Review Article

Socio-economic Status Scales in India & Globally: A Review

Abstract

Socio Economic Status (SES) Scales as used for investigating social status and related health conditions are comprehensively reviewed for their background, development, strengths, weaknesses and popularity. They measure components such as education, occupation, income and possessions either individually or in combination for urban/rural population. Level of socio-economic status is in turn related to health status. Although carrying limitations, yet Kuppuswamy, BG Prasad and Udai Pareek remain the most accepted, updated and longstanding Indian scales. Others scales such as Tiwari and Kumar, Gaur and Agarwal can also be harnessed. Below Poverty Line (BPL) scale and multidimensional poverty index, Hashim and identical scales should also be applied to identify BPL families for delivering medical benefits through a government initiative such as- Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. Few international scales are also discussed. Nevertheless, a combination of scales or an all-encompassing scale with the most relevant classification of the Indian society and identification of the poor is always desired by researchers and policy makers for a reasonable outcome.

Keywords: **Below Poverty Line, health status, Kuppuswamy scale, Prasad scale, SES scales, India**

Rachita Lakhumna[1], Prasad D. Pore[1], Saurabh K. Wadhwa[2]

[1]Department of Community Medicine, Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College (DTU), Pune, Maharashtra, India, [2]Department of Pathology, Government Medical College and Hospital, Amritsar, Punjab, India

Introduction

Socio-economic status (SES) is defined as the place that an individual or a family occupies in distinction to the existing standards of cultural and material ownership, income and involvement in group activities of the community.[1]

Since ages, societies stratify its population based on socio-economic conditions such as approach to resources and goods,[2] social standing[3] wealth, prestige and power,[4] housing, environmental conditions and standard of living of a family or an individual.[5] SES also determines health, diet, disease and death. It influences approach to the available health amenities. Inequalities in medical services, root causes as well as presence of several diseases along with concerning conditions in health.[6-9]

Differences in socio-economic conditions are prevalent globally and can be measured for an individual or a section of society. Cattell, made pioneering effort to categorise a person depending on his/her social status taking into account the respect he commands, IQ level, per annum income, level studied and job.[10] Since then, many scales have been designed and applied but an all-purpose scale that can assess SES wholly is still illusive.[11] A wide majority of scales assess SES using income, occupation and education categories but limitations regarding suitability to population (urban/rural) and other criteria sometimes makes them unreliable[12] and superfluous.[13] It is thus imperative to study them for making sensible choice, meaningful outcome, ratification and application to the society in general.

Historical Evolution

The British Registrar General advocated the use of occupation-based classification in India till 1960. In due course, diverse scales mainly B. G Prasad, Udai Parikh, Kulshrestha, Kuppuswamy, Shrivastava, Bharadwaj, Tiwari and Kumar, Aggarwal and Gaur were applied for SES classification. It is important to understand the utility, advantages and limitations of some of these common scales used now a days.[14]

Most of the scales originated in 1960 and 70s and since then they have evolved under changing social circumstances [Box 1] or the poor sections of the society [Box 2]. Upgrades in B. G. Prasad, Kuppuswamy and Udai Pareek socio-economic

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Rachita Lakhumna,
Flat-28, Patang Plaza Tower, Phase-6, Katraj, Pune - 411 046, Maharashtra, India.
E-mail: rachitalakhumna1997@gamil.com

Access this article online

Website: https://journals.lww.com/PMRR

DOI: 10.4103/PMRR.PMRR_133_24

Quick Response Code:

How to cite this article: Lakhumna R, Pore PD, Wadhwa SK. Socio-economic status scales in India & Globally: A review. Prev Med Res Rev 2025;2:40-8.

Submitted: 13-May-2024 **Revised:** 22-Aug-2024
Accepted: 28-Aug-2024 **Published:** 12-Dec-2024

scales are provided by many authors periodically.[15-32] These three scales have been updated in this review as per latest reports up to 2024 [Tables 1 and 2] and 2019 [Table 3]. Numerous studies have disclosed positive association between socio-economic status and occurrence/frequency of various health conditions.[1,39-43]

International socio-economic scales are tools used to measure and compare socio-economic status (SES) across different countries and populations. These scales typically incorporate various indicators such as income, education, occupation and sometimes other factors such as wealth, social class and living standards. Some of the notable international socio-economic scales are also discussed [Box 3].

Methods

Based on the above observations, various socio-economic scales in use are critically reviewed. The papers for reviews are accessed online through open access and membership of department library. Mostly, those papers were selected in which the authors presented

Box 1: Evolution of the key Indian socio-economic scales for classifying population

B.G. Prasad Scale: This scale is based on monthly per capita income and (CPI). To remain relevant and accurate with changing economic conditions, this extensively used scale is updated several times due to inflation and variation in the value of goods and services. This scale remains a crucial tool and its evolution reflects the need to adapt to changing economic condition and maintain its relevance in social research and public health

First published in 1961 in the JIMA, it was based on the CPI of 1960. B G Prasad himself modified it in 1968 and in 1970. Kumar improved the classification in 1993–1994 due to the inflation in the economy[15]

Modified BG Prasad socio-economic classification: It was updated in 1982, 2001, and 2016 and then in April 2021 for a more valid status. The labour bureau website provides the linking factors between AICPI values to arrive at the latest figures. It introduced 4.63 value as a linking factor between 1960 and 1982, 4.83 between 1982 and 2001[16] and 2.88 value between 2001 and 2016.[17] Another update was provided for January 2022, where, if the old income value is taken as 100 (2016: Base year), the new revised income is 8220 and above.[18,19] The scale is updated more frequently in recent years,[20] even an online tool is available for real-time updates.[21] The most recent updated version is Prasad Scale 2024 [Table 1].[22] It was also opined that two more things such as All-India Whole Price Index and BPL be linked to Prasad's classification (1961)[23]

