

Comparative Analysis of Happiness Among School Teachers Across Socio-economic Levels

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ABSTRACT

Happiness consists of positive emotions, including joy and fulfillment. A significant portion of psychological studies has focused on understanding and addressing traumas, mental disorders, and the management of negative feelings. Consequently, it has overlooked the potentials that can be realized through leveraging our inherent strengths to enhance the quality of human life. Socio-economic status (SES) refers to the social and economic standing of an individual or group within society. It is usually assessed through a combination of factors such as income level, educational attainment, type of occupation, wealth accumulation, health quality, and access to social participation. Since school teachers are an integral part of India's work force, therefore it was considered necessary to explore happiness across different socio-economic groups of school teachers. The present study used a descriptive survey research design. Respondents included 311 school teachers teaching at primary, secondary and senior secondary levels in government and private schools across six districts namely Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Patiala, Amritsar and Gurdaspur of Punjab, India. The results suggest that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of happiness among school teachers on the basis of their socio-economic status. In particular, teachers from higher socio-economic backgrounds reported notably higher happiness scores.

Keywords: Happiness, Socio-economic Status, School Teachers

Happiness is related to living a meaningful life. The intricacies of contemporary living have resulted in a decline in satisfaction and contentment, making it essential to seek happiness in small moments. Happiness consists of positive emotions, including joy and fulfillment. A significant portion of psychological studies has focused on understanding and addressing traumas, mental disorders, and the management of negative feelings. As a result, it has overlooked the potentials and possibilities that can be realized through leveraging our inherent strengths to enhance the quality of human life. The field of Positive Psychology has remained largely unexamined for an extended period of time. Positive psychology is the area of psychology that emphasizes the exploration of issues and mechanisms that contribute to the optimum

functioning of an individual. According to Myers and Diener (1995), happiness encompasses the experience of frequent positive emotions and rare negative emotions, along with an overall sense of life satisfaction. Various psychological schools of thought have considered happiness as a positive emotion. There exist a number of psychological theories pertaining to happiness, few of which have been described ahead. Lately, positive psychology has received much attention. Martin Seligman is considered as the Father of Positive Psychology, who presented the PERMA model

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of happiness which is discussed below. Seligman (2011) suggested a mnemonic PERMA which represents the five elements of well-being theory.

P: Positive Emotions related to the pleasures of life.

E: Engagement which is related to the flow state of mind wherein an individual is completely absorbed in an enjoyable task.

R: Relationships which is related to the happiness achieved through social interactions.

M: Meaning which is concerned with living a meaningful and purpose-oriented life.

A: Accomplishments which is concerned with the happiness acquired through achievement of goals of life.

Socio-economic status (SES) refers to the social and economic standing of an individual or group within society. It is usually assessed through a combination of factors such as income level, educational attainment, type of occupation, wealth accumulation, health quality, and access to social participation. These factors serve to classify individuals into various socio-economic tiers. The concept of 'status' can be viewed as a relative ranking assigned to an individual or group, suggesting that people can be positioned along a range from low to high socio-economic status based on their possession or absence of the aforementioned factors. In the field of education, the idea of socio-economic status holds great importance because it impacts teachers' ability to maintain a decent quality of life, engage in ongoing professional growth, and provide effective support for their students' academic and emotional development. Educators from higher SES backgrounds typically have access to better educational resources, professional networks, and improved living conditions, which can enhance their job satisfaction and overall happiness (Richardson, 1986). Conversely, teachers belonging to low SES may experience ongoing stress, job insecurity, and social marginalization, all of which can hinder their professional performance and mental health. Since school teachers are an integral part of India's work force, therefore it was considered necessary to explore happiness across different socio-economic groups of school teachers. Gerdtham and Johannesson (2001) mentioned that happiness increases with income, health and education and

decreases with unemployment, urbanisation, being single and male gender. Alam and Farid (2011) mentioned in their study that a number of teachers were not satisfied by their socio-economic status, profession choice, behaviour of students and exam stress. Many of the teachers also felt that they were underpaid in terms of their abilities. In a study conducted by Msuya (2016), it was concluded that socio-economic factors had big impact towards the levels of job satisfaction.

