

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN SHAPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND SELF-CONSTRUAL

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ABSTRACT

For many Indians, valuing the distribution of wealth is a significant part of who they are. As a result, these values may have an impact on how Indians perceive their own socioeconomic standing (SES). The current study investigates valuing as a modulator of the link between self-construal and SES based on this hypothesis. The findings confirmed the hypothesis, according to which those who report relatively obstructive values have a larger link between self-construal and SES than people who report generally progressive values. Using both objective and subjective SES indicators, this outcome was repeated. The present findings try to reverberate the juxtaposition between self-construal, socio-economic status, values and the general economic context.

KEYWORDS: Progressive values, Obstructive values, SES, Self-construal

According Wealth is a measure of a person's value in society, according to the theories and principles that underpin free enterprise (Smith, 1776/ 1998; Weber, 1905/ 2002). Particularly, having money shows that one has effectively used their skills and assets to produce things and services that people want to buy. Therefore, having wealth is a sign of productivity, talent, and general deservingness. Thus, it is not surprising that socioeconomic status (SES) and self-construal are positively correlated in India's capitalist economy (Sharma & Vaid, 2005). An economic structure that optimizes the production and efficient distribution of commodities and services would inevitably lead to inequality, which is a desirable consequence. Some, on the other hand, believe that exploitation and social injustice are to blame for this discrepancy. These points of view probably have an impact on how much one's own socioeconomic status influences how they feel about themselves. Particularly, people with highly obstructive values might be more likely to rely their self-concept on their socioeconomic status than people with generally progressive values. In light of this, the current study looks at valuing as a modulator of how socioeconomic background affects one's perception of oneself. When it comes to self-construal, we expect that individuals with relatively high obstructive valuing will be more affected by SES than individuals with progressive valuing.

SOCIAL ECONOMIC STATUS AND SELF-CONSTRUAL

Generally, researchers in different metanalytic reviews have found positive significant correlations between various forms of socio-economic status (Henceforth SES) and dimensions of self like self-esteem (Twenge and Campbell, 2002), self-concept (Trowbridge, 1972), self-construal (Fernandez et al. 2005). Twenge and Campbell (2002) discovered a positive correlation between self-esteem measures, such as wealth, education, and occupational standing, in a recent meta-analytic evaluation. This is in line with findings from

economics research that suggests, rather than the tangible luxuries associated with money, self-construal has a role in the relationship between personal wealth and utility (i.e., general satisfaction) in Western nations. Economists have specifically emphasized the significance of comparison income in influencing people's contentment, over and beyond absolute wealth (Easterlin, 2001; Frank, 1999; Stutzer, 2004). Research shows that while forming their assessments of contentment, people take into account how their financial situation stacks up against a reference level—typically determined by the affluence of individuals from comparable backgrounds (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Clark & Oswald, 1996). This implies that the joy that comes from financial results is frequently dependent on how these results set the individual apart from others and enhance their perception of themselves.

The effect of familial SES on the self-construal of Indian college students is an intriguing topic of research regarding the relationship between economic outcomes and self-construal. The SES indicators of college students are determined by their parents' accomplishments, not by their own. Moreover, socioeconomic diversity is generally lacking in Indian institutions; according to some academics, barely 10% of students attending elite universities originate from households in the lower half of the income distribution. Despite this, research indicates that college students' self-esteem and their socioeconomic background are still related (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Thus, once students are admitted to a university, the psychological consequences of coming from a low SES family do not seem to go away. Because higher education is a vital component of social mobility and because college students have no influence over their socioeconomic background, the mechanisms underlying this effect offer an intriguing and socially significant area of study.

VALUING AS A MODERATOR

The college years are crucial for the formation of ideologies in addition to their significance for career growth. Students frequently operate on the reasoning done by others and get exposed to the thought process of others (Stewart and Healy). Ideas concerning the causes and fairness of India's wealth distribution are prominent among these points of view. These points of view are significant not only because they are highly relevant to current policy discussions, but in view of offering the knowledge about a person's financial history, these are very important. Therefore, these ideas are probably going to have an effect on how much people base their perception of themselves on SES.

The particular set of valuations that are currently of interest deal with impediment versus advancement. A substantial portion of our conception of these values comes from Smout et al. (2014).

