

## Perceived Socioeconomic Status and Group Identification: A Case of Majority-Minority Stratum

*Dr. Vikrant Jha\* and Mithlesh kumar\*\**

### Abstract

*India, which has the second-largest population after China, is home to many different religious communities; roughly 80% of India's population identifies themselves as Hindu and being part of majority group whereas roughly 20% population belonging to a minority group. People have different opinions about how much they think the intergroup structure is set up in a hierarchy, even though this is a fact that is well-known and widely accepted. Intergroup comparisons can lead to an evaluation of the economic and social status of the in-group if conducted within the context of a comparative examination of the in-group and the out-group. Consequently, this research (N= 120, M<sub>age</sub> = 32 years, SD = 12.46) is intended to understand the perceived socioeconomic status and group identification of people in majority-minority stratum. Overall, our findings showed that both majority and minority groups reflects in-group favouritism towards their own group and out-group derogation towards other group. We also discovered that regardless of the participants' group membership, participant's perceived socioeconomic status had a positive correlation with their affiliation in the majority group and a negative correlation in their identification with the minority group. The findings are then addressed in the light of existing body of scholarly work, and the article concluded by offering some thoughts on the directions that majority-minority identification research should go in the future.*

**Keywords.** Perceived socioeconomic standing, Group

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\* Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, India. [Vikrantjha08@gmail.com](mailto:Vikrantjha08@gmail.com), +918076643263

\*\* Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, India.

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## **Introduction**

There are a variety of social groups to which people belong, some of which they acquire (like occupational positions) and some of which they are born with (like gender). Human beings categorize themselves as well as other people effortlessly into social categories. In other words, we easily categorize individuals into subgroups based on their given attributes (for example ethnicity or sex) or their acquired position (for example their employment or socio-political affiliation) (Deaux, 1996), or, more widely, on our impressions of their resemblance, proximity, and shared fate (Campbell, 1958). This way of putting people into groups is usually quick and easy (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). The effects of social categorizations frequently manifest themselves not only in the dynamics of social relationships, but also in the manner in which one's social standing is displayed to the outside world.

In the context of society, almost all groups can be placed into one of two categories: the majority or the minority. One definition of "minority" is a group with fewer members than other groups (Brewer, 1991, 2003; Moscovici & Paicheler, 1978; Simon, 1992); another defines "minority" as a group with relatively low power and status in relation to the majority (Tajfel, 1981). It is impossible to provide a definitive definition for the phrases "majority" and "minority"; rather, they are determined by context and represent the interaction between the two groups. Changes in population, movement of people, the demography of borders, and the establishment of a nation-state all have the potential to bring about a reversal in the status quo of certain groups, causing them to move from being in the minority to being in the majority. Berreman, (1972) emphasized that people in India identify themselves with four broad social categories in which they could take majority or minority positions. These categories were as follows: (i) religious groups, (ii) regional-linguistic-national-racial groups, (iii) caste categories (the varnas), and (iv) social class, lifestyle, and occupational

categories. Each of these significant categories contained subsets of subcategories that were distinct from one another and often contrasted with one another.

According to research, minority group identification is stronger than majority group identification (Kinket & Verkuyten, 1997; Perreault & Bourhis, 1999; Van Oudenhove & Eisses, 1998; Verkuyten & Masson, 1995), potentially due to minority groups being more insecure (Gerard & Hoyt, 1974; Mullen et al., 1992; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1984). There is evidence that members of minority groups have a more pronounced sense of group identity, greater awareness of positive and negative self-stereotypes, and elevated attention to information at the group level (Doosje et al., 1995; Simon, 1992; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). According to Brewer and Weber (1994), individuals of the minority group have a stronger perception of the homogeneity and resemblance of their own group than members of the majority group. Furthermore, majority and minority groups' associations between prominent identity and discrimination are different. According to research by Jackson (2002) and Verkuyten and Masson (1995), members of minority groups have more prominent in-group identification due to a wider variety of factors than members of majority groups do. The in-group identity of majority group members is primarily motivated by views of conflict between groups.

