

Prosocial Behavior And Rejection Sensitivity: The Differential Effects Of Gender Among Indian Expatriates In U.A.E.

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Abstract:

The study is intended to investigate the gender difference on Prosocial behavior and Rejection sensitivity of Indian expatriates in U.A.E. The sample of 202 expatriates from U.A.E was collected through simple random sampling method. The instruments administered were Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger & Freifeld, 1995), Rejection Sensitivity RS-Adult questionnaire (A-RSQ), (Berenson, et.al, 2009) and Personal data schedule. The data obtained was subjected to SPSS analysis and t-test was carried out. Significant differences revealed between male and female participants on the basis of empathic concern dimension only. Empathetic concern, being the motivation behind an individual's efforts to reduce the suffering of another, its gender influence would be of great significance to explore various kinds of intervention modules according based on gender to increase Prosocial behaviour on the basis of other psychosocial variables other than Rejection sensitivity among the expatriate population.

Key words: Prosocial behavior, Rejection sensitivity, Expatriates

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Introduction

Humans are endowed with an extraordinary ability to share and understand the affective states of others and this is vital as it allows appropriate social interactions and relationships with others. This ability, known as empathy, is multifaceted since consisting of several aspects, including emotion contagion, empathic accuracy, concern for others, self-other distinction, emotion regulation and perspective taking (Preston & de Waal, 2002; Decety & Jackson, 2004, 2006; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). There have been studies aimed at exploring whether the physical distance between an observer and an individual in a particular affective state (induced by a painful stimulation) is a critical factor in modulating the magnitude of an empathic neural reaction in the observer. Theory and evidence suggest that empathy is an important motivating factor for prosocial behaviour and that emotion regulation, i.e. the capacity to exert control over an emotional response, may moderate the degree to which empathy is associated with prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviour (PSB) has genetic and social determinants. Dispositional pro-socialness, i.e., the disposition or tendency to help, share, cooperate, empathize and take care of other people might be a predictor of PSB (Caprara et al., 2000). While understand the pro-socialness of individuals towards their kith and kin as a Universal

phenomenon, the present study attempted to observe an unprecedented urge of pro-socialness among a large majority among those residing as expats. This is where the possibility of a factor related to social rejection or social exclusion emerges and the need to measure the rejection sensitivity of these individuals arises. It leads to conduct a correlational research to explore the relation between PSB and Rejection Sensitivity.

Prosocial Behaviour among expatriates

India has had the historical bilateral relationship with the Middle Eastern countries commonly referred as GCC countries (Gulf Cooperation Council countries viz. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) for centuries with mutual respect and benefit. Relations got strengthened after the oil exploration boom which opened the doors on Indian semi-skilled and unskilled workers who migrate in the GCC countries to meet out their manpower need in new projects.

Expatriate population in the U.A.E. is migrant workers who moved to a new country in search of job on a temporary basis. Temporary period could be few months to many few years. In GCC countries, temporary period could be as long as many decades. While most of these migrant workers are employed by local or international companies, there is a small population of migrants who are running their own enterprises in the U.A.E. It is normal that when people are away from home country, people tend to be more socially supportive to each other.

It may be noted that in the life of an expatriate Indian there are many situations where one could experience the warmth of prosocial behavior from fellow countrymen. It is not only during personal emergencies and pandemic situations that expatriates come forward to support fellow community. Recently during the Covid-19 pandemic period also many Indian expatriate individuals and groups came forward to support fellow Indians to reach their home towns in India. In addition to the general prosocial behaviour of Indian expatriates, researcher has noticed an exceptional urge among expatriate Indian communities – individuals and groups - in U.A.E to extend a helping hand to fellow citizens in India whenever there are national emergencies, calamities or any sort of adverse situations arises and appeal for help arises from their respective community.

Studies on prosocial behaviour based on gender examine different experimental data sets that explore social behavior in economic games and uncovers that many treatment effects may be gender-specific (Espinosa & Kovács, 2015). Study observes that, in general men and women do not differ in “neutral” baselines. However, social framing tends to reinforce prosocial behavior in women but not men, whereas encouraging reflection decreases the prosociality of males but not females. The treatment effects are sometimes statistically different across genders and sometimes not but never go in the opposite direction. These findings suggest that the social behavior of both sexes is malleable but each gender responds to different aspects of the social context; and gender differences observed in some studies might be the result of particular features of the experimental design. These results contribute to the literature on prosocial behavior and may improve the understanding of the origins of human prosociality.

