



Available Online at EScience Press Journals

International Journal of Agricultural Extension

ISSN: 2311-6110 (Online), 2311-8547 (Print)

<http://www.esciencepress.net/IJAE>

SOCIAL GAIN OR SOCIAL PAIN: SUBJECTIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, INCOME AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL RELATIONS

^{a,b}Aistė Diržytė, ^bAleksandras Patapas

^a Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius, Lithuania.

^b Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: July 12, 2021

Revised: November 23, 2021

Accepted: December 01, 2021

Keywords

Subjective perceptions

Well-being

Interpersonal rejection

Public administration

Socio-economic status

ABSTRACT

Social pain is usually defined as the experience of pain because of interpersonal rejection or loss. However, some research suggests that social pain could also arise from low income or subjective perceptions regarding socioeconomic status. To contribute to promoting effective public administration or social policy solutions, over the last few decades, many scientific studies were conducted worldwide. Many authors have investigated social wellbeing as it could create direct and indirect financial losses to the state. This study aimed to find out the peculiarities of attitudes towards social relations in different groups of income and perceived socio-economic status in a representative sample of Lithuanian population (n=1001). We have found that mean ranks in the lowest-income quintile, agreeing that "my relationships are supportive and rewarding", were almost twice lower than in the highest-income quintile. A similar tendency was observed with the statements "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others" and "People respect me". Mean ranks in the subjectively poorest group regarding perceived respect from people were almost three times lower than in the subjectively rich group. It appears that having low income and low subjective socioeconomic status may harm psychological wellbeing. Our study raises concern regarding societal wellbeing: we suggest that to achieve the prosperity of society, it is necessary to reduce socio-economic inequalities and through various programs and projects strengthen people's ability to establish and maintain supportive, compassionate social contacts.

Corresponding Author: Alex Patapas

Email: patapas4984-2@ubogazici.in

© The Author(s) 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in the influence of social relationships on psychological well-being has a long history, starting with the works of E. Durkheim (1897/1951), J. Bowlby (1969) and many others. Recently, researchers worldwide have investigated positive as well as challenging aspects of social relationships, including social power (Lammers and Stoker, 2019), social class (Kraus and Stephens, 2012), or aggression (Baker *et al.*, 2018). Some researchers have suggested the central role

of morality in social connections and revealed that supportive social relations reduce the adverse consequences of a wide variety of stressful life events, contributes to psychological well-being irrespective of the level of life stress, and may enhance overall subjective well-being (Prati *et al.*, 2018). Some researchers investigated whether low (vs. high) subjective socioeconomic status increase both prosociality and aggression (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 2018), and some have found that we choose our social

ties because of their capacity to provide rewards relative to costs, and our choices lead to construct social networks composed predominantly of rewarding social ties. While social contacts may be generally positive, at least some contacts could be aversive. This may result in negative perceptions about oneself or one's social connections. Person perception studies show that negative information about others has a higher impact than positive information, and unpleasant encounters with bureaucracies are far more predictive of clients' overall evaluation of services provided than are pleasant encounters.

Research on societal quality of life has established social relationships as an extremely important factor in the psychological well-being of society. Researchers argue that we are 'social animals' who, through relationships with others, can experience the joy of life, discover the meaning of life, as other people are the most important objects in our world (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2009). If one succeeds in establishing and managing social relationships in a qualitative manner, it may determine the ability to experience the fullness of life (Seligman, 2011; Dush and Amato, 2005). In addition, relationships with other people are reflected in best life experiences (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 2006).

Research shows that social relationships are better predictors of our well-being than higher-income: "people are firmly anchored in social networks, and person's health and well-being affect the health and well-being of another because human happiness is not the happiness of isolated individuals" (Diener and Seligman, 2004). Social relationships also link to mental and physical health: individuals living alone or having no close friends are twice as likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease; they are more likely to have infectious or respiratory diseases. Quality of social connections determines the speed of wound healing: if a person has very poor-quality social relationships (criticism, misunderstanding, humiliation), wounds heal twice slower than in a group of people having supporting and satisfactory social relationships (Seligman, 2011). Deprived social connections relate to social exclusion: exclusion means that a person is geographically present in society but cannot participate actively as other citizens (Tov and Diener, 2009). Research has shown that in some countries poor people, especially children or youth, may suffer social exclusion or stigma and related bullying. Due to a lack of material

resources, some people may not be able to get proper education and achieve their goals in the labour market (Lyubomirsky and Kasri, 2006; Yaroshenko and Tomashevski, 2021; Polukarov *et al.*, 2021).