It is common practice to use the term "status" to indicate that different groups can be distinguished from one another in terms of the relative prestige they enjoy. The reasons behind such distinctions can be extremely diverse, ranging from (beliefs about) the relative actions of the groups on some novel task, to group associations that are greatly judged in day-to-day life. People have different opinions about how much they think the intergroup structure is set up in a hierarchy, even though this is a fact that is well-known and widely accepted. The concept of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994) refers to people's beliefs that social hierarchies between groups are normal and unavoidable and that some groups are dominant (high status) over others (low status). It has been established that these beliefs are subject to contextual circumstances such as an individual's social status (Guimond et

al., 2003). People's perspectives on the social hierarchy aren't the only factors that influence the attitudes and behaviours they exhibit in intergroup relationships; other features of the social setting in which they live also play a role. By "structural appraisals," one means evaluations of the larger context of relationships between social groups. Contextual considerations, such as the nature of the environment, determine the extent to which this structure can be altered, and it incorporates not just specific groups and their placement in that environment, but also other levels of self and group inclusiveness (such as individuals and superordinate categories).

The term "socioeconomic status" (SES) refers to a complex and multidimensional concept that takes into account both independent objective factors (such as income or education) and the subjective assessments that individuals make regarding where they fall on the socioeconomic spectrum. Over the past decade, there has been substantial development in the study of the psychological implications of social class (Manstead, 2018). Moya and Fiske (2017) define the field at large as a system of social stratification based on one's access to various resources (economic, social, etc.). The Great Recession, which is intrinsically connected to the growing gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" (Pfeffer et al., 2013), is largely responsible for this heightened focus. According to Moya and Fiske (2017), class differences and the adverse effects they have that are widespread and manifest themselves in a variety of different spheres are becoming increasingly apparent in the current socioeconomic environment. However, one could argue that almost all of an individual's social and psychological behaviours are primarily influenced by their objective or perceived socioeconomic standing. This includes everything from eating habits (Baumann et al., 2019) and patterns of speech (Kraus et al., 2019) to humor-related attributes (Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2020) and a sense of self (Easterbrook et al., 2020).

In the framework of a comparative analysis of the in-group and the out-group, intergroup comparisons can also lead to an appraisal of the economic and social status of the in-group. According to the findings of the research, perceptions of deprivation or disadvantage usually depend on comparisons

rather than the simple evaluation of the in-group's situation alone. Relative deprivation can be understood in a variety of ways, including as a sense of offense caused by opinions about positions determined by comparisons between the actual position and what is expected (Davis, 1959; Runciman, 1966); as a "perception of discrepancy between [an actor's] value expectations and [their] value capabilities" (Gurr, 1970, p. 24) or as a belief that the in-group has less than the out-group.

Group identification is a notion that is conceptually distinct from social identity, cohesiveness, and common fate. Group identification is defined as the member's affiliation with an interacting group. It is hypothesized that there are three roots to the phenomenon of group identification: cognitive (the act of social categorization), affective (the act of interpersonal attraction), and behavioural (the act of interdependence). Miller and Bersoff (1992) and Miller et al. (1990) discovered that Indian society's structure provided an ideal setting for the investigation of the changing roles of several identities, such as religious, national, regional, geographical (north vs. south), class, and race identities, and how one might get rid of or combine these identities for the improvement of societal functioning properly. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), any group (such as social class, religion, baseball team, etc.) can be a source of self-worth and pride. As a result, we tend to boost our sense of self-worth through highlighting and promoting the status of the group to which we belong, the so-called "in-group" (as opposed to "out-groups," which are groups to which we do not belong (Hogg & Turner, 1987). Putting oneself into a social group and then thinking of oneself as a member of that category is what is meant by the term "self-categorization." According to self-categorization theory, self-categorization is hierarchical. Membership in a category and one's classification of themselves do not necessarily have to correspond. Turner et al. (1987) consider self-categorization to be a part of a person's self-concept, which they define as the sum of their mental representations of themselves. Self-categorization, to be more precise, is the mental act of labelling oneself and other people one considers to be similar to oneself as "us" (as opposed to "them") in a certain category.