Kuppuswamy's SES: Kuppuswamy's SES scale (1976) is the most popular scale for assessment of urban population. Kuppuswamy scale contained three index parameters like education, occupation and income that are again divided into subgroups. Originally it was meant to assess individual SES but after many years, it included family head for both educational and occupational status and collective income of the family, considering all the sources together. While there isn't a precise year marking this transition from individual to family SES, the adaptation began relatively early after its inception during 1982 and 1998 revisions.[24] It is now named as 'Modified Kuppuswamy SES'. Major Kuppuswamy SES updates were reported in 2007,[25] 2017,[26] and in 2019.[27] In the year 2020, Kuppuswamy scale was introduced as 'Updated Modified Kuppuswamy SES'.[28] Updated figure of 2021 is provided by Multiplying the 1.6 factor by income scale of 2012[29] 2015 and updated for the year 2023[30] then latest in 2024[22] [Table 2] to make it a more efficient tool and enhance validity.

Udai Pareek's scale: Pareek's scale was developed by Pareek for calculating the SES of a family in a rural area. The scale consists of nine items-caste, occupation of the HOF, education of the HOF, level of social participation of the HOF, landholding, housing, farm power (animals), material possession and type of the family. The scale is free of income category so requiring no timely updates [Table 3].[31] The scale was updated for 2019[27] again in 2021 for few categories[32]

Tiwari and Kumar Scale (2005): The purpose of Tiwari Scale is to accurately count SES values considering the diverse background of our country. This scale contains seven domains including (house, materials possession, education, occupation, monthly income, land, social participation and understanding), for determining the SES. This instrument consists of 10-point scale for each of the measurable seven domains, the score range (0–70) was considered into five groups based on the category of city. The scale is highly valid and reliable with a correlation coefficient of 0.998. Needless to say, that it can very efficiently measure the SES of the individuals/families from urban/rural areas,[12,33] and is updated regularly after 5 years[34]

Gaur's SES (Gaur 2013): Gaur SES scale include seven variables to assess the SES namely education, occupation, income per capita, expenditure, housing condition, living status and debt to assets ratio. This SES scale has standard number seven i.e., seven variables with 0–7 scoring of each variable. So, the equal weightage is given to all the seven variables related to socio-economic status. A score <10 indicates lower class (V) and score of 40 and above classifies into Upper class (I) on SES[13]

JIMA: *Journal of the Indian Medical Association*, CPI: Consumer Price Index, BPL: Below poverty line, AICPI: All-India CPI, SES: Socio-economic Status, HOF: Head of family

Table 1: Revised BG Prasad socioeconomic status classification, 2024

Socio-economic classes	Original classification (1961) of the per capita income	Revision for 2023	Revision for January, 2024
I (upper class)	≥100 and above	8763 and above	≥9131 and above
II (upper middle class)	50–99	4381.5–8675.3	4566–9131
III (middle class)	30–49	2630–4294	2739–4565
IV (lower middle class)	15–29	1314.5–2541.27	1370–2738
V (lower class)	<15	<1314.5	<1370

Values in INR/month. Rounded off to nearest 10

Box 2: Indian Socio-economic scales for identifying poor families

Standard of Living Index (SLI)[35]

NFHS II had used SLI for measuring the SES for the entire country. SLI includes parameters namely type of the house, house with attached toilet, light, type of fuel for cooking, drinking water supply, kitchen facility, property such as house, land for cultivation/watered land/cattle and durable goods. Achieved scores per category are added together and classified. Values ranging from 0–14 classifies the population as low SLI and score of 25–67 indicated high standard of living

Hashim system for identifying urban poor:

Planning commission (2012) applied a uniform criterion for identifying BPL households in urban area so that benefits are delivered to them as per objectives and without any prejudice. Expert group headed by Hashim, recommended appropriate indicators, to identify BPL households in a cyclic and organised manner for the conduct of BPL survey. Survey consists of a questionnaire and responses are processed, a thorough process of validation for the approval of urban BPL list at various levels is carried out. The commission address the grievances of public on any discrepancies in the urban BPL list and takes up new proposals/approvals to make the survey very simple, clear and suitable for maximum support under various schemes. Hashim system thus applicable strictly for urban poor

Expert group deliberated with methodology that the poverty in urban areas can be addressed through identifying three categories of vulnerabilities, i.e., residential vulnerability, occupational vulnerability and social vulnerability. Based on the above broad approach, the expert group recommended a three-stage identification process (i) Automatic exclusion; (ii) Automatic inclusion; and (iii) Scoring index[36] Hashim himself viewed residential vulnerabilities as the most acute amongst all three mentioned vulnerabilities. If urban poor are identified taking up these vulnerabilities as the basis, then the degree of urban deprivation may be counted much more than the official estimates[37]