For decades, researchers have been interested in how exclusion affects a person's social relationships, or whether being the poorest member of society results in social stigma and consequent social pain (Gudmundsdottir, 2013). This research is extremely important as it demonstrates that social pain could also arise from social comparisons, perceptions regarding personal income or socio-economic status, and not only because of interpersonal rejection or loss. Research has also demonstrated the positive value of the personal initiative to be an active member of society. Some researchers revealed that not only qualitative social relationships but also any contribution to society can increase the quality of life: altruistic social behaviour, community engagement and group assistance aimed at helping others positively link to longevity, help overcome stress and negative emotions (Kapteyn *et al.*, 2013; Moroz *et al.*, 2021).

By magnetic resonance, neurobiologists have found that some parts of the brain activate at the time we receive money so that we experience a pleasure. However, when we give money to other people for charitable purposes, our brain activates in a way that gives us even more pleasure. Thus, social relationships are crucial to the quality of life. When people care about other people's happiness and well-being, they are more positive about themselves, their self-esteem and self-confidence increase. According to research, many people in the world suffer from low self-esteem and lack of willingness to live, which can lead to their diminished economic value (Trung *et al.*, 2013). To make effective public administration or social policy decisions, it is important to clarify factors possibly related to people's economic value and societal wellbeing (Hlushchenko, 2021). This study aimed at analysing Lithuanian population attitudes towards social relationships in different income and perceived socioeconomic status groups. We hypothesised that income or perceived socio-economic status relates to different attitudes towards social relations.

METHODOLOGY

The study of Lithuanian population was carried out by multilevel probability sampling. The overall number of

respondents was 1001. To measure attitudes towards social relationships, we used the Psychological Flourishing scale created by Ed Diener (Diener *et al.*, 2009). The Flourishing Scale is a brief 8-item summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score. However, we have selected 3 items for this survey:

1. "People respect me".
2. "My social relationships are supportive and rewarding".
3. "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others".

Objective and subjective indicators relate to socio-economic status. Objective indicators include, for example, personal income, and subjective indicators include, for example, perceived socioeconomic stratification. We evaluated the objective socioeconomic status according to the person's income. We subdivided the study sample into income quintiles. In the lowest income group, quintile Q1, there was 17.2 percent of the respondents. In Q2, the second quintile, there was 19.9 percent, in Q3, the third quintile, there was 24.9 percent, in Q4, the fourth quintile, there was 19.4 percent, and in Q5, the fifth quintile, the highest income group, there was 18.7 percent of respondents.

Because the data were distributed asymmetrically across the groups, non-parametric statistics were used to analyse the data, and Kruskal-Wallis independent sample intergroup comparisons were performed. The limitations of this part of the analysis are, of course, the specifics that other assets or debts of the individual were not taken into account, because the income received monthly does not necessarily reflect the actual economic situation of the individual.

In this study we aimed to evaluate the role of subjective socioeconomic stratification, therefore we have also analysed subjective socio-economic status assessment. We applied the modified Subjective Social Class Measure, which measures a person's subjective socio-economic status, and based on the results, we divided the respondents into 5 groups:

1. Affiliating themselves with the wealthy, who live a rich and privileged life, who have a lot of money and feel like VIP.
2. Assigning themselves to the middle class who have enough money to live a normal life.

3. Assigning themselves to the middle class, who sometimes have limited amounts of money (do not always have the money to live as they want).

4. Affiliating themselves with the poor, who have no money for a normal life.

5. Assigning themselves to the poorest of the poor who do not have the money for basic everyday needs.

According to the subjective assessment of the socio-economic situation, only one person attributed himself to the rich, so we did not investigate this further. As the remaining four groups were distributed asymmetrically, non - parametric statistics were used to analyze the data, and Kruskal-Wallis independent sample intergroup comparisons were performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine whether groups of different income quintiles differ in their attitudes towards social relationships, we performed Kruskal-Wallis cross-group comparisons of independent samples. As we can see in Table 1, the results of the study showed statistically significant differences in attitudes towards social relationships between different groups of income quintiles. Mean ranks in the lowest-income quintile Q1, agreeing that "my relationships are supportive and rewarding," were almost twice lower than in the highest-income quintile Q5 ($H(2) = 127.585, p = 0.000$). A similar tendency is observed for the statement "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others", with mean ranks in the lowest income quintile Q1 being almost twice lower than in the highest income quintile Q5 ($H(2) = 110.829, p = 0.000$).