Talcott Parsons was an influential sociologist of 20th century and a major proponent of structural functionalism. His perspective of society is that it is composed of various interdependent systems such as education, religion, economy etc working together in order to lead to stability. Each structure of the society has a specific function. This theory asserts that social stratification is an essential feature of a progressive society. As opposed to Weber's view, the structural functional perspective believes that differential rewards based upon accountability and performance helps to motivate people to contribute towards their societal roles. Parsons believed that inequality is not necessarily negative. Rather it is a functional mechanism which ensures that important roles in a society are played by the best people in terms of performance and responsibility (Parsons, 1951).

It was observed that studies have been conducted to correlate happiness of school teachers with their socio-economic status in other parts of the world but negligible number of studies have been conducted in India which try to investigate happiness of school teachers through the lens of socio-economic status.

Objective of the Study

The objective was to study the difference in the mean scores of Happiness among school teachers on the basis of Socio-economic Status.

Hypothesis of the Study

It was hypothesised that there does not exist significant difference in the mean scores of happiness among school teachers on the basis of socio-economic status.

Methodology

The present study used a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected from the

respondents by using standardized research tools namely Happiness Scale by Kumar and Singh (2025) to study Happiness and Socio-economic Status Scale by Kalia and Sahu (2012) to study Socio-economic Status among school teachers. Respondents included 311 school teachers teaching at primary, secondary and senior secondary levels in government and private schools across six districts namely Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Patiala, Amritsar and Gurdaspur of Punjab, India. A random sampling technique was used for data collection. Before the analysis of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test was conducted on both the variables to check for normal distribution of data. After the confirmation of normal distribution, parametric tests including ANOVA was used for data analysis (Cohen *et al.* 2007). The socio-economic status was categorically divided into three levels i.e., low, average and high based upon the obtained scores as mentioned in table 1, while numeric data was used for the scores of happiness. Informed consent from all human participants was assured before their participation in the study. Confidentiality protocols were strictly followed for the conduct of this study.

Table 1: Interpretation of Socio-economic Status (SES)

	Urban	Rural
High SES	73 & above	60 & above
Average SES	46 to 72	29 to 59
Low SES	Below 45	Below 28

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of current study was to study the difference in happiness levels of school teachers based upon their socio-economic status. One-way analysis of variance was conducted with happiness as the dependent variable and socio-economic status as the independent variable. Data was collected from a sample of 311 school teachers. Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test was conducted on both the variables to check for normal distribution of data. The results obtained after analysis of data have been presented as under.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality

In order to confirm the normal distribution of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test was conducted on both the variables. The results have

been depicted in the table 2.

Table 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality

Variable	Statistic D	df	Critical Value
Happiness	0.00*	311	0.07
Socio-economic Status	0.00*	311	0.07

*Not significant at 0.05 level.

The calculated KS value for the data of Happiness and Socio-economic Status is 0.00, which is less than the critical value indicated in table 2. This means that the null hypothesis 'Data is not different from normal' is accepted. Therefore, we conclude that the data for happiness and socio-economic status is normally distributed thereby suggesting to use parametric statistical tests. The Normal Probability Curves for the data of happiness and socio-economic status have been depicted below.