Aggarwal Scale[6]: A new scale was devised upon analysing prevalent scales and comprehensive deliberation with experts from the field of sociology and economy and anthropology for measuring SES. This is a questionnaire-based SES in a tabular form. There are 22 items such as per capita income (monthly) education, occupation. property of the family, kind of the house, vehicles, earning members (nuclear/joint), offspring, convenience, studies, full time servant, locality, caste, visits to foreign countries in the last three years, ownership of agricultural land, non-agricultural land/residential land or other type of land, existence of milk giving cattle, non-milk giving cattles or pets, accommodation, other house or commercial building or shed etc., irrespective of rented or not rented, positions held, parental support and total amount of income tax that a family has filed. Each item was given a suitable weightage and each item was scored based on a scale with limits from 3–9. The status is measured from cumulative values of <15 (very poor or BPL) to >76 (upper high)[6]

Short form of Aggarwal Scale: A shorter version to the lengthy Agarwal scale was planned to help purposeful use and overcome the time constraint. Through an analysis, the original scale was narrowed down to six items e.g., location, education of husband/wife, occupation of husband/wife, family possessions, caste and monthly per capita income. It was concluded from studies that the short version of the scale is in agreement with the original scale[38]

BPL: Below poverty line, SES: Socio-economic Status

these scales for the first time or where they have been updated from time to time and reported. All the important information have been collected and presented in a concise manner. Comparative analysis amongst different scales is also described on the basis of published reports. A comprehensive and also comparison account of well-known socio-economic scales utilised for Indian society is also prepared. An account on scales in identifying poor families for health benefits is also prepared.

Results

Socio-economic scales in India are valuable tools, but their limitations need to be acknowledged. A swot analysis is performed for the strength and weaknesses they contain for the futuristic approach [Table 4].

The socio-economic scales at present may not be balanced in their approach and do not address the issues of development, and future growth. A comparison for the advantages and disadvantages amongst different scales is discussed in Table 5.

Comparative Study amongst Different Scales

B. G. Prasad's, Kuppuswamy's and Gaur's SE

A study of 240 antenatal cases were recorded for socio economic variables as per B. G. Prasad's, Kuppuswamy's and Gaur's SES classification. Gaur's scale was found to be most relevant as it also considered other variable such as housing condition, living status, percentage of income, expenditure and specifically the debt to asset ratio along with income, education and occupation. Gaur's SES status is the one which quite in harmony with present situation holding good amount of applicability and reliability.[60]

Standard of living index with BG Prasad, Kuppuswamy, Udai Pareek

Standard of living index (SLI) scale was compared with the three popular SES scales (BG Prasad, Kuppuswamy, Udai Pareek) with SLI through a study in the rural/urban set up at Bengaluru to explore its usefulness. This exploratory study identified different percentage of high-class families using SLI scale in comparison to the other two scales. After careful analysis, it was established that SLI scale generates a more authentic and precise image of the SES of the family and must be advocated for measuring SES for any setup.[40]

Kuppuswamy scale, Below Poverty Line Scale, the modified Kuppuswamy scale and the multidimensional poverty index

Four SES scales were compared and evaluated against childhood stunting, which is used as an indicator of chronic deprivation for 7925 households in urban area of Vellore of state Tamil Nadu in

Table 2: Kuppuswamy scale updated for the year 2024

Education					
Level (education of the head)					**Score**
Profession or Honours					7
Graduate or Post Graduate					6
Intermediate or diploma					5
High school certificate					4
Middle school certificate					3
Primary school certificate					2
Illiterate					1
Occupation					
Level (Occupation of Head of the Family)					**Score**
Profession	Legislators, Senior Officials & Managers: 10; Professionals: 9; Technicians and Associate Professionals: 8; Clerks: 7				
Semi - Profession	Skilled Workers and Shop & Market Sales Workers: 6				
Clerical, Shop owner, Farmer	Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers: 5				
Skilled Worker	Craft & Related Trade Workers: 4				
Semi-skilled worker	Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers: 3				
Unskilled worker	Elementary Occupation: 2				
Unemployed	Unemployed: 1				
Total Monthly Family Income in Rupees					
(1976)	**(1998)**	**(2012)**	**(2023)**	**(2024)**	**Scores**
>=2000	13408	≥30375	≥146,104	>185,574	12
1000-1999	6704-13407	15188-30374	73,054-109,580	92,764-185,574	10
750-999	5028-6703	11362-15187	54,651-59,251	69,584-92,764	6
500-749	3352-5027	7594-11361	36,527-45,588	46,405-69,584	4
300-499	2011-3351	4556-7593	21,914-36,526	27,815-46,405	3
101-299	677-2010	1521-4555	7,316-21,913	9276-27,815	2
<=100	<676	≤1520	≤7315	≤9276	1
Kuppuswamy socio-economic status scale 2024					
Score					**Socio economic class**
26-29					Upper (I)
16-25					Upper Middle (II)
11-15					Lower Middle (III)
5-10					Upper Lower (IV)
<5					Lower (V)

southern India. The four scales were Kuppuswamy scale, Below Poverty Line Scale (BPL), the modified Kuppuswamy scale and the multidimensional poverty index (MDPI) and the level of agreement was compared amongst scales. It is concluded disparity exists amongst these scales and must be carefully used and interpreted in the context of social, cultural and economic conditions.[61]

Kuppuswamy scale, BG Prasad scale and Udai Pareekh scales suffer from certain drawbacks and may not be useful to both the rural and urban areas at the same time. Another persistent issue is updating the income range at regular intervals for valid results and appropriate estimation of social status.[62]