To find out whether subjective stratification, self-attribution to different socio-economic status groups is associated with different evaluations of the quality of social relationships, we performed Kruskal-Wallis cross-group comparisons of independent samples. Table 2 indicates statistically significant differences between the different groups of subjective socioeconomic stratification. The mean ranks in the subjectively poorest group, agreeing that "my relationships are supportive and rewarding," were almost three times lower than in the subjectively rich group ($H(2) = 130.374, p = 0.000$). A similar tendency is observed for the statement "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of other people" – the average ranks in the subjectively poorest group were almost twice lower than in the subjectively rich group ($H(2) = 111.070, p = 0.000$).

To find out whether groups of different income quintiles differ in perceived respect from people, we performed Kruskal-Wallis cross-group comparisons of independent samples. As we can see in Table 3, the results of the study showed statistically significant differences in

perceived respect from people among different income quintile groups. Mean ranks in the lowest-income quintile Q1, agreeing that "people respect me", were almost twice lower than in the highest-income quintile Q5 ($H(2) = 69.904, p = 0.000$).

Table 1. Intergroup comparisons of income quintile independent samples by attitudes, Kruskal-Wallis test (n = 1001)

	Income quintiles	N	Mean ranks	H (2) Chi-square	df	p
"My social relationships are supportive and rewarding"	Q1	172	357.18	127.585	4	<0.001
	Q2	199	453.67			
	Q3	249	474.18			
	Q4	194	545.10			
	Q5	187	673.61			
"I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others"	Q1	172	356.19	110.829	4	<0.001
	Q2	199	451.22			
	Q3	249	487.02			
	Q4	194	556.18			
	Q5	187	648.54			

Table 2. Intergroup comparisons of subjective socioeconomic stratification by attitudes to others, Kruskal-Wallis Test (n = 998)

	Subjective socioeconomic stratification	N	Mean ranks	H (2) Chi-square	df	p
"My social relationships are supportive and rewarding"	Middle class, enough money	125	612.76	130.374	3	<0.001
	Middle class, not enough money	552	554.60			
	Poor, not enough money	276	381.07			
	Poorest of the poor	45	235.32			
"I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others"	Middle class, enough money	125	578.58	111.070	3	<0.001
	Middle class, not enough money	552	554.43			
	Poor, not enough money	276	399.88			
	Poorest of the poor	45	217.04			

Table 3. Intergroup comparisons of income quintile independent samples by perceived respect from people, Kruskal-Wallis test (n = 1001).

	Income quintiles	N	Mean ranks	H (2) Chi-square	Df	p
"People respect me"	Q1	172	385.05	69.904	4	<0.001
	Q2	199	474.41			
	Q3	249	480.99			
	Q4	194	548.29			
	Q5	187	613.54			

To find out whether subjective stratification, self-attribution to different socio-economic status groups are associated with different evaluations of perceived respect from people, we performed Kruskal-Wallis cross-group comparisons of independent samples. A

statistically significant differences emerged in perceived respect for people among the different groups of subjective socioeconomic stratum ($H(2) = 78.11, p = 0.00$), with mean in the subjectively poorest group almost twice lower than rich group (Table 4).

Table 4. Inter-group comparisons of subjective socioeconomic stratification by perceived respect from people, Kruskal-Wallis test (n = 998).

	Subjective socio-economic stratification	N	Mean ranks	H (2) Chi-square	df	p
"People respect me"	Middle class, enough money	125	552.73	78.111	3	<0.001
	Middle class, not enough money	552	547.64			
	Poor, not enough money	276	417.03			
	Poorest of the poor	45	266.90			

To sum up, the Lithuanian population's survey revealed statistically significant differences in attitudes towards social relationships between different income quintile groups. In the Lithuanian population, the mean ranks in the lowest income quintile, agreeing that "my relationships are supportive and rewarding", are almost twice lower than in the highest income quintile. A similar tendency is observed with the statements "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others" and "People respect me" (Sirgy, 2012).

It appears that having low subjective socio-economic status may harm psychological wellbeing. Our study raises concern regarding societal wellbeing, especially, having in mind some of the studies reporting that lower-class participants respond with greater hostile reactions to threat than do upper-class participants (Kraus and Stephens, 2012; Guillen-Royo *et al.*, 2013) or that low subjective socio-economic status is related to increased aggression (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 2017; Boes and Winkelmann, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study revealed statistically significant differences in attitudes towards social relationships between different income quintile groups. Mean ranks in the lowest-income quintile Q1, agreeing that "my relationships are supportive and rewarding", were almost twice lower than in the highest-income quintile Q5. A similar tendency is observed with the statement "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others". Significant differences between different groups of subjective socioeconomic stratification were shown. Mean ranks in the subjectively poorest group were almost three times lower than in the subjectively rich group. A similar tendency is observed with the statement "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others".

