

Role of economic status on Prosocial behavior and Rejection sensitivity among Indian expatriates in U.A.E

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Abstract

The study is intended to investigate the significant difference among participants based on their economic status 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 economic status bears no significant role on one's Rejection Sensitivity and Prosocial behavior except social responsibility, factor1 other oriented empathy, and personal distress dimensions of prosocial behavior. The study outcome would be of great importance to seek for more psychosocial variables, other than economic status, which can contribute to the evident nature of helping behavior among expatriates.

Key words: Prosocial behavior, Rejection sensitivity, Expatriates

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

II. 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. 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.

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 give 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 participant's economic 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 in U.A.E on the basis of their economic status. It might help us to understand and explain the "giving nature" of the expatriate population on the basis of their level of education.

III. METHODOLOGY

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 economic 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 among participants based on monthly income as their economic status on both Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial behaviour. One way ANOVA was carried out to compare participants with different levels of monthly income on Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial Behaviour, its sub components.

Rejection sensitivity and Prosocial Behaviour on the basis of Monthly income

Since economic status is a great determinant of one's helping nature, it was decided to include participant's monthly income and checked whether any difference among participants based on different economic status on rejection sensitivity and thereby prosocial behaviour.

Table 1

Mean, F- value and the corresponding level of significance on Rejection sensitivity and sub variables of Prosocial behaviour based on Monthly Income

	Monthly Income	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig level
Rejection Sensitivity	1000-5000	39	92.87	29.32	1.238	.296
	5001-10,000	49	83.78	24.50		
	10,001-15,000	40	80.25	30.70		
	15,001-20,000	27	84.26	21.22		
	20,001 above	47	86.09	23.86		
Social Responsibility	1000-5000	39	40.74	4.10	2.560*	.040
	5001-10,000	49	42.29	5.45		
	10,001-15,000	40	41.45	6.07		
	15,001-20,000	27	40.30	6.59		
	20,001above	47	38.70	6.35		
Empathic Concern	1000-5000	39	15.18	3.45	2.009	.095
	5001-10,000	49	16.37	2.99		
	10,001-15,000	40	16.08	3.35		

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	15,001-20,000	27	15.00	3.32		
	20,001above	47	14.72	3.53		
Perspective Taking	1000-5000	39	16.08	3.87	1.828	.125
	5001-10,000	49	17.53	3.17		
	10,001-15,000	40	17.55	2.73		
	15,001-20,000	27	17.44	2.35		
	20,001above	47	16.53	3.37		
Other-Oriented Moral Reasoning	1000-5000	39	8.00	1.79	.742	.564
	5001-10,000	49	8.63	1.98		
	10,001-15,000	40	8.58	1.78		
	15,001-20,000	27	8.26	2.14		
	20,001above	47	8.53	2.07		
Mutual Concerns moral reasoning	1000-5000	39	8.15	2.04	.965	.428
	5001-10,000	49	8.37	2.06		
	10,001-15,000	40	7.98	1.59		
	15,001-20,000	27	8.04	1.95		
	20,001above	47	7.64	1.66		
Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy	1000-5000	39	88.15	8.92	3.996**	.004
	5001-10,000	49	93.18	9.51		
	10,001-15,000	40	91.63	9.20		
	15,001-20,000	27	89.04	10.29		
	20,001above	47	86.13	9.79		
Self-reported altruism	1000-5000	39	38.00	8.47	.448	.774
	5001-10,000	49	39.53	9.33		
	10,001-15,000	40	38.25	7.82		
	15,001-20,000	27	39.19	9.07		
	20,001above	47	40.11	8.27		
Personal Distress	1000-5000	39	13.82	2.81	2.832*	.026
	5001-10,000	49	15.51	2.50		
	10,001-15,000	40	14.38	2.71		
	15,001-20,000	27	14.56	2.70		
	20,001above	47	15.30	2.77		
Factor 2: Helpfulness	1000-5000	39	51.82	10.05	1.112	.352
	5001-10,000	49	55.04	10.31		
	10,001-15,000	40	52.63	9.26		
	15,001-20,000	27	53.74	9.25		
	20,001above	47	55.40	8.56		

*.05 level of significance & **.01 level of significance.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates mean, F- value and the corresponding level of significance of Rejection Sensitivity and sub components of Prosocial behaviour among expatriates in U.A.E, based on Monthly Income. It could be noted that there observed significant mean differences in Social Responsibility, Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy and Personal Distress. However, there is no significant mean difference observed in Rejection Sensitivity, and other subcomponents of prosocial behaviour.

