



**PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND REJECTION SENSITIVITY BETWEEN
MARRIED AND UNMARRIED PARTICIPANTS AMONG INDIAN
EXPATRIATES**

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Abstract

The study is intended to investigate the significant difference between married and unmarried participants on Prosocial Behavior and Rejection Sensitivity of Indian expatriates in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E). The sample of 202 Indian expatriates from U.A.E were 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). The data obtained was subjected to SPSS analysis and the statistical technique used was Pearson correlation coefficient. The result revealed that marital status bears no significant role on one's Rejection Sensitivity and Prosocial behavior. The study outcome would be of great importance to seek for more psychosocial variables, if any, which can contribute to the evident nature of helping behavior among expatriates.

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 prosocialness, 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 prosocialness 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 expatriates. 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 explore the relation between PSB and Rejection Sensitivity (Caprara, et al., 2000).

Literature Review

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. are 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 expatriates; individuals and groups came forward to support fellow Indians to reach their home towns in India from many GCC cities where they have been stranded after losing their jobs or livelihood. In addition to the general prosocial behaviour of Indian expatriates, researcher has noticed an exceptional urge among expatriate Indian communities – individuals and groups - in the 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.

Rejection sensitivity

Migration of skilled and unskilled workers from India to the Gulf countries has begun since 1970s, once crude oil was discovered. 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 joy of reunion. Such behavior repeats year after year. In addition while living as an expatriate, these individuals positively respond to humanitarian appeals, donation requests from their friends and relatives and general public for social causes voluntarily and appeals from Indian government entities as well. Over 80% of the Indian workforce in the U.A.E. are 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 prosocial acts mentioned above by expatriate Indians in the U.A.E. are mostly evident towards their relatives and friends in India and not so evident towards their fellow countrymen or towards other nationalities who they coexists with 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 behaviour is related to their rejection sensitivity levels based on participant's marital status. 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 their marital status. If a difference does exist, it might help us to understand and explain the “giving nature” of the expatriate population on the basis of their marital status.

Methodology

Participants and procedure:

Indian expatriates in U.A.E (N=202) participated in the survey were given questionnaires directly and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaire prepared in paper format and online-format (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) and 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 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 marital status is a factor that may be expected to have significant effect on most of the psychosocial variables, it was decided to study the difference between married and unmarried participants in both Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial behaviour. t-test was carried out to compare married and unmarried participants in terms of their scores in Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial Behaviour, its sub components.

Rejection Sensitivity and Prosocial Behaviour on the basis of marital status

Marital status is included in the study with the anticipation that Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial behavior may differ on the basis of whether the participant is single or married.



Table1

Mean, SD, t-values on the basis of Marital status on Rejection sensitivity and sub variables of Prosocial behaviour.

	Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig level
Rejection Sensitivity	Single	41	87.98	31.821	.690	.491
	Married	161	84.79	24.847		
Social Responsibility	Single	41	41.32	5.289	.730	.466
	Married	161	40.57	5.967		
Empathic Concern	Single	41	15.07	3.758	.941	.348
	Married	161	15.63	3.259		
Perspective Taking	Single	41	16.29	3.662	1.60 2	.111
	Married	161	17.19	3.087		
Other-Oriented Moral Reasoning	Single	41	8.37	1.757	.220	.826
	Married	161	8.44	2.000		
Mutual Concerns moral reasoning	Single	41	8.32	1.863	1.08 4	.280
	Married	161	7.96	1.870		
Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy	Single	41	89.37	11.364	.250	.803
	Married	161	89.80	9.394		
Self-reported altruism	Single	41	40.44	9.122	1.14 8	.252
	Married	161	38.72	8.406		
Personal Distress	Single	41	14.12	3.172	1.73 1	.085
	Married	161	14.95	2.614		
Factor 2: Helpfulness	Single	41	54.56	10.354	.502	.595
	Married	161	53.67	9.350		



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 expatriates in U.A.E, based on marital status. It could be noted that none of the variables show statistically significant mean difference with respect to marital status.