In perceived respect from people among different income quintile groups, the study showed statistically

significant differences as well. Mean ranks in the lowest-income quintile Q1, agreeing that "people respect me" were twice lower than in the highest-income quintile. The results of the study showed statistically significant differences in perceived respect from people among different groups of subjective socioeconomic stratification, where the average ranks in the subjectively poorest group were almost twice lower than in the subjectively rich group. It appears that having low income and low subjective socioeconomic status may harm psychological wellbeing. Our study raises concerns regarding societal wellbeing. To achieve the prosperity of society, it is necessary to reduce socio-economic inequalities and through various programs and projects strengthen people's ability to establish and maintain supportive, compassionate social contacts.

REFERENCES

- Baker, E. R., C. I. Jensen, M. Moeyaert and S. Bordoff. 2018. Socioeconomic status and early childhood aggression: Moderation by theory of mind for relational, but not physical, aggression. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(8): 187-1201.
- Boehm, J. K. and S. Lyubomirsky. 2009. The promise of sustainable happiness. *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Boes, S. and R. Winkelmann, 2010. The effect of income on general life satisfaction and dissatisfaction. *Social Indicators Research*, 95(1): 111-128.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. and I. S. Csikszentmihalyi. 2006. *A life worth living: Contributions to positive psychology (series in positive psychology)*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Diener, E. and M. E. P. Seligman. 2004. Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5: 1-31.
- Diener, E., D. Wirtz, W. Tov, C. Kim-Prieto, D. Choi, S. Oishi, and R. Biswas-Diener. 2009. New

- measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research*, 39: 247-266.
- Dush, C. M. K. and P. R. Amato. 2005. Consequences of relationship status and quality for subjective well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22: 607-627.
- Greitemeyer, T. and C. Sagioglou. 2017. Increasing wealth inequality may increase interpersonal hostility: The relationship between personal relative deprivation and aggression. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 157: 766-776.
- Greitemeyer, T. and C. Sagioglou. 2018. Does low (vs. High) subjective socioeconomic status increase both prosociality and aggression? *Social Psychology*, 49(2): 76-87.
- Gudmundsdottir, D. 2013. The impact of economic crisis on happiness. *Social Indicators Research*, 110(3): 1083-1101.
- Guillen-Royo, M., Velazco, J. and L. Camfield. 2013. Basic needs and wealth as independent determinants of happiness: an illustration from Thailand. *Social Indicators Research*, 110(2): 517-536.
- Hlushchenko, N. V. 2021. Modern issues of administrative law. *Legal Horizons*, 14(2): 124-129.
- Kapteyn, A., Smith, J. P. and A. Van Soest. 2013. Are Americans really less happy with their incomes? *Review of Income & Wealth*, 59(1): 44-65.
- Kraus, M. W. and N. M. Stephens. 2012. A road map for an emerging psychology of social class. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 6: 642-656.
- Lammers, J., Stoker, J. I. 2019. Social and personal power: A closer examination: An invited commentary to Mayiwar and Lai. *Social Psychology*, 50(4): 270-275.
- Lyubomirsky, S. and F. Kasri. 2006. *Levels of private self-consciousness and mood awareness among happy and unhappy individuals*. Penguin Press, New York.
- Moroz, L. I., A. D. Safin and O. O. Andrusik. 2021. Influence of emotions on the effectiveness of the creative process. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 7(3): 87-93.
- Prati, F., S. Moscatelli, P. A. M. Van Lange, N. J. Van Doesum, and M. Rubini. 2018. The central role of morality in perceived humanness and unselfish behaviors. *Social Psychology*, 49(6): 330-343.
- Polukarov, Yu. O., N. A. Prakhovnik, O. I. Polukarov, H. V. Demchuk and O. V. Zemlyanska. 2021. Assessment of the economic effect from the implementation of labour protection measures at enterprises. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Economics"*, 8(1): 68-76.
- Seligman, M. 2011. *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press, New York.
- Sirgy, M. J. 2012. *The psychology of quality of life. hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and eudaimonia*. Springer Science + Business Media B.V., Berlin.
- Tov, W. and E. Diener. 2009. *The well-being of nations: Linking together trust, cooperation, and democracy. The Science of Well-being: The Collected Works of Ed Diener*. Springer, Dordrecht.
- Trung, N., K. Cheong, P. Nghi and W. Kim. 2013. Relationship between socio-economic values and wellbeing: Overview research in Asia. *Social Indicators Research*, 111(2): 453-472.
- Yaroshenko, O. M. and K. L. Tomashevski. 2021. The impact of COVID-19 on labour and social security relations: Rule-making experience of Belarus and Ukraine. *Journal of the National Academy of Legal Sciences of Ukraine*, 28(2): 211-221.

Publisher's note: EScience Press remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.