Another research on Gender Differences in the Correlates of Volunteering and Charitable Giving has found that women score higher on most measures of the traits, motivations, and values that predict helping others, and women are more likely to help family and friends. However, sex differences in the institutional helping behaviors of volunteering and charitable giving are small (Einolf, 2010).

Rejection sensitivity

Migration of skilled and unskilled workers from India to the Gulf countries has begun since 1970s, once crude oil was discovered. Two to three generations of Indian expatriates can be found in these countries. One of the prominent countries, where there are over 1.7 million Indians living is the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E). Though Gulf countries allow foreign expatriates to work or do business, they are not granted permanent residency or citizenship unlike the United States of America or other Western European countries. This situation compels expatriate population to return to their home country sooner or later.

Normally an expatriate Indian visits his / her home country once a year or once in two to three years. After staying away from their near and dear ones for a shorter or longer period, these men and women eagerly await the visit to their home country. During these visits to India, they shower their dear and near ones with gifts and presents. It is common that individuals display an array of prosocial behavior towards their friends and relatives. Such behavior is usually expressed in the form of giving gifts in cash or in kind. On the face of it, it can be looked upon as a gesture love and reunion. Such behavior repeats year after year. In addition while living as an expatriate, these individuals positively respond to humanitarian appeals, donation requests for social causes voluntarily and appeals from government entities for the welfare of their countrymen in India. Over 80% of the Indian workforce in the U.A.E. is low wage-earners. In spite of the low income they earn, these expatriates are not hesitant to respond to appeals from relatives or friends positively. In many cases they borrow money to fulfill the needs of relatives and friends in India. It has to be noted that this kind of prosocial behavior is extended beyond their immediate family members.

Feeling rejected by a friend, family member, or romantic partner is a universally painful experience. Some individuals, however, feel the sting of rejection much more acutely than others and also have an exaggerated fear of being rejected by those around them. These people are said to be high in a trait known as rejection sensitivity. Someone high in rejection sensitivity will often interpret benign or mildly negative social cues—such as a partner not answering a text message immediately—as signs of outright rejection. They may disregard other more logical explanations, as well as reassurances on the part of the supposed rejecter. Paradoxically, such behavior may actually push others away, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to RS theory (Romero-Canyas et al., 2010), higher trait RS results in multiple psychological difficulties, including depression, aggression, and relational breakup (Downey et al., 1998, 2000; Ayduk et al., 1999, 2001; Marston et al., 2010).

Researcher has observed that such prosocial acts are mostly evident towards their relatives and friends in India and not so evident towards their fellow countrymen or others who are in the U.A.E. This raised questions in the researcher about the genuineness and the reason behind the prosocial behavioral pattern of Indian expatriates.

This study is an attempt to understand the nature of prosocial behavior of Indian expatriates and if such behavior is related to their rejection sensitivity levels based on gender. Prosocial behavior has been evident among Indian expatriates during their period of stay in the U.A.E. There are dearth of published studies available which looked into the selective prosocial nature of “giving to friends and relatives only” among expatriate Indians. Therefore the present study mainly focuses on the rejection sensitivity and prosocial behavior among Indian expatriates living the U.A.E on the basis of gender. If a difference does exist, it might help us to understand and explain the “giving nature” of the expatriate population on the basis of gender.

Method

Participants and procedure:

Indian expatriates in U.A.E (N=202) participated in the survey and were given questionnaires directly and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaire prepared in paper format and Google form was given to 202 individuals living in different states of the United Arab Emirates. They completed Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger & Freifeld, 1995), Rejection Sensitivity RS-Adult questionnaire (A-RSQ), (Berenson, et.al. 2009). Responses were analysed by means of SPSS. A brief description about the nature and purpose of the study were given in the introduction of the questionnaire and the participants were assured about the confidentiality of the responses.

Measures

Prosocial Personality Battery

The Prosocial Personality Battery (PSB) (Penner et al., 1995) is a 56-item standardized questionnaire that assesses the two dimensions of the prosocial personality: helpfulness, the behavioural aspect of prosociality, and other orientated empathy, the thoughts and feelings facet of the prosocial personality. Participants are asked to rate statements on a five-point scale of how much they agree or disagree, e.g. where 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree for items 1 to 42; while for items 43 to 56 participants are asked to rate how often they engage in the behaviours described on a 5-point scale where 1= Never and 5= Very Often. Sixteen items were then recoded and the relevant sections were computed into two scale variables, other-orientated empathy and helpfulness, giving a single score for each. The alpha coefficients for the two factors other orientated empathy and helpfulness were .77 and .85 respectively which indicates good level of reliability.