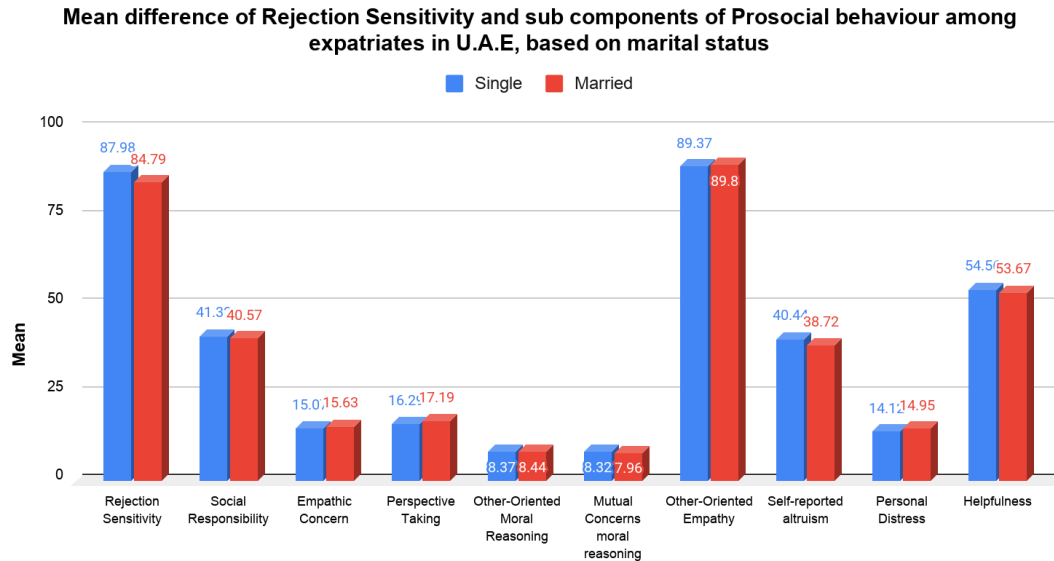


Figure 1

Marital status has rarely been considered as a predictor variable of empathy and prosocial behaviour. In the National Altruism Study (2003) conducted in University of Chicago, empathy and altruistic values are greater among married and widowed individuals than among the separated and never married. Also, altruistic values are higher among widows than in widowers. Similarly, Diener et.al. (1999) suggested that married adults are more likely to demonstrate positive affect than unmarried adults (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Kahana et.al (2013) found no significant mean difference were found in terms of marital status in prosocial behaviour among retired elders. On mentioning the advantages of prosocial behaviour, mortality was found to be significantly reduced in married older adults who reported giving instrumental and emotional support to family, friends, or neighbors. (Fowler & Christakis, 2008).

Even though studies were hardly found on the rejection sensitivity based on marital status, there are many studies on the effect of rejection sensitivity on the relationship between married couples. Previous researches indicate that relationship satisfaction would be poorer among couples in which at least one partner is highly sensitive to rejection. It is more likely that they



would perceive rejection in ambiguous situations and this perceived rejection may lead to maladaptive behaviours (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Galliher & Bentley, 2010). Also, anticipating and fearing rejection is correlated with low self-esteem as well as self worth, which in turn hinder people from forming close, meaningful relationships.

Implications and Future Direction:

This study primarily focused on prosocial behaviour and rejection sensitivity of expatriate Indians in the U.A.E based on their marital status. 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 among the Indian expatriates in the U.A.E were unavailable hence it became more relevant to understand the underlying motives of prosociality. From personal interactions with people from different sections of life in the U.A.E. 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 difference could be established based on participant's marital status on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity. As no considerable difference could be established between married and unmarried participants on both prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity, 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. Number of participants 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. Data 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 married and unmarried group. So it must be required grouping Indian expatriates in different zones on the basis of their



marital status. 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 married and unmarried participants on prosocial behaviour and rejection sensitivity of Indian expatriates in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E). The finding of the study itself gives a scope to probe more psychosocial factors contributing prosocial behaviour among expatriates.

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