Ration card holders, modified Kuppuswamy scale and Hashim's system

In urban slums, 639 households were assessed in terms of housing, assets and amenities by means of three different systems of socio-economic status (SES) – ration card holders, Modified Kuppuswamy Scale and Hashim's system in a cross-sectional, community-based study through questionnaire at urban slums of field practice area of a medical college, Pune. The study revealed no agreement between these three systems. Hashim's system provides an all-inclusive approach to the SES of the urban slums households in an accurate and pragmatic manner. Thus, there is a need of authentic system to explore and update beneficiaries for various poverty alleviation schemes.[63]

A scoping review identified that the SLI, Pareekh, Tiwari and Gaur's SES are the asset-based wealth index that are the time and again applied indices for measuring socio-economic status in South Asian urban health studies.[64]

Thus, living standard of an individual or population under study is measured and it is then equated to a person or family's state of physical and mental health along with promptness and ability in seeking health aids at hospitals for various diseases and emergencies. Income-based scales are constantly upgraded to reflect changes in the economy of the country. The scales containing education subcategory, expand the link between higher educational attainment with improved health outcomes. The need for an all-compassing new scale is needed for true evaluation of

Table 3: Udai Pareek Scale

Category	Sub category	Score	Category	Sub category	Score
Caste	Scheduled caste	1	Education	Illiterate	0
	Lower caste	2		Can read only	1
	Artisan caste	3		Can read and write	2
	Agriculture caste	4		Primary	3
	Prestige caste	5		Middle	4
	Dominant caste	6		High school	5
Occupation	None	0		Graduate and above	6
	Labourer	1	Land	No land	0
	Caste occupation	2		<1 acre	1
	Business	3		1–5 acre	2
	Independent profession	4		5–10 acre	3
	Cultivation	5		10–15 acre	4
	Service	6		15–20 acre	5
	<20 acres	6	Material possessions	None	0
Social participation	None	0		Bullock cart	1
	Member of one organisation	1		Cycle	1
	Member of>one organisation	2		Radio	2
	Office holder in such an organization	3		Chairs	3
	Wide public leader	4		Improved agriculture equipment	2
House	No house	0		Mobile phone	4
	Hut	1		Television	5
	Kutcha house	2		Refrigerator	6
	Mixed house	3	Family types	Single	1
	Pucca house	4		Joint	2
	Mansion	5		Extended	3
Farm power	No drought animal	1	Number of family members	Size up to 5	2
	1–2 drought animal	2		Any other distinctive Features	2
	3–4 drought animal	4		>5	1
	5–6 drought animal	6			

Grade	Category	Score on Scale
I	Upper class	>43
II	Upper middle class	33–42
III	Middle class	24–32
IV	Lower middle class	13–23
V	Lower class	<13

socio-economic status and relevance in modern changing financial circumstances of urban and rural population.

Discussion

Simply put, an individual health depends upon the factors mainly the access to money, political connections, standing in a society and culture[65] and can be measured using socio-economic status (SES) scale.[66]

As per the opinion of many authors of socio-economic scales that socio-economic level of a person is mainly determined by his nutritional condition, health, illness and death. In community-based studies, socio-economic status reveals the prevalence and rate of ailments.[16] Medical scientists and eminent scholars have made earnest efforts for the creation of a comprehensive survey and interrogation so as to find out the SES of a family/individual in rural/urban setup.[24] Socio-economic status of community can be understood through the survey to find health services and buying abilities as economical or not.[25]

Once the SES is measured, an estimate of the distribution of diseases and health status can be found out to help formulate health policy, and monitoring changes all around geographically and socially to check if policy achieves the goal of reducing health inequalities.[2]

Socioeconomic status (SES) has a profound influence on multiple aspects of an individual's health and well-being, including nutritional status, mortality rates, and overall morbidity. Additionally, SES is a key factor in determining how individuals access and utilize available healthcare services.[22]

The announcement of Arogya Bharat Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana programme by the Indian Government in 2018, is directed to provide comprehensive primary health care and for improving access to hospitalisation services at secondary and tertiary level health facilities for bottom 40% of total population.[67] This programme has the potential to boost Indian healthcare system in a big way and achieve universal health coverage[68] and meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[69] as suggested in a study[70] A wide range of initiatives/models to

Box 3: International SES scales

Hollingshead Index of Social Position Scale (ISP): This is one of the earliest and most widely used measures of social status of an individual based on four arenas which are marital status, retired/employed status, educational attainment and occupational prestige[44]

MacArthur scale of subjective social status: It was developed as part of research on SES and Health. It measures perceived social status rather than objective indicators like income or occupation linking subjective social status to health outcomes and psychological well-being[45]

Nakao and Treas Scale of SES: This scale assigns socio-economic scores to various occupations based on prestige and income data of individuals for use in sociological research[46]

Blishen Scale: This scale measures the SES of Canadian occupations based on average income and education data. Widely used to assess the socio-economic status of individuals[47]

Carroll, moore SEI: Developed by John Carroll and Wilbert Moore, this scale assesses occupational status based on the prestige and educational requirements of various occupations. Used in social science research to study the effects of socio-economic status on various outcomes, including mobility and inequality[48]

Moore SEI: This scale is designed to measure the SES of individuals based on their occupation. This index takes into account the prestige and educational requirements of various occupations to provide a composite score that reflects an individual's socio-economic standing[49,50]

ISEI of occupational status: This is designed to measure the SES associated with occupations on an international scale. It was developed as part of the ISSP[51]

SIOPS: The SIOPS provides a ranking of occupations based on their prestige across different countries[52]

ISCO: The ISCO is a system of classifying and aggregating occupational information. Developed by the International ILO, it provides a standard framework for international occupational statistics[53]