STUDENTS WITH OBSTRUCTIVE VALUISM

In Indian culture, the set of ideas that underlie blockage is referred to as the "dominant ideology" (Kilby, 1963). These pupils may represent what we refer to as "Obstruction," which is the disruption of a valued life as a result of avoiding unpleasant experiences and being distracted from values by paying attention to other psychological experiences or to values instead of values (Smout et al., 2014). These ideas include the notion that everyone has the potential to develop (also known as social mobility) and the conviction that a person's drive and skills ultimately determine their social and economic status.

One would anticipate a reasonably substantial effect of socioeconomic background on self-construal among college students with obstructive valuism. People from relatively high

socioeconomic backgrounds tend to see their family's financial circumstances as a reflection of their talent, achievement, and work ethic. Moreover, these people have succeeded in embracing a perspective allocation of various capital resources that is in synchronisation with their interests. Conversely, those from poor socioeconomic origins are more prone to perceive their families' financial circumstances as a reflection of their own value and, as a result, have a lesser sense of who they are. This begs the question of why people with low socioeconomic status would ever embrace obstructive valuing. Therefore, it's likely that people with low socioeconomic status struggle to balance their desires for having a positive self-concept with believing that the world is fair. Their need to feel that the world is fair is met to the extent that they embrace obstructive values, but this also compromises how they perceive themselves.

PROGRESSIVE STUDENTS

Numerous Indian students, namely those from Kashmir in the current study, may have encountered things that have caused them to form "challenging beliefs" about economic disparity (Kilby, 1963). These views are frequently the consequence of fresh ideological exposure among college students. Indian college students, in particular, are heavily influenced by the prevailing neoliberal values at universities. Among these views is the fundamental conviction that disparities in opportunity and exploitation, not variations in aptitude and drive, are the main causes of economic inequality. One would anticipate a very small effect of SES on self-construal among students who eventually grow to identify with progressive values.

First, take into consideration pupils from low-socioeconomic backgrounds who have progressive values. According to Smout et al. (2014), these students exhibit behavior that demonstrates the application of values, including a strong understanding of what matters to them personally. These pupils are prone to support explanations for the financial circumstances of their families that reflect society more negatively than their own. Additionally, the policies that these students appreciate are likely to be in line with their material self-interest. However, it should be somewhat uncommon for progressive valuing students from wealthy homes to experience benefits in their own perceptions. Although these people are conscious of the benefits their social class has brought them, they have grown to feel that those who are less fortunate are not always more deserving of these benefits.

SUBJECTIVE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

The current research in view of the theoretical formulations predicts the effects of subjective socio-economic status on self-construal with values as the base. The differential aspects of objective socio-economic status have been considered simultaneously. Subjective SES can be conceptualized as the notion of individual's perceived identification with a specific class (Centers, 1949). Additionally, it would seem that some of the psychological advantages of coming from a wealthy household would be mediated by an individual's assessment of their SES. According to research, when correcting for objective SES indicators, subjective SES has a strong bearing upon both physical and psychological health with strong independent positive predictive capacity (Piko & Fitzpatrick, 2001). This finding is consistent with this perspective. Currently, however, we contend that depending on one's valuation, the benefits associated with considering oneself to come from a high socioeconomic background will also differ. Similar to objective SES, we anticipate that among students who hold obstructive valuing, subjective SES will have a greater impact on self-construal than it will on persons

who hold progressive valuiism.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Data for this study were gathered from a sample of 253 postgraduate students from the University of Kashmir in Srinagar, comprising 136 women, 112 males, and 5 transgender individuals. Participants' ages ranged from 23.8 years (SD 51.56) to 18%, with the following ethnic groups represented: Ladakhis (18%), Gujjars (18%), Paharis (16%), and Kashmiris (48%). The selection of participants was based on their ability to provide adequate data in two testing sessions spread over a fortnight.

MEASURES

SUBJECTIVE SES AND SELF-CONSTRUAL

The Self-Construal Scale—Short Version (SCS-SV; D'Amico & Scrima, 2016) is a 10-item variant of the original Self-Construal Scale (SCS; Singelis, 1994) that was completed by participants in the first assessment. The scale is designed to assess people's perceptions of their level of separation (Independent subscale) and connection (Interdependent subscale) to social contexts. The Likert scale has seven points for each item. The D'Amico & Scrima Self-construal Scale demonstrated a good level of internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$), and its mean was 3.14 (SD 5.49), above the scale midpoint, as in previous study with college students. During the first testing session, individuals completed the D'Amico & Scrima Self-construal Scale and rated their subjective SES. Participants specifically selected one of five response options in response to the question, "In terms of education and income, would you say your parents are:" Response options include "Upper Class" (5%), "Upper-Middle Class" (35%), "Middle Class" (42%), "Lower-Middle Class" (13), and "Working Class" (5%). The percentage of participants who picked each option is listed along. Higher scores on the item correlate with higher subjective SES according to its coding.