## **Present Study**

India, which has the second-largest population after China, is home to many different religious communities, roughly 80% of India's population identifies themselves as Hindu, whereas roughly 20% belonging to a minority group. The contentious term "minority" or "minorities" appears in the Constitution in several provisions, including Article 29, Article 30, Article 350(A), and 350(B); although no concrete definition is provided. Under the provisions of the National Commission on Minorities Act of 1992, the central government of India has accorded official recognition to six religious groups that have traditionally been regarded to be members of the country's underrepresented minority: Muslims, Buddhists, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, and Jains (Jains were involved somewhat later in 2014). Their economic and educational development is vital to the country's overall development, which is moving from the ranks of the world's developing nations to those of the developed.

Data on population and the varying rates of growth experienced by each religious community are officially released, which leads to widespread attention regarding the higher rate of growth experienced by a religious community, as Muslims have stated. People think that their religion is the reason for their faster growth and not their relative poverty and lack of education. This is because they don't know much about the social and economic state of the same groups. As a result of their lack of understanding of lower social standing relative to the majority, individuals of minority groups, according to Tajfel (1978), struggle to develop a positive sense of social identity. Similarly, Turner et al. (1984) argued that being a part of a minority group typically does not make a positive contribution to a person's sense of self-esteem or pride. If a person's in-group does not meet their esteem needs, they can either (a) try to alter the group's structure (social change), (b) look for new benchmarks of evaluation that may increase in-group respect and, consequently, enhance social skills (social creativity), or (c) reject the in-group and join a more desirable one (social mobility) (Tajfel, 1978). If having a strong sense of belonging to one's group is associated with harbouring bias against other members of that group (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Deaux, 1996; Perreault & Bourhis, 1999), then members of minority groups

may be more prone to harboring such feelings. Consequently, *people's perceptions of their economic condition and their group identifications (toward their group and the other group) in a majority-minority context* were the focus of our investigation for the current research.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate the mean differences between majority and minority groups with regard to their perceptions of their socioeconomic status and their group identification.
2. To analyze the difference between the mean levels of identification that people have in their own group and in another group.
3. To investigate the relationship between perceived socioeconomic status and group identification in majority and minority groups.

### **Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>. There will be mean differences in perceived socioeconomic status and group identification between the majority and minority groups.
- H<sub>2</sub>. There will be difference between the mean levels of identification that people have in their own group and in another group.
- H<sub>3</sub>. There will be relationship between perceived socioeconomic status and group identification in majority and minority groups.

### **Method Design**

Quantitative research approach was used in this study. To quantify the data cross-sectional survey design was utilized by the researcher where a set of information regarding individuals' perceived economic status and their group identification was collected for a sample at one point in time.

### **Participants**

One hundred twenty adult people from rural and urban parts of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India, participated in the study. At inception, 150 adult people were approached to take part in the study and 128 agreed to do so (85% response

rate). Eight participants were not able to go through the complete survey due to their time constraints and personal reasons. Out of total sample size,  $N = 120$ , 55 (45.83%) were male and 65 (54.17%) were female. Their  $M_{age}$  was 32 years ( $SD = 12.46$ ) and ranging from 18-70 years. 68 (56.66%) adults identified themselves belonging to majority group (Hindu) and 52 (43.33%) adults identified themselves belonging to minority group (Muslims). Participants were sampled primarily through convenience sampling. Table 1 includes the other socio-demographic details of the individuals.