ESeC: The ESeC is a tool for comparing social class across Europe. It is developed to create a unified classification reflecting employment relations and conditions[54]

IWI: The IWI measures wealth on an international scale, taking into account various assets and living conditions[55]

HDI: The HDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in key dimensions of human development: health, education and standard of living[56]

Global MPI: The MPI measures acute multidimensional poverty, considering various deprivations in health, education and living standards[57]

World Bank's International Poverty Line: The International poverty line, set by the World Bank, defines extreme poverty globally. As of recent updates, it is $1.90 per day (PPP)[58]

Gini coefficient: The Gini coefficient measures income inequality within a country, ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality)[59]

MPI: Multidimensional poverty index, HDI: Human development index, IWI: International Wealth Index, ESeC: European socio-economic classification, ILO: Labour organisation, ISCO: International Standard Classification of Occupations, SIOPS: Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, ISEI: International Socio-economic Index, SES: Socio-economic status, ISSP: International Social Survey Programme, SEI: Socio-economic index

expand the provision of PHC services have emerged in India, in the last few decades. Many of these initiatives have focused upon the under-served and poor populations. Many of the schemes are also dependent on socio-economic status of the family. Hence, the identification of correct socio-economic status is of paramount importance so as the real needy person will get the benefit of the scheme. It is a socio-economic status which will also determine the utilisation of such schemes of government.

Way Forward

Research evidence on Kuppuswamy scale is limited. Studies using this scale indicate a significant representation of the upper-middle class, while economically deprived populations are not adequately identified for targeted resource allocation, reducing its practical utility.[71] Moreover, no recent studies have validated the Kuppuswamy scale, and in the absence of a universally accepted alternative, its continued use may be necessary for collecting data beyond income.[72]

Alternatively, planning commission had also conducted an investigation adding some more parameters to the existing indexes such as accommodation type, assets at home, size of the family, supply of water, power connection, food expenditure, sartorial choices, spending on well beings, occasions, transport, income, investments and lending settlements. To take things further ahead, there are some psychological parameters included as well like perceptions, opinion and satisfaction about life, status, job, work place and even harassment and abuse at work.[73]

Nevertheless, for sake of welfare works, our government has defined two types of classes: these are BPL and upper class. BPL is the people unable to feed their family and the upper class (1% only): Who rather contribute to the welfare of the country through paying income tax, etc. Middle class is the category of people who do not pay direct tax but support the economy of our country. This class can be further subdivided into three categories of lower, average and upper middle. Hence, a new and different scale independent of income is required now because these classes cannot be measured using prevalent SES scales of Kuppuswamy and GB Prasad, etc.[74]

The BPL scale was designed by the Government of India to identify economically disadvantaged households/individuals

Table 4: SWOT Analysis of Major Indian Socioeconomic Scales

Strengths		Weaknesses	
Data collection	These scales generate valuable data for research on health, education, and social welfare programs. They help identify disparities and guide targeted interventions (e.g., Kuppuswamy SES).	Limited scope	Most scales fail to capture the full complexity of SES, overlooking factors like access to healthcare, social mobility, and housing quality.
Standardisation	Scales provide a standardized framework to compare SES across different regions and populations in India, enabling comparative analysis of social programs.	Urban Bias	Many scales are tailored for urban contexts, leading to inaccurate representations of rural realities in India.
Multidimensional Focus	Many scales account for income, education, and occupation, offering a more comprehensive understanding of SES than income alone.	Data Dependence	The accuracy of these scales relies on reliable data, which is challenging due to the large informal sector.
		Caste System Influence	The caste system can skew results as it is often intertwined with socioeconomic factors.
Opportunities		**Threats**	
Incorporation of New Factors	Scales can be updated to include aspects such as access to technology, digital literacy, and social capital.	Data Privacy Concerns	With more sophisticated data collection, it is essential to address privacy issues to ensure ethical usage.
Regional Customization	Region-specific scales can mitigate urban bias and better encapsulate the socioeconomic realities across India.	Misinterpretation of Data	Incorrect interpretation of scale results can result in misguided policies or ineffective interventions.
Integration with Government Data	Merging scale data with government datasets on welfare programs and public services can provide deeper insights.	Policy Shifts	Changes in government policies may impact the relevance and interpretation of existing scales.
Technological Advancements	Emerging technologies like big data analysis enable more nuanced and real-time assessments of socioeconomic status.		

needing government aid and subsidies. The 10th plan BPL survey for urban families was based on the extent of deprivation with respect to seven parameters: roof, floor, water, sanitation, education level, type of employment and status of children in a house.[75] The MDPI is an international scale developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme in 2010[76] to measure acute poverty and designed to identify the most vulnerable people, the poorest amongst the poor. The national MPI model retains the ten indicators of the global MPI model, staying closely aligned to the global methodology. Thus, it can be liberally used in Indian context.[77]

Conclusion

SES is a multifaceted construct that encompasses economic resources, educational attainment and occupational prestige. Socio-economic disadvantages can limit access to quality education and perpetuate cycles of poverty and poor health. Lower-paying jobs often expose workers to greater risks, stress and fewer healthcare benefits. SES affects key social determinants of health, including housing, neighbourhood conditions and food security, which can exacerbate health disparities. While socio-economic scales offer insight into financial status and social position, they often lack inclusiveness, making them less universally applicable.

