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Research Article

Revisiting the Social Construct of Status in India: The Modified B.G. Prasad Socio-economic Status Classification (2022)

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ABSTRACT

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The Modified B.G Prasad Classification is a favoured socioeconomic status classification for epidemiological studies in India due to its simplicity but needs monthly updates and revision based on changing Consumer Price Index for Industrial workers base values due to changes in the cost of living and inflation. Socio-economic status greatly influences the distribution of health-related states and events in a community. To perform the necessary revisions in the classification, this paper illustrates the calculation of a multiplication factor and the inclusion of a new base value for the year 2016, in an easy-to-use formula. By inserting the appropriate values as given by the Indian Labour Bureau, values for the year 2022. The formula and the methodology for calculation of the socio-economic status can be used by researchers for future revisions in the B.G. Prasad Classification for socio-economic status.

1. Introduction

Socio-economic status (SES) or the position of an individual or family in the society, is an important yardstick of the health status of the community of any nation [1]. A complex composite of income, education, occupation and possessions, it is treated as one of the measures of health, achievement, and success. It has also been considered, by some, to be the most important influencer of morbidity and mortality as it is closely related to health & life outcomes [2,3]. Lower SES is often associated with more negative life events/stressors as compared to high SES. SES is also responsible for the access to healthcare and the quality of which varies across the different classes of social strata [4]. Assessment of SES is a prerequisite for conducting various community based/field studies and is used as a tool to influence the accessibility, affordability, acceptability, availability and utilization of available health resources.

Our society has always been classified into strata based on various criteria. Social class is closely linked with economic status, level of education, way of life, attitudes & expectations and exposure to stress [5]. In India, most of the people requiring health care facilities belong to the lower class or live below the poverty line. It is important to have a standard classification of socioeconomic status, to apprise the economically weaker section of the society thereby directing the attention of policymakers to the unmet needs of these groups.

In India, there are many SES classifications applicable for rural, urban and both areas. These SES classifications depend on distinct parameters that need to be modified periodically as per the changing inflation rates, the value of rupee depreciation and other factors to maintain its validity [6]. In the present-day situation, social scientists and researchers need economic revision of income variables in SES.

Various socio-economic status measurement scales were proposed by many experts applicable to both rural and urban areas, Modified B. G. Prasad's classification (1961) being one of the most widely used in both areas of India. Its widespread application lies in the fact that it uses only income for the calculation of social class. B.G. Prasad classification was modified in 1968 & 1970 by Prasad himself and by Kumar in 1993, due to changing trends in expanding economy [7,8]. It is calculated as:

$$\text{Per capita monthly income} = \frac{\text{Total monthly income of the family}}{\text{Total members of the family}}$$

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Calculation of the revised SES ranges for BG Prasad classification

Table-1 Elements for Revision of B G Prasad Classification 2021

Socio-Economic Class	B.G. Prasad SES (1961)	Income in Rs/ month											
		Jan 2021 (Rs)	Feb 2021 (Rs)	Mar 2021 (Rs)	Apr 2021 (Rs)	May 2021 (Rs)	June 2021 (Rs)	July 2021 (Rs)	Aug 2021 (Rs)	Sept 2021 (Rs)	Oct 2021 (Rs)	Nov 2021 (Rs)	Dec 2021 (Rs)
	Monthly CPI (IW): 2016 (base value-100)	118.2	119.0	119.6	120.1	120.6	121.7	122.8	123.0	123.3	124.9	125.7	125.4
I-Upper Class	Rs 100 and above	≥7693	≥7745	≥7784	≥7816	≥7849	≥7920	>7992	>8005	>8024	>8128	>8180	>8161
II-Upper Middle Class	Rs 50-99	3808-7692	3834-7744	3853-7783	3369-7815	3885-7848	3920-7919	3955-7992	3962-8005	3971-8024	4023-8128	4049-8180	4039-8161
III-Middle Class	Rs 30-49	2254-3807	2269-3833	2281-3852	2290-3368	2300-3884	2321-3919	2342-3955	2345-3962	2350-3971	2381-4023	2396-4049	2390-4039
IV-Lower Middle Class	Rs 15-29	1165-2253	1173-2268	1180-2280	1184-2289	1189-2299	1199-2320	1210-2341	1212-2345	1215-2350	1231-2381	1239-2396	1236-2390

Table-2 Updated B G Prasad Classification 2022

Socio-Economic Class	B.G. Prasad SES (1961)	Income in Rs/ month	Income in Rs/ month	Income in Rs/ month	Income in Rs/ month
		Jan 2022 (Rs)	Feb 2022 (Rs)	Mar 2022 (Rs)	Apr 2022 (Rs)
	Monthly CPI (IW): 2016 (base value-100)	125.1	125.0	126.0	127.7
I-Upper Class	Rs 100 and above	≥8142	≥8135	≥8201	≥8311
II-Upper Middle Class	Rs 50-99	4029-8141	4027-8135	4059-8200	4114-8310
III- Middle Class	Rs 30-49	2384-4029	2384-4026	2403-4058	2435-4113
IV-Lower Middle Class	Rs 15-29	1233-2384	1232-2383	1242-2402	1259-2434
V- Lower Class	Below Rs 15	<1233	<1232	<1242	<1259

The income ranges in the modified B.G Prasad scale are updated monthly due to inflation and a rise in the cost of living. Cost of living and inflation is usually ascertained from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which takes into account the weighted average cost of living factors like goods and services. CPI for industrial workers is used rather than agricultural labourers or non-manual workers as it gives a better picture of an Indian working-class family (based on the Working-Class Family Income and Expenditure Survey of 1981-82). Since inflation or deflation is a dynamic phenomenon hence the CPI values and the modified B.G. Prasad class values retain their validity only when updated monthly.