**Table 1**

*Socio-Demographics of Participants in Majority and Minority Groups*

Sociodemographic characteristic	Majority group		Minority group	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender				
Male	30	44.10	25	48.10
Female	38	55.90	27	51.90
Area				
Urban	35	51.50	38	73.10
Rural	33	48.50	14	26.90
Socioeconomic status				
Weak	29	42.60	25	48.10
Strong	39	57.40	27	51.90

*Note.*  $N = 120$ .

## Measures

### *Sociodemographic Variables*

Participants were asked about their, gender, area of belonging (urban/rural), their socioeconomic status (weak/strong), and whether they belong to majority group or minority group in India based on their religious affiliation.

### ***Perceived Socioeconomic Status***

The conventional 10-step social ladder version of the MacArthur SSS scale (Adler et al., 2000) was used for the assessment. The participants were given the task of choosing the rung on the social hierarchy that best reflected where they stood in comparison to other persons living in India in terms of their socioeconomic status. When it came to this social ladder, having a high number indicated a higher placement.

### ***Group Identification***

In accordance with the works of Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) and Schubert and Otten (2002) an example of graphical social identification scale was provided by Steffens and Haslam (2017) was used in this study to measure group identification of individuals. Participants were asked to identify their perception of alignment or overlap based on their perceived socioeconomic position between themselves and a group using pairs of circles with varied degrees of overlap. A complete lack of overlap indicates that they were separated from this group (i.e., indicating a very low level of social identification and marked as 1); total overlap indicates that they and their group are isomorphic (i.e., indicating a very high level of social identification and marked as 7). Higher scores indicated greater group identification with a certain group. Here we used two groups' majority and minority and participants were required to provide response towards both the group based on their perceived socioeconomic status. Graphical scales such as this were highly reliable and extremely easy to complete. They were also particularly useful in situations where participants were asked to indicate their identification with multiple entities because they allow for a visual comparison of responses.

### **Procedure**

The participation of individuals in the study was entirely voluntary, and they did not receive any type of compensation for their participation in the study. Everyone who took part in the study gave their informed consent, and they also filled out the questionnaire that the researcher gave them, which included instructions that were very explicit. When the investigation was

done, the participants were given a debriefing, and any questions or concerns that the participants had were addressed and handled by the researcher. It took participants 10–12 minutes on average to complete the questionnaire. Following the completion of the questionnaire, the participants were thanked for their participation in the study. At each stage of the research, the researcher complied with the ethical standards outlined in the APA's code of conduct (APA, 2002).

### **Statistical Analysis**

First, a frequency distribution was carried out for the sociodemographics of both the majority and the minority groups. Next, independent and dependent samples *t*-tests were carried out to compare the mean differences on various measures and conditions. Finally, in the end, we computed Pearson product-moment correlations to examine the relationships between variables in both the majority and the minority groups.

### **Results**

The analysis of missing data showed that across all measurements of the participants, there were no missing values at all. All values were then verified to be within the scale's allowable range by examining the range of scores on each item. Parametric tests' assumptions were examined, and it was discovered that the variables under investigation satisfied the criteria for normality and homoscedasticity. Descriptive statistics of variables under study in majority-minority groups have been provided in table 2, and difference in means using independent and dependent samples *t*-test.

**Table 2***Mean Comparison of Study Variables in Majority and Minority Groups*

Variable	Majority group		Minority group		<i>t</i> (118)	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
	Perceived socioeconomic standing	5.37	2.16	5.00		
Identification in majority	3.53	1.18	3.00	1.34	2.30*	0.21
Identification in minority	2.76	1.36	3.83	1.41	4.15***	0.36