Fundamentally, socio-economic scales highlight the well-established relationship between existence of SES and health outcomes along with health disparities based on socio-economic background. Income is an all important factor, so in author's opinion, the BG Prasad socio-economic classification system, which relies solely on income, is as of now suitable in the Indian context due to its simplicity and quantifiability, the single variable of income makes it easier to compare economic disparities. The regional, religious and geographical disparities in education and income may not also influence the status granted. This scale is particularly effective in India due to its adaptability to diverse regional and economic contexts across both urban and rural areas.

Overall, understanding SES is crucial for shaping community health and well-being. Well-designed studies and interventions based on SES can lead to effective strategies and programmes, including income support, educational initiatives and targeted healthcare, to improve conditions for disadvantaged populations.

Relevance to preventive medicine:
Knowing a community's socio-economic status helps identify vulnerable populations and tailor preventive strategies to address their specific needs, ultimately improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities.

Implications for clinical practices:
By grasping a community's socio-economic status, clinicians can identify barriers to care such as financial condition awareness and social believes. Hence, clinicians can exercise specific approach to provide culturally sensitive care, address social determinants of health, and advocate for policies that promote equity.

Author contributions
PDR conceptualised the manuscript. All authors were involved in drafting data collection, interpretation, analysis & final approval of the manuscript. RL will be the guarantor of the manuscript.

Table 5: Comparisonal studies of Indian Socio-economic status scales

Scale	Advantages	Disadvantages
BG Prasad	Only per capita monthly income and All India Average Consumer Price Index values required	Needs constant monthly updating CPI values
	Applied to both rural and urban population	Factors like education, occupation, housing conditions and material goods are overlooked
	Simple, extensively used	Latest income values very low thus accommodate big part of population in top category
	Still remains crucial tool	Local adjustment due to regional variation is required
Modified Kuppuswamy Scale	Most popular, simple, considers income (family), occupation and education (head of family)	Difficult identification of the head of the family, wrong reporting of income, variable monthly salary of daily wage labourers, differences of earning in joint and nuclear families, no scoring of sanitation and health items, disastrous expenditure, regular income updating required
		Occupational and educational fields require frequent revisions
		Considers liquid assets only, and ignores immovable assets
		Applicable to urban families only
Udai Pareekh	Individual, rural, income statement not required	Some categories are ambiguous and unclear for caste and profession variables
	Considers land, material possession and social participation	Farm power must be updated
	Classifies BPL/APL lines	Subcategories like transport, vehicles and luxury items need to be included now with upsurge in living standards
		Applicable to rural families only
Gaur Scale	Includes the majority of the determinants, debts etc.	Income base requires updating, education and occupation variables need revision
	Studies community	
	Highly reliable and applicable	
Tiwari and Kumar Scale	Considers issues like land, house types, occupation, education and city	Lengthy, time consuming and difficult
		Non uniform for rural and urban population
SLI index	Measures financial wellbeing without considering income, decodes the living status through the possessions	Durables like computers, Luxury items, Mobiles, jewellery, branded clothes, savings, investments, online payments, servants, travelling mode, foreign visits, festivals, organising functions etc., requires inclusion, old things like B and W TV, Moped etc., should be excluded
		Ownership issues for land in urban area
Hashim system	Identify urban poor	Considers residential, social and Occupational vulnerability only
		Applicable to urban families only
Aggarwal Scale	Elaborate in nature	Lengthy, requires income values, scoring faulty for incomplete families, dishonest disclosure on income results in wrong scoring

CPI: Consumer Price Index, BPL/APL: Below poverty line/above poverty line, SLI: Standard of living index

Data availability statement
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, on a reasonable request.

Use of AI in drafting of manuscript
The authors, declare that they haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Park K. Medicine and social sciences. In: Park K, editor. Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine. 20th ed. Jabalpur: Banarsidas Bhanot; 2009. p. 600-3.
2. Galobardes B, Lynch J, Smith GD. Measuring socioeconomic position in health research. Br Med Bull 2007;81-82:21-37.
3. Sharma R. Revision of Prasad's social classification and provision of an online tool for real-time updating. South Asian J Cancer 2013;2:157.
4. Mueller CW, Parcel TL. Measures of socioeconomic status: Alternatives and recommendations. Child Dev 1981;52:13-30.
5. Kishore J, Grewal I. Practical and Viva Community Medicine. 3rd ed. New Delhi: Century Publications; 2014. p. 11.
6. Aggarwal OP, Bhasin SK, Sharma AK, Chabra P, Aggarwal K, Rajoura OP. A new instrument (scale) for developing socioeconomic status of a family. Preliminary study. Indian J Community Med 2005;30:111-4.
7. Kunst AE, Groenhof F, Mackenbach JP, Health EW. Occupational class and cause specific mortality in middle aged men in 11 European countries: Comparison of population based studies. EU working group on socioeconomic inequalities in health. BMJ 1998;316:1636-42.
8. Avendano M, Kunst AE, Huisman M, Lenthe FV, Bopp M, Regidor E, *et al.* Socioeconomic status and ischaemic heart disease mortality in 10 Western European populations during the 1990s. Heart 2006;92:461-7.
9. Espelt A, Borrell C, Roskam AJ, Rodríguez-Sanz M, Stirbu I, Dalmau-Bueno A, *et al.* Socioeconomic inequalities in diabetes mellitus across Europe at the beginning of the 21st century. Diabetologia 2008;51:1971-9.
10. Cattell R. The concept of social status. J Soc Psychol 1942;15:293-308.
11. Braveman PA, Cubbin C, Egerter S, Chideya S, Marchi KS, Metzler M, *et al.* Socioeconomic status in health research: One size does not fit all. JAMA 2005;294:2879-88.
12. Kishore J, Kohli C, Kumar N, Gupta N. Scales used in India to evaluate socio-economic status in medical research: Limitations of existing scales and the need of a more comprehensive one. J Int Med Sci 2017;30:66-74.