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire – Adult (A-RSQ)

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire - Adult (18 items): RSQ-A (Downey, 1996) is intended to measure an individual's level of RS - personal. It is not designed for a specific population. There are two versions. One includes 8 (eight) items and the other includes 18 (eighteen) items. This study used the scale consisting of 18 items. The total number of items in the scale is 18. Scoring A-RSQ (18 items): Calculate a score of rejection sensitivity for each situation by multiplying the level of rejection concern (the response to question a.) by the reverse of the level of acceptance expectancy (the response to question b.). The formula is, rejection sensitivity = (rejection concern) * (7-acceptance expectancy). Internal consistency (alpha) is 0.81. Correlation with Interpersonal Sensitivity Scale of the SCL-90 (n=310) is 0.48. Correlation with score on the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (n=295) is 0.41. Correlation with score on the Beck Depression Inventory (n=303) is 0.35. Test-retest reliability (n=104) 0.83.

Since gender is a factor that may be expected to have significant effect on most of the psychosocial variables, it was decided to study the gender wise difference in both Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial behaviour. t-test was carried out to compare male participants and female participants in terms of their scores in Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial Behaviour, its sub components.

t-test analysis based on socio-demographic variable: Gender

Table 1

Mean, t-value and the corresponding level of significance of Rejection Sensitivity and sub components of Prosocial behaviour among expatriates in U.A.E, based on gender.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-values	Sig level
Rejection Sensitivity	Male	129	85.66	25.484	.160	.873
	Female	73	85.04	28.006		
Social Responsibility	Male	129	41.21	6.216	1.582	.115
	Female	73	39.86	5.006		
Empathic Concern	Male	129	16.08	3.376	3.234**	.001
	Female	73	14.52	3.123		
Perspective Taking	Male	129	16.98	3.270	.194	.846
	Female	73	17.07	3.159		
Other-Oriented Reasoning	Male	129	8.45	1.964	.231	.818
	Female	73	8.38	1.934		
Mutual Concerns moral reasoning	Male	129	7.96	1.843	.741	.460
	Female	73	8.16	1.922		
Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy	Male	129	90.67	10.291	1.876	.062
	Female	73	88.00	8.660		
Self-reported altruism	Male	129	39.62	8.348	1.217	.225
	Female	73	38.10	8.899		
Personal Distress	Male	129	14.99	2.615	1.448	.149
	Female	73	14.41	2.953		
Factor 2: Helpfulness	Male	129	54.61	9.036	1.511	.132
	Female	73	52.51	10.304		

**Sig at .01 levels.

Result and Discussion

Table 1 indicates mean, t- value and the corresponding level of significance of Rejection Sensitivity and sub components of Prosocial behaviour among Indian expatriates in U.A.E, based on gender. It could be noted that there observed a significant gender difference in Empathic Concern, where males (M=16.08) have a higher mean score than females (M=14.52, t=3.234, p<.01). However, there is no significant mean difference observed in Rejection Sensitivity, and other subcomponents of Prosocial behaviour.