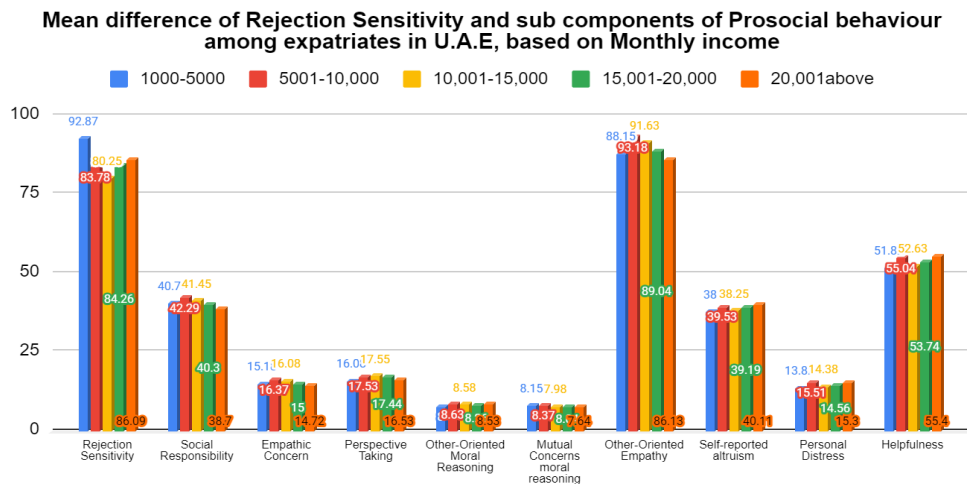


Figure 1

There is evidence that economic stress is positively associated with selfless helping behaviors (Davis, Carlo, Streit, & Crockett, 2018). Individuals overwhelmed with their own needs may be better able to adequately empathize with others in need. Simulation theory explains that when a similar mental state is observed in another individual, mirror neurons get activated and empathic understanding is generated.

Piff et al. (2012) reported that individuals from higher social classes behaved more unethically and were less charitable, less trusting, and less generous than individuals from a lower social class. According to social cognitive perspective individuals from lower social classes are more attuned to the welfare of others as a way to adapt to their more hostile environments, and are thus more likely to be compassionate and to engage in other beneficial prosocial behavior (Piff, et al., 2010). Whereas, upper-class individuals lead to an individualistic focus on their own internal states, goals, motivations, and emotions.

Social responsibility on the basis of Monthly income

Table 2

Duncan’s Post Hoc analysis: Social Responsibility

Monthly Income	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
20,001above	47	38.70	
15,001-20,000	27	40.30	40.30
1000-5000	39	40.74	40.74
10,001-15,000	40	41.45	41.45
5001-10,000	49	42.29	42.29
Sig.		.055	.169

Post-hoc analysis indicates that participants having income above 20,001 and income between 5001-10,000 differ significantly in Social Responsibility, in which participants having income between 5001-10,000 showed high mean scores. Schmuklea, Korndörferb and Egloffc (2019) showed that higher income individuals are less generous than poorer individuals only if they reside in a US state with comparatively large economic inequality. This finding might serve to reconcile inconsistent findings on the effect of social class on generosity by highlighting the moderating role of economic inequality.

Other-Oriented Empathy on the basis of Monthly income

Table3

Duncan’s Post Hoc analysis: Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy

Monthly Income	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
20,001above	47	86.13		
1000-5000	39	88.15	88.15	
15,001-20,000	27	89.04	89.04	89.04
10,001-15,000	40	91.63	91.63	91.63
5001-10,000	49	93.18	93.18	93.18
Sig.		.208	.132	.071

Post hoc analysis indicates that the three groups – participants having income above 20,001, between 10,001-

15,000, and between 5001-10,000 - differ significantly with each other in Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy. More specifically, participants having income between 5001-10,000 score high in Other-Oriented Empathy traits, while participants having income above 20,001 scored comparatively low.

Personal Distress on the basis of Monthly income

Table 4
Duncan's Post Hoc analysis: Personal Distress

Monthly Income	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
1000-5000	39	13.82	
10,001-15,000	40	14.38	14.38
15,001-20,000	27	14.56	14.56
20,001 above	47		15.30
5001-10,000	49		15.51
Sig.		.263	.093

Post hoc analysis indicates that the three groups – participants having income above 20,001, between 5001-10,000 and between 1000-5000 - differ significantly with each other in Personal Distress. More specifically, participants having income between 5001-10,000 score high in Other-Oriented Empathy traits, while participants having income between 1000 – 5000 scored comparatively low.

Implications and Future Direction:

This study primarily focused on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity of expatriate Indians in the U.A.E based on their economic 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 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 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 economic status on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity. As no considerable difference could be established among the participants based on economic status on prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity except for social responsibility, factor 1 other oriented empathy, and personal distress 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. Number of participants was 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 all levels of economic status. So it must be required grouping Indian expatriates in different zones on the basis of their monthly income. 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.

V. CONCLUSION

There was no significant difference obtained among the participants on the basis of economic status except social responsibility, factor 1 other oriented empathy and personal distress dimension of prosocial behaviour among expatriates. Participants earned between Rupees of 5000-10000 as their monthly income revealed high social responsibility, empathy and personal distress than the participants earning higher salary as monthly income. The finding of the study itself gives a scope to probe more psychosocial factors other than monthly income contributing prosocial behaviour and rejection sensitivity among expatriates.

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