VALUING AND OBJECTIVE SES

Participants completed the Smout et al. (2014) measure of self-determined values as part of the second assessment. The 10-item Valuing Questionnaire (VQ; Smout et al. 2014) is a self-report tool used to assess an individual's consistency in adhering to their own values. It assesses two constructs: Obstruction (which represents the disturbance of a life worth living because of avoiding unpleasant experiences, being distracted from values by values-related distractions, or paying undue attention to distress), and Progress (defined as the enactment of values, perseverance, and including clear awareness of what is personally important). According to the measure's descriptive statistics, valuation received a good internal reliability rating of 0.648.

Participants also reported the following objective SES factors in the second assessment: (1) the total annual income of parents while the participant graduated with the matric degree; and (2) the educational attainment of each parent. With a median of 7,45,000, parents' incomes ranged from Rs. 17,50,000 to Rs. 4,38,000 in India. The educational background of parents was classified into the following categories: "could not complete class 10th" (35% for mother, 29% for father), "completed class 10th" (23% maternal, 28% paternal), "passed class 12th" (18% maternal, 17% paternal), "undergraduate degree" (14% maternal, 15% paternal), and "Master's degree" (10% maternal, 11% paternal). The parents' education measure was

created by averaging the two parent education level items (master's degree, did not finish class 10th).

RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

Zero-order correlations between the principal constructs were calculated and the study analysis was done to understand the relationship between the principal constructs and socio-demographic factors and studies were performed to assess the relationships between the main variables and important demographic factors (age, gender related coding) prior to evaluating the main hypotheses.

CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

There was a significant correlation ($r = 5.2$, $p < 0.005$) between the objective indicators of SES, parental income and education. Similar to earlier studies, there was a significant correlation between Subjective SES and Parents' Education ($r = 4.9$, $p < 0.005$) and Parents' Income ($r = 6.2$, $p < 0.005$). Only Parents' Income, with a significant correlation of $r = 6.14$, $p < 0.05$, was found to be associated with Self-construal among the three SES measures, both objective and subjective. Subjective SES and self-construal had a positive correlation ($r = 4.30$, $p < 0.05$ & $r = 5.9$, $p < 0.05$) with values.

MAIN ANALYSES

Multiple regression analyses were utilized to examine the hypotheses. The first phase of each analysis included the following control variables: sex, age, and the coding sets that represented the ethnic distribution. Standardized regression coefficients and standardized simple slopes were calculated for interaction testing according to the guidelines provided by Aiken and West (1991).

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The theoretical understanding that suggests that objective SES shall have a profound influence on self-perception among obstructive valuers compared to progressive valuers, was being considered at the outset in the present research. Therefore, a single objective SES composite was calculated by normalising/averaging the standard Z-scores of parental wealth and education. Here the important thing that should be noted is that the differential prediction among the different indicators of objective SES is not being proposed in the current research. At Step 1, Parents' Income and Valuing were added, at 2, the Parents' Income Valuing interaction term was being added, and at Step 3, self-construal was regressed on the control variables. Objective SES, $b = 5.07$, n.s., and Valuing, $b = 4.03$, n.s., did not have a significant impact at step 2. The interaction term for objective SES Valuing was significant at Step 3, $b = 6.20$, $p < 0.01$. standardized simple slopes for obstructive valuers (i.e., 12 stand. Dev) and progressive valuers (1 stand. Dev) were calculated using the regression equation. As expected, Objective SES had a positive effect on Self-construal among obstructive valuers ($b = 5.89$), but not among progressive valuers ($b = 6.03$). In Figure 1, this interaction is seen. The primary outcome was not significantly influenced by age, sex, or any of the ethnicity vectors.

