

## Study on correlation between Prosocial Behavior and Rejection Sensitivity among Indian expatriates

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### Abstract:

The study is intended to investigate the correlation between 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 Prosocial Behavior of expatriates bears no significant correlation with Rejection Sensitivity. 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 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 behavior 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. U.A.E. accounts for more than 1.1 million Indian expatriates.

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 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. 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 focus on the rejection sensitivity among Indian expatriates living the U.A.E prosocial behavior. If a relation does exist between the two, it might help us to understand and explain the “giving nature” of the expatriate population.

## 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 I= 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.

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 1**

*Pearson correlation coefficient between Rejection Sensitivity and sub components of Prosocial behaviour among expatriates in U.A.E (N=202)*

Variables	Social Responsibility	Empathic Concern	Perspective Taking	Other-Oriented Moral Reasoning	Mutual Concern moral reasoning	Factor 1: Other-Oriented Empathy	Self-reported altruism	Personal Distress	Factor 2: Helpfulness
Rejection Sensitivity	.052	.096	-.135	.063	.124	.056	.092	-.007	.080

### Result and Discussion

Table 1 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient between Rejection Sensitivity and sub components of Prosocial Behaviour among expatriates. None of the variables of pro social behaviour and Rejection Sensitivity is found to be significantly correlated with each other. When considering the correlation values, it can be seen that all the subcomponents of prosocial behaviour shared a very weak correlation coefficient with Rejection sensitivity.

Correlation coefficient obtained between rejection sensitivity and social responsibility was,  $r=.052$ , empathic concern was,  $r=.096$ , perspective taking was,  $r=-.135$ , other oriented moral reasoning was,  $r=.063$ , mutual concern moral reasoning was,  $r=.124$ , factor1 other oriented empathy was,  $r=.056$ , self-reported altruism was,  $r=.092$ , personal distress was,  $r=-.007$  and finally

between rejection sensitivity and factor2 helpfulness was,  $r=.080$ .

Scope of some factors other than rejection sensitivity could be causing the elevated levels of prosociality among Indian expatriates. Alternate reasons for the display of exceptional prosociality of the Indian expatriates could be attributed to the fulfilment of expectation of their Indian counter parts viz.friends and relatives. It is a well-known common notion that those who work abroad especially in the oil rich gulf countries (also known as middle eastern countries) are of the larger and higher earning scale and are saving much more than those who work in India with a similar educational qualification and skill level. Though the earning part, if true, is due to the currency exchange rate between the Indian rupee and U.A.E. Dirham, the savings part