13. Gaur KL. Socio-economic status measurement scale: Thirst area with changing concept for socio-economic status. IJIRD 2013;2:139-45.
14. Chinta A, Srivastava BK, Eshwar S, Jain V, K Rekha, Madhu N, *et al.* Overview of socio-economic status scales in India. Int J Dent Sci Innov Res 2016;1:30-6.
15. Kumar P. Social classification – Need for constant updating. Indian J Community Med 1993;XVIII: 60-1.
16. Sharma N, Aggarwal P. Modified BG Prasad socioeconomic classification, update-2021. J Integr Med Public Health 2022;1:7-9.
17. Khairnar MR, Kumar PG, Kusumakar A. Updated BG Prasad socioeconomic status classification for the year 2021. J Indian Assoc Public Health Dent 2021;19:154-5.
18. Abu Bashar MD. Modified BG Prasad socioeconomic status scale: Updated for the Year 2022. Indian Pediatr 2022;59:816.
19. Sood P, Bindra S, Singh P. Modified B. G. Prasad socioeconomic scale: 2022 update of India. Int J Community Med Public Health 2023;10:821-3.
20. Dalvi TM, Khairnar MR, Kalghatgi SR. An update of B.G. Prasad and Kuppuswamy socio-economic status classification scale for Indian population. Indian J Pediatr 2020;87:567-8.
21. Sharma R. Online Interactive Calculator for Real-Time Update of the Prasad's Social Classification. Available from: www.prasadscaleupdate.weebly.com. [Last accessed on 2024 Jun 06].
22. Mohanty M, Patle RA, Narlawar UW. Modified BG Prasad and modified Kuppuswami socio-economic status scales: Revision and updates for January 2024. Prev Med Res Rev 2024;1:166-7.
23. Agarwal A. Social classification: The need to update in the present scenario. Indian J Community Med 2008;33:50-1.
24. Kuppuswamy B. Manual of Socioeconomic Status (Urban). Delhi: Manasayan; 1981.
25. Kumar N, Shekhar C, Kumar P, Kundu AS. Kuppuswamy's socioeconomic status scale-updating for 2007. Indian J Pediatr 2007;74:1131-2.
26. Singh T, Sharma S, Nagesh S. Socio-economic status scales updated for 2017. Int J Res Med Sci 2017;5:3264-7.
27. Wani RT. Socioeconomic status scales-modified Kuppuswamy and Udai Pareekh's scale updated for 2019. J Family Med Prim Care 2019;8:1846-9.
28. Saleem SM. Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale updated for the year 2020. Indian J Forensic Community Med 2020;7:1-3.
29. Anjali M, Khapre M, Asha TJ, Rahul A. Modified Kuppuswamy socio-economic status scale with 2016 as base year – An update for 2021. J Med Evid 2021;2:234-5.
30. Radhakrishnan M, Nagaraja SB. Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale 2023: Stratification and updates. Int J Community Med Public Health 2023;10:4415-8.
31. Pareek U, Trivedi G. Manual of Socio-Economic Status Scale (rural). New Delhi: Manasayan Publishers; 1995.
32. Majumder S. Socioeconomic status scales: Revised Kuppuswamy, BG Prasad, and Udai Pareekh's scale updated for 2021. J Family Med Prim Care 2021;10:3964-7.
33. Tiwari SC, Kumar A, Kumar A. Development and standardization of a scale to measure socio-economic status in urban and rural communities in India. Indian J Med Res 2005;122:309-14.
34. Tiwari SC, Kumar A. Updation of the scale to measure socio-economic status in urban and rural communities in India. Indian J Med Res 2012;135:432-4.
35. International Institute for Population Sciences. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) 1998–99. Mumbai, India: International Institute for Population Sciences; 2000.
36. Planning Commission. Perspective Planning Division Government of India. Report of the Expert Group to Recommend the Detailed Methodology for Identification of Families Living below Poverty Line in the Urban Areas; December; 2012.
37. Hashim S. Urban Development and the Poor. Soc Change 2014;44:505-18.
38. Dudeja P, Bahuguna P, Singh A, Bhatnagar N. Refining a socio-economic status scale for use in community-based health research in India. J Postgrad Med 2015;61:77-83.
39. Wang MP, Wang X, Lam TH, Viswanath K, Chan SS. Health information seeking partially mediated the association between socioeconomic status and self-rated health among Hong Kong Chinese. PLoS One 2013;8:e82720.
40. Ramesh Masthi NR, Gangaboraiah, Kulkarni P. An exploratory study on socio economic status scales in a rural and urban setting. J Family Med Prim Care 2013;2:69-73.
41. Pilić L, Dzakula A. Socioeconomic status and risky health behaviors in Croatian adult population. Acta Med Croatica 2013;67:25-35.
42. Džubur A, Mehić B, Džubur A, Filipovska-Mušanović M, Denjalić A, Hasanbegović I. Quality of life for tobacco smokers in relation to their socioeconomic status. Med Glas (Zenica) 2014;11:210-5.
43. Shrivastava GP. Development of a socio-economic status scale. Indian J Soc Work 1978;39:133-8.
44. Hollingshead AB. Two Factor Index of Social Position. New Haven, CT: Hollingshead; 1957.
45. Adler NE, Stewart J, *et al*. The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status. In: Psychosocial Research Notebook [Internet] 2007.