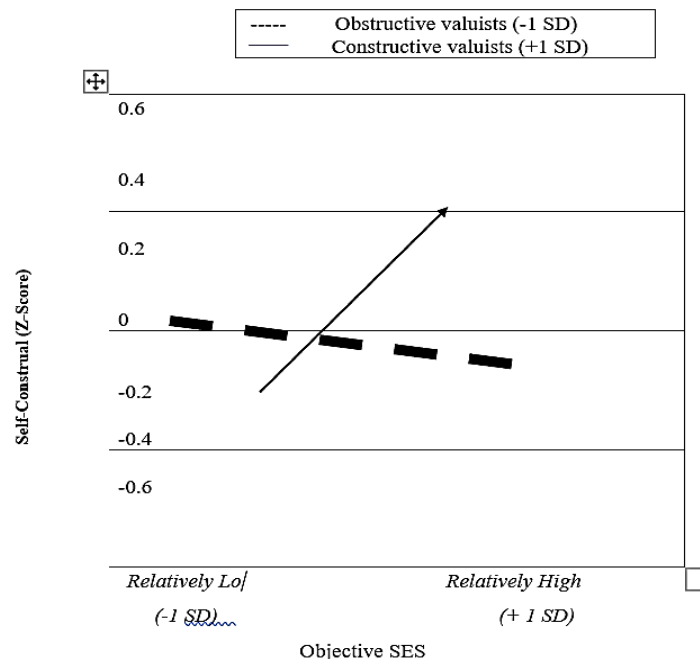


Figure 1 Predicted values of self-construal (z-scored) based on objective SES and valuing.

VALUING, SUBJECTIVE SES AND SELF-CONSTRUAL.

Here the contention/assumption that, compared to progressive valuers, obstructive valuers would be more affected by subjective SES on self-construal was being tested. At Step 1, we added Subjective SES. Subjective SES and Values were added at step 1, subjective SES interaction term was being added at step 2 and finally at step 3, self-construal was regressed on control variables. While Valuing did not show a significant positive effect at step 2, 4.45 n.s., Subjective SES did, $b = 5.18$, $p < 0.05$. Step 3: 6.23 $p < 0.05$. The Subjective SES Valuing interaction term was significant. Subjective SES positively impacted Self-construal among obstructive valuers as expected (6.48), but not among progressive valuers ($b = 5.001$). In Figure 2, this interaction is illustrated. The primary outcome was not significantly influenced by age, sex, or either of the ethnicity vectors.

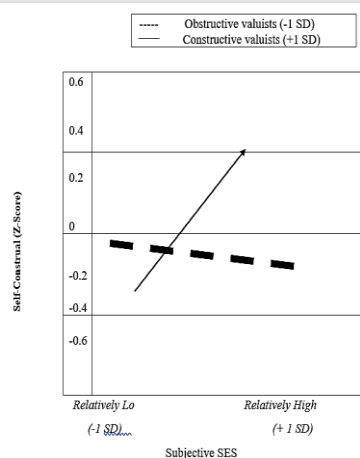


Figure 2 Predicted values of self-construal (z-scored) based on subjective SES and valuing.

DISCUSSION

Indian culture is distinguished by a high emphasis on individual values (Kilby, 1963). Indian capitalism's guiding principles rationalize the unequal distribution of income that naturally results its inter-corporate investments by highlighting the value of diligence and creativity in generating wealth (Mazumdar, 2011). However, other influential viewpoints link economic disparity to the exploitation and subjection of weaker individuals by stronger ones. The underlying premise of the current study is that an individual's perception of how income is distributed affects how much their own socioeconomic status (SES) shapes their self-perception. Thus, this study demonstrates how the ideological individual difference variable of progressive versus obstructive valuism plays a role in how socioeconomic background affects how one perceives oneself. The results imply that people who identify as obstructive valuists have a more strongly dependent self-construal on SES than people who identify as progressive valuists.

The study's findings are in line with theoretical viewpoints that emphasize the importance of values in defining how different kinds of success affect people's well-being. Oishi et al. (1999) have presented the values as moderators with respect to research on well-being, which suggests that global well-being is derived from contentment in a particular life domain, such as relationships or achievement. According to Crocker and Wolfe's (2001) research, individual differences are significant in various aspects of life where holistic self-construal is most highly contingent. Based on the current findings, people with obstructive valuism are said to place a high value on financial success because they see striving for money in a capitalistic society as legitimate and productive. SES would therefore be expected to have a stronger influence on self-construal for these people. The current results align with the theoretical perspectives by different value conflict theories. Specifically, a variety of theoretical stances suggest that maintaining self-construal and wellbeing requires coherence across self-values and views (Emmons, King, & Sheldon, 1993, Ryan and Deci, 2000).

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