whereas STAI-I (State Anxiety) and STAI-II (Trait Anxiety) revealed a negative and highly significant relationship with SES. It means that the increment and decrement in SES are negatively associated with state and trait anxiety. A

negative and significant relationship between SES and STAI-I was found among the urban NSC students.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Based on results analyzed and evidence drawn from background studies following implications can be suggested for the upliftment of students living in low SES in urban and rural backgrounds of Himachal Pradesh:

Socio-economic status (SES) plays an important role in the development of personality characteristics of the students studying in schools across the countries. The socially disadvantaged children living in low income, low social class status, low educational level of parents, handicap them in school potentialities and restrict their social life. Therefore, appropriate efforts from the government should be taken to the policy implementation strictly to raise the level of these students in urban and rural settings.

A second look for the policy formulation may be taken with surveys conducted to assess the current needs of these students.

In this study, our qualitative analysis revealed some important observations in the support of our quantitative findings. It is visible from the analysis that SC school students are suffering based on their family income that is too low and they have to work as a laborer along with their parents to generate more income for their survival. Socio-economic factors such as insufficient land, dependence for income generation purely on the private sector job, the standard of low education affect their physical and mental health and subsequently become the basis for atrocities such as an attack, physical and workplace exploitation against these deprived sections of people. Therefore, there is a strict need to enforce the law made for the protection and

uplifting deprived students to the mainstream in the society.

It has also been observed that with the long passage of time after independence and law mentioned in the Indian constitution to safeguard the deprived section of people, atrocities and practice of castism in overt and covert behavior are still present in Indian society which needs to be taken care with adequately educating people and law enforcement.

It was also observed that the non-availability of IT facilities in rural areas, print and electronic media is a major problem for these students to update knowledge and connect with the outer world.

Further, a nostalgic attitude regarding the education of students was also noticed among few rural SC families as most of their parents are illiterate and they consider it wasting time and money. Thus, remain engaged in earning a livelihood as their prime concern.

People should be taught about the benefits of education and incentive-based education with the help of employment schemes and scholarship schemes should also be introduced to reinforce the level of education among deprived rural people.

The rural school should be equipped with faceto-face smart classes if possible virtual satellite programs as well to get quality education, and improve the cognitive and linguistic skills of the rural students.

The importance of SWB on the overall quality of the social and personal life of individuals has been documented. Research in this area posits that individuals who are happy and satisfied in life are good in problem-solving, better in work performance, have good social relations, tend to be more resistant to stress and depression, and experience better psychological well-being. Therefore, these students should be taught

meditation, yoga, and personal hygiene to maintain good health mentally and physically.

The social and attitudinal distance between NSC and SC students was also marked, perpetuated for quite a long time, and persists that pose a threat to SWB among socially deprived students. Therefore, Psychologists and counselors should be recruited to narrow these attitudinal differences among these students and people in society.

If all these measures were taken care it will help to achieve better SES and SWB for these deprived school students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Additional studies using longitudinal approach should be conducted to determine other variables that affect SES and subjective wellbeing among rural and urban school students.

Additional studies, using a larger population of subjects in a larger geographic area, would be beneficial to determine other variables or to reinforce the results.

Employing a different variable to determine the SES of the students would enhance the results.

Researching a larger population of subjects regarding small rural and large urban school districts will require the study to include states other than Himachal Pradesh.

Teachers and administrators should be mandated to participate in professional development in the area of learning strategies for students from a low socioeconomic background.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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