A revision in the classification instead of a simple update is required with a change in the base value of CPI (Industrial Workers), which was released in 2016.

For revision of modified B.G. Prasad class values, a knowledge of the following components is required:

1. Old class values from 1961 Prasad’s classification [9]
2. Consumer Price Index for industrial workers-CPI (IW)- for each month of the year (2021, 2022) which is representative of a working-class Indian,
3. Multiplication Factor for each month
4. Linking Factor

- The base value for the revision year- i.e., 100 for 2021, 2022

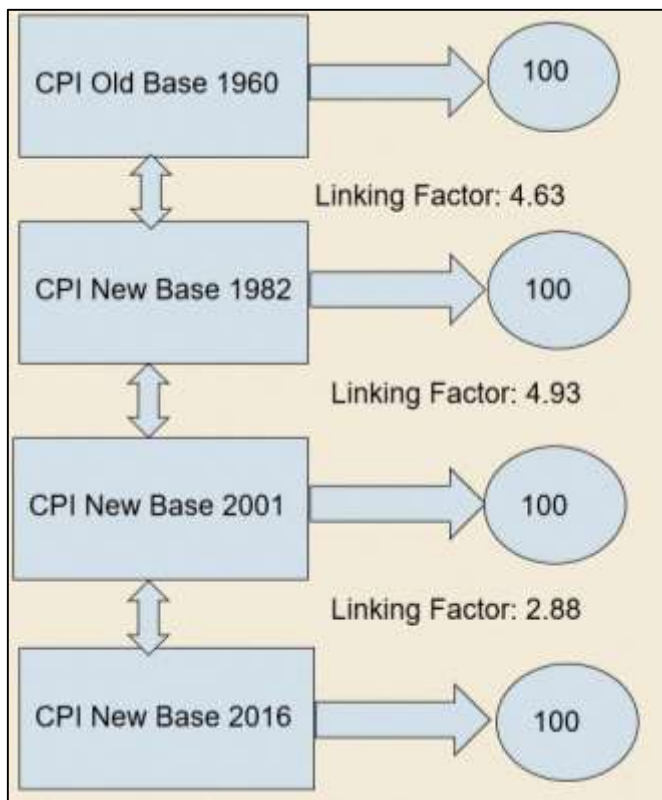
The updates of these values are available from the website of the Labour Bureau, Government of India.

3. Results and Discussion

The updates of these values are available from the website of the Labour Bureau, Government of India.

The CPI value for a particular month is released at the end of the following month, e.g., the value for January 2022 was released on 31st February 2022 on the Indian Labour Bureau website. Similarly, Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers (Base 2016=100) can be obtained from the website of Labour Bureau, Government of India. The linking factors are also provided by the Labour Bureau to convert the income value of the past year into new values; 4.63, 4.93, and 2.88 are the linking factors given by the Labour Bureau to convert from base values of 1960 to 1982, 1982 to 2001 and 2001 to 2016 respectively after inflation ^[10] (Figure 1).

Figure-1: CPI and Linking Factor



The income values for a given month in the modified B.G. Prasad scale can be calculated by the following formula:

$$\text{Income for given month} = \text{Old Income Value} \times \text{Multiplication Factor} \times \text{Linking Factors}$$

*Old Income Value (As per Prasad's 1961 classification)

- Where multiplication factor is calculated as:

$$\text{Multiplication Factor} = \frac{\text{Current CPI index value}}{\text{Base CPI index Value in 2016 (100)}}$$

Let us understand this with an example:

CPI Industrial Workers (IW) for April of X year = 120.1
 Multiplication factor = Current index value (120.1)/Base index value in 2016 (100) = 1.201
 Old income value taken as 100

The new income value can now be calculated as:
New income value = 100 × 1.201 × 4.63 × 4.93 × 2.88 = Rs. 7895.
 The updated values for the per capita monthly income (in Rs/month) for the years 2021 and 2022 are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Limitations:

The Modified B.G. Prasad Classification takes into account only income per capita and no social factors are considered for its classification. Therefore, it represents more economically based classes rather than socio-economic classes. It takes into account CPI for industrial workers only ignoring the agricultural workers and rural labourers of rural and urban areas, hence the scale may show false representation. This can be redressed by including the remaining prices indices for a more comprehensive scale. Education and designation in the workplace and possessions like land, house and vehicles sometimes represent the social status of the family but here in Prasad's classification, no other parameters are included, sometimes leading to the faulty representation of sections of society. Despite all the above limitations, the modified B.G. Prasad classification is widely used in community studies and has stood the test of time.

Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared that no conflicting interests exist.

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