46. Nakao K, Treas J. Updating occupational prestige and socioeconomic scores: How the new measures measure up. Sociol Methodol 1994;24:1-72.
47. Blishen BR. A socio-economic index for occupations in Canada. Can Rev Sociol 1967;4:41-53.
48. Carroll JD, Moore WE. Social stratification. In: Faris RE, editor. Handbook of Modern Sociology. Chicago: Rand McNally; 1963. p. 701-1.
49. Cirino PT, Chin CE, Sevcik RA, Wolf M, Lovett M, Morris RD. Measuring socioeconomic status: Reliability and preliminary validity for different approaches. Assessment 2002;9:145-55.
50. Duncan OD. A socioeconomic index for all occupations. In: Reiss AJ, editor. Occupations and Social Status. New York: Free Press; 1961. p. 109-38.
51. Ganzeboom HB, De Graaf PM, Treiman DJ. "A standard international socio-economic index of occupational status". Soc Sci Res 1992;21:1-56.
52. Treiman DJ. Occupational prestige in comparative perspective. New York: Academic Press; 1977.
53. International Labour Organization. International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-08. Geneva: International Labour Organization; 2012.
54. Rose D, Harrison E. The European socio-economic classification: A new social class schema for comparative European research. Eur Soc 2007;9:459-90.
55. Smits J, Steendijk R. The International Wealth Index (IWI). Soc Indic Res 2015;122:65-85.
56. United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2019. UNDP; 2019.
57. Alkire S, Santos ME. Acute multidimensional poverty: A new index for developing countries. OPHI Working Papers 38. Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford; 2010.
58. "World Bank. 2020. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune. © Washington, DC: World Bank.
59. Gini C. Measurement of Inequality of Incomes. Econ J 1921;31:124-6.
60. Zafer A, Gaur KG, Tomer A, Nagarwal K, Manohar RK. A new socio-economic status scale: Urgent need of hour. Inter Multispeciality J Health (IMJH) 2015;1.
61. Kattula D, Venugopal S, Velusamy V, Sarkar R, Jiang V, S MG, *et al.* Measuring poverty in Southern India: A comparison of socio-economic scales evaluated against childhood stunting. PLoS One 2016;11:e0160706.
62. Majumder S. Socioeconomic status scales: Revised Kuppuswamy, BG Prasad, and Udai Pareekh's scale updated for 2021. J Family Med Prim Care 2021;10:3964-7.
63. Patil SV, Mahajan SA, Doke PP, Gothankar JS. Coherence between existing system of defining urban poor with Kuppuswamy and Hashim's system; Which is More Relevant? Indian J Community Med 2021;46:489-93.
64. Saif-Ur-Rahman KM, Anwar I, Hasan M, Hossain S, Shafique S, Haseen F, *et al*. Use of indices to measure socio-economic status (SES) in South-Asian urban health studies: A scoping review. Syst Rev 2018;7:196.
65. Miech RA, Hauser RM. Socioeconomic status and health at midlife. A comparison of educational attainment with occupation-based indicators. Ann Epidemiol 2001;11:75-84.
66. Yagnamoorthy T, Katturajan K. An overview of socio-economic status. (UGC Care Group I Listed Journal) 2020;10:225-35.
67. Lahariya C. Health and wellness centers to strengthen primary health care in India: Concept, progress and ways forward. Indian J Pediatr 2020;87:916-29.
68. Lahariya C. 'Ayushman Bharat' program and universal health coverage in India. Indian Pediatr 2018;55:495-506.
69. Lahariya C, Roy B, Shukla A, Chatterjee M, De Graeve H, Jhalani M, *et al.* Community action for health in India: Evolution, lessons learnt and ways forward to achieve universal health coverage. WHO South East Asia J Public Health 2020;9:82-91.
70. Lahariya C, Sundararaman T, Ved RR, Adithyan GS, De Graeve H, Jhalani M, *et al.* What makes primary healthcare facilities functional, and increases the utilization? Learnings from 12 case studies. J Family Med Prim Care 2020;9:539-46.
71. Lahariya C. 'Flogging a dead horse': Use of socio-economic status scales in health research in India. Indian J Pediatr 2017;84:1-2.
72. Sharma R, Saini NK. A critical appraisal of Kuppuswamy; s socioeconomic status scale in the present scenario. J Family Med Prim Care 2014;3:3-4.
73. Planning Commission. Migration of Tribal Women: Its Socioeconomic Effects – An In-Depth Study of Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, M.P and Orissa; 2010. Available from; https://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/sereport/ser/ser_mig.pdf. [Last accessed on 2023 May 05].
74. Sarangi G, Saboth P. Changing socioeconomic scenario in India and scales of assessment (editorial). NIJP 2019;2-5.
75. Hasim SR. Report of the Expert Group to Recommend the Detailed Methodology for Identification of The Families Living Below Poverty Line in The Urban Areas. In: India PCGoI, Delhi; 2012.
76. Alkire S, Santos ME. Acute Multidimensional Poverty: A New Index for Developing Countries; 2010.
77. Javalkar SR, Shalini H, Davalagi SB, Vidya GS. Socio economic status assessment in India: History and updates for 2024. Int J Community Med Public Health 2024;11:1369-77.