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

According to  $t(118) = 0.94$ ,  $p = .350$ , the mean difference in perceived socioeconomic status was not found to be statistically significant, as shown in Table 2. The majority group ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) and minority group ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ) evaluated their socioeconomic status essentially identically, and both groups remained in the middle of the standard 10-rung social ladder on the MacArthur SSS scale. The reported value of Cohen's  $d$  was 0.10, which pointed out that the effect size was small (because it was less than 0.50). With  $t(118) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .023$ , the findings revealed a significant mean difference in identification with the majority group. Results also revealed that those who were part of the majority group had a higher score on the question of whether they identified with the majority group ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) in comparison to persons who were part of the minority group ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). The reported value of Cohen's  $d$  was 0.21, which suggested a small effect size (because it was less than 0.50). Table 2 also reflected a significant mean difference when it came to identifying with a minority group, with  $t(118) = 4.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . According to the findings, persons who were part of the majority group had a considerably lower score on the question of whether they identified with a minority group ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) in comparison to people who were part of the minority group ( $M =$

3.83,  $SD = 1.41$ ). The reported value of Cohen's  $d$  was 0.36, and it was less than 0.50, which showed that the effect size was small. Overall, the results of the independent samples  $t$ -test showed that our proposed hypothesis  $H_1$  was supported when it came to group identification but not when it came to perceived socioeconomic status.

**Table 3**

*Mean Comparison of Participants' Identification in Majority and Minority Based on Their Group Membership (Majority or Minority)*

Participants' group membership	Identification in majority		Identification in minority		$t$	$df$	Cohen's $d$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
	Majority group	3.53	1.18	2.76			
Minority group	3.00	1.34	3.83	1.41	3.46***	51	0.48

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3 revealed mean comparison of participants' identification with majority and minority based on their group memberships (majority or minority). Findings indicated significant mean difference among participants having majority group membership with  $t(67) = 4.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Results showed that mean score of people from majority group was higher when they identified themselves with majority ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) and it subsequently decreased when they identified themselves with minority ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). The reported value of Cohen's  $d$  was 0.51 and greater than 0.50; it indicated that the effect size was medium. The outcomes also suggested significant mean difference among participants having minority group membership with  $t(51) = 3.46$ ,  $p < .001$ . Results highlighted that mean score of people from minority group was lower when they identified themselves with majority ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) and it subsequently increased when they identified themselves with minority ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ). The reported value of Cohen's  $d$  was 0.48, which was less than 0.50, which showed that the effect size was small. Based on findings of dependent sample  $t$ -test our proposed hypothesis  $H_2$  was supported.

**Table 4***Intercorrelations for Study Variables by Majority-Minority Groups*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Perceived socioeconomic status	—	.43**	-.27*
2. Identification in majority group	.21	—	.22
3. Identification in minority group	-.26*	.30*	—

*Note.* The results for minority group ( $n = 52$ ) are above the diagonal. The results for majority group ( $n = 68$ ) are below the diagonal.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4 indicated that in the majority group, perceived socioeconomic status has non-significant correlation with identification in majority group ( $r = .21$ ,  $p = .086$ ) and significant weak negative correlation with identification in minority group ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p = .036$ ). Identification with majority group has significant weak positive correlation with identification in minority group ( $r = .30$ ,  $p = .012$ ). In minority group, perceived socioeconomic status has significant medium positive correlation with identification in majority group ( $r = .43$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and significant weak negative correlation with identification in minority group ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p = .056$ ). Identification in majority group has non-significant correlation with identification in minority group ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .122$ ). Our proposed hypothesis  $H_3$  was supported to some extent; however, further inquiry is required in subsequent research.

## Discussion

Analysis of the data and results on perceived social status and group identifications in majority-minority setting with adults clearly demonstrates the differences in group identification that exist between majority and minority groups, as well as the similarities that exist in perceived social standing. People who belong to either the majority or the minority group positioned themselves in the middle of the social ladder on the MacArthur SSS scale. This emphasizes the significance of exerting effort toward moving

to higher class identities, which also indicates higher status is anticipated to be more psychologically appealing, and is, therefore, more subjectively significant to people's self-definitions (Vignoles, 2011). Researchers have also claimed that the desire for status is an essential psychological motivator and is highly related to one's self-esteem (Anderson et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to Alicke and Sedikides (2009), this is consistent with the motivation for self-enhancement, which compels people to highlight their positive side.