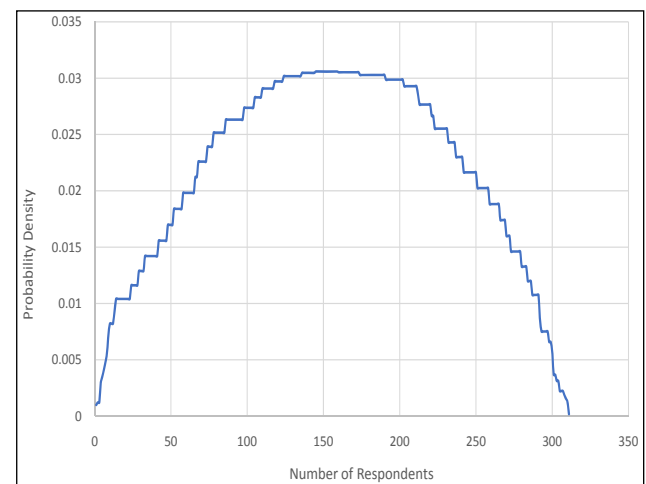


Fig. 1: Normal Probability Curve for Happiness

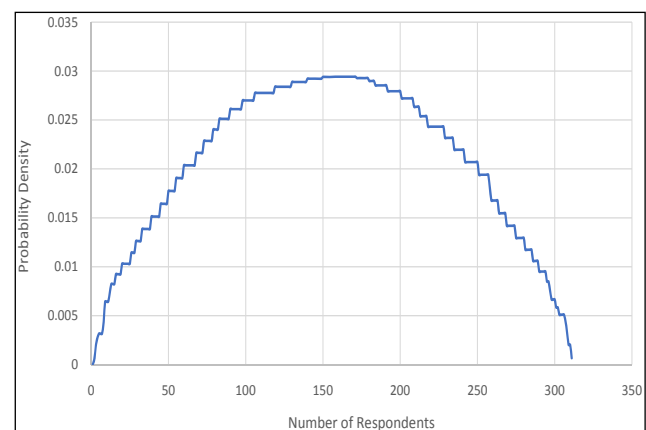


Fig. 2: Normal Probability Curve for Socio-economic Status

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics tend to organize, simplify, and clarify data, helping the readers to understand the basic characteristics of the data set before drawing conclusions through inferential analysis. The results of descriptive analysis have been presented in the table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Happiness	311	226.15	13.04	192	268
Socio-economic Status	311	76.63	13.55	26	114

The table 3 represents that both the variables i.e., happiness and socio-economic status have been studied on a sample of 311 respondents. The mean value of happiness was 226.15 with a standard deviation of 13.04 while the mean value of socio-economic status was 76.63 with a standard deviation of 13.55. The minimum and maximum score obtained for the variable of happiness was 192 and 268 respectively, thus generating a range of 76. The minimum and maximum score obtained for the variable of socio-economic status was 26 and 114 respectively, thus generating a range of 88.

Inferential Statistics

One-way analysis of variance was used to study the difference in mean scores of happiness of school teachers based upon their socio-economic status. The result of ANOVA has been presented in the table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2074.619	2	1037.309	6.312*	0.002
Within Groups	50614.578	308	164.333		
Total	52689.196	310			

*Significant at 0.01 level.

From the table 4 it can be observed that F-ratio is 6.312 ($p < 0.01$) which means that the result is statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance. This means that the hypothesis 'There does not exist significant difference in the mean scores of happiness among school teachers on the basis of

socio-economic status' is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of happiness among school teachers based upon their socio-economic status. The result of current study is aligned with the outcomes of research conducted by Nabavi and Sohrabi (2017) and Banerjee (2016) which concluded that in order to improve the mental health of teachers, it is necessary to promote their socio-economic status.

The result indicates that at least one SES group out of low, average and high differs significantly in happiness levels, therefore, Tukey Post Hoc test was applied to find which specific group differs. The result obtained in Post Hoc test has been presented in table 5.

Table 5: Post Hoc Test

(I) Socio-economic Status	(J) Socio-economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Average	Low	4.875	9.205	0.857
High	Low	10.973	9.101	0.451
High	Average	6.098*	1.800	0.002

*Mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

From the table 5 it can be observed that only the high socio-economic status vs average socio-economic status shows statistically significant difference (Mean difference = 6.098, $p = 0.002$). This means that teachers from high socio-economic status group report significantly higher happiness levels when compared to teachers from average socio-economic status group. Also, there exists no significant difference between average socio-economic status group and low socio-economic status group and between high socio-economic status group and low socio-economic status group.

CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted to investigate the differences in mean scores of happiness among school teachers based on their socio-economic status. The results indicate a significant statistical relationship between socio-economic status and happiness levels in school teachers. In particular, teachers from higher socio-economic backgrounds reported notably higher happiness scores than those from average socio-economic backgrounds. This implies that socio-economic conditions

significantly influence the subjective well-being and overall life satisfaction of educators. The findings highlight the necessity of addressing economic inequalities and enhancing financial and social support systems within the teaching community to promote increased happiness, well-being and teacher development.

GENERATIVE AI DECLARATION

The author(s) confirm that there was no use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technology for assisting in the writing or editing of the manuscript, and no images were manipulated using AI. The authors developed and verified all scientific content, data analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work presented, and no AI tool was listed as an author.

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