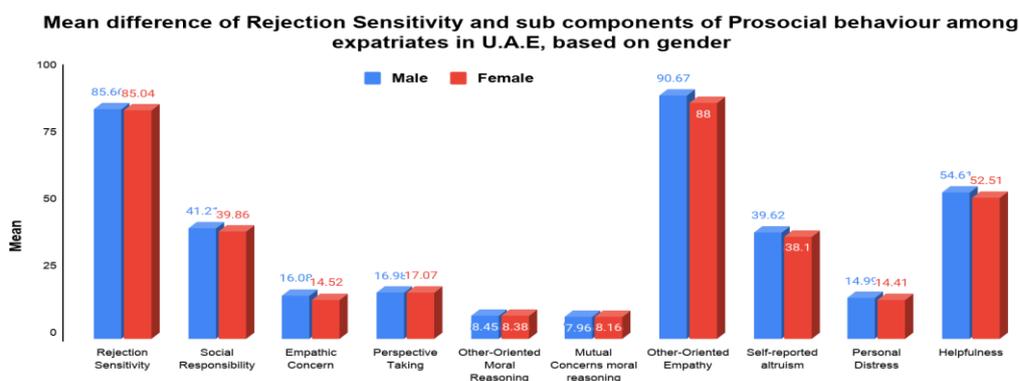


Figure 4.1

Popular culture considers empathy to be a gendered belief – one that is expected to be more typical, natural or appropriate for one gender than other. However, empirical studies provide a mixed pattern of findings. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) reviewed 29 papers pertaining to emotional empathy, social sensitivity, affective role taking etc. and in most of the studies examined, there were no significant gender differences and in the remaining studies, differences were nearly equally divided between two genders. In Block (1976) review, most of the studies showed higher empathy in females than males. On the basis of a review of nine articles, Hoffman (1977) concluded that females are indeed more empathic than males.

The research concerning gender differences are highly related to the definition of empathy and the method through which it is assessed. Eisenberg and Lennon (1984) found a large gender difference favouring women when the measure of empathy was self-report scales. Klein and Hodges (2001) have found that women are assumed to have greater capacity in understanding others thoughts and feelings than men (Klein & Hodges, 2001; O'Brien et.al, 2012). Gender differences favouring females have been strongest when self-report or other-report measures were used to assess empathy (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1984).

Usually, data related to gender differences are embedded in studies in which the gender was of minor importance and thus it does not supply any further information. Contrary to that trend, Espinosa & Kovářik (2015) attempted to find out how men and women react to different situations and revealed that gender is an important element of prosocial behaviour. They suggest that the social behavior of both genders are adaptable but each gender responds to different aspects of the social context and gender differences observed in studies might be the result of features of the experimental design. Similarly, Rand et.al (2014) argues that people internalize behaviours which are advantageous in their daily life situations and apply them intuitively, but when prompted to reason or reflect their behaviour, most of them behave 3more in line with their self-interest (Espinosa & Kovářik. 2015).

Considering the gender differences in rejection sensitivity, present study does not show any significant mean difference between males and females. A study by Marston et.al (2010) found that males reported higher levels of rejection sensitivity than females at the age of 16 and 17, but does not differ at the age of 18, which may be contributed by the numerous role transitions during late adolescence. Gender differences in socialization can influence rejection sensitivity and the response to it.

Apart from gender differences, there are status based rejection is prevalent, which is a tendency to believe potential rejection because of one's personal characteristics including race and gender. research evidence suggests that member of a stigmatized minority group who are sensitive to being rejected because of their group membership, say, female, may have more trouble coping well in environments that have traditionally been dominated by their counterparts.

Implications and Future Direction:

This study primarily focused on the gender difference on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity of expatriate Indians in the U.A.E. The study was significant when viewed from a dimension where a large majority of Indian expatriates seems to behave in a similar pattern of prosociality. This seemed

generally evident when extending helping hand towards their friends and relatives in India. This pattern has generally been observed by the researcher in his long duration of stay in the U.A.E. spanning over two-and-a-half decades. Similar published studies were unavailable among the Indian expatriates in the U.A.E hence it became more relevant to understand the underlying motives of prosociality. From personal interactions with people from different walks of life all these years, researcher has noticed that there exists an exceptional nature of prosociality displayed by Indian expatriates towards their kith and kin irrespective of their social or economic status. However from the present study no considerable gender difference could be established on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity. As no considerable difference could be established between male and female participants on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity except for empathetic concern from the current sample, alternate influencing factors for such display of exceptional prosociality of the Indian expatriates could be envisaged. The study opens up more avenues of research among the friends and relatives of expatriate Indians living in India to understand their perspective of such outcome put forward by the researcher.

Limitations:

1. Samples were limited to 202. This shall be considered as inadequate considering the larger population of expatriate Indians living in the U.A.E. It can be argued that, with larger samples of the population of expatriate Indians in the U.A.E, the outcome of the study could be different. A larger sample size would have increased the generalizability of the results.
2. Samples collected from expatriate Indian population in the U.A.E does not represent at a pan India level covering all 29 states of India which has varied cultures, customs, language, religious beliefs, values etc.
3. There are no equal representations of people from both genders. So it must be required grouping Indian expatriates in different zones on the basis of gender. Among those participated in the study, homogeneity in the nature of the job Indian expatriates performing in the U.A.E. could not be ensured.

Conclusion

There was no significant difference between male and female participants on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity except empathic concern dimension among expatriates. The finding of the study itself gives a scope to probe more psychosocial factors contributing prosocial behaviour among expatriates.

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