The results of the independent samples t-test and dependent samples t-test show that identification in the majority group is higher in the majority group and identification in the minority group is higher in the minority group. This suggests that both majority-minority groups exhibit in-group favouritism for their own group. Identification in the majority group is lower in the minority group, while identification in the minority group is lower in the majority group. This finding suggests that both majority and minority groups reflect out-group derogation towards the other group. This finding shows that, on average, affiliations with groups that were considered as the most significant for the self-perception (socioeconomic dimensions: schooling, job status, and money) did not cause intergroup bias, while group affiliations that were viewed as less important did cause intergroup bias (Grigoryan et al., 2022). It is possible that affiliation in socioeconomic groups is more helpful for assessments of themselves because, first, these are the boundaries of categorization that societies use to ascribe success and worth (Easterbrook et al., 2020), and, second, these groups have more permeable lines and seem to be under people control.

Result of correlation analysis suggests that in both majority and minority groups, perceived socioeconomic status positively correlated with identification in majority group whereas negatively related to identification in minority group and this negative correlation of perceived socioeconomic status with identification of minority group can be due to realistic and symbolic threat that faced by minority and also Riek et al. (2006) found that both types of threat independently and directly trigger intergroup bias and

can generate a lack of authenticity in smaller communities and their members' psychosocial functioning. In a similar vein, Shaikh (2016) emphasized the fact that even after more than ten years after the Sachar Committee Report the circumstances of largest minority group (Muslims) remain unchanged, stating that in certain instances things seem to have, in fact, deteriorated. For instance, the percentage of Muslims working in India's police force was 7.63% in 2005, but by 2013, that percentage had dropped to 6.27%. According to Shaikh (2016), the government has discontinued the practice of publishing data that is segmented according to the religious affiliation of law enforcement employees. Our findings suggest that the emergence of Covid-19 and economic crises have altered the socioeconomic status of people in different groups, and that this has likely also altered their self-related cognitions towards groups, suggesting that this topic should be a focus of future research in the field of intergroup relationships.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of results, we are able to reach the conclusion that persons who belong to majority or minority groups positioned themselves in the middle of the social ladder on the MacArthur SSS scale. Majority-minority groups reflect in-group favouritism towards their own group and reflect out-group derogation towards other group. In majority and minority groups, perceived socioeconomic status positively correlated with identification in majority group whereas negatively related with identification in minority group. We also suggest that more researches need to be done in India especially in majority-minority context.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Even though this study's findings make it possible to start a new line of inquiry in psychological studies on socioeconomic status and group identifications in majority-minority contexts. It is essential to realize that this study has some limitations before proposing new lines of research. First, because our study was conducted in a particular sociocultural setting (India), in which Hindus make up the majority of the population while other

communities make up the minority. The findings from our study cannot be generalized to other sociocultural settings; therefore, any future research must focus on cross-cultural investigations. Second, it's important to point out that the sampling strategy we utilized in this study was convenience sampling, which limits how widely our findings can be applied. Future studies should adopt probabilistic sampling strategies to ensure that their samples are as representative as feasible. Third, instead of doing experiments, we decided to conduct this research using a survey approach. As a result, we limit drawing causal conclusions from our findings. Therefore, future research ought to make use of experimental or longitudinal methods in order to identify the potential causal impacts of socioeconomic status and group identification in a scenario involving a majority and a minority population.

## **Declarations**

### **Authors' Contributions**

The authors have made significant contributions to the generation of ideas, the refinement of concepts, and the gathering, analyzing, and interpreting of data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards outlined in the APA's code of conduct (APA, 2002) were followed.

### **Acknowledgement**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank each participant for their contribution to the research and to offer our sincere gratitude.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

There are no conflicts of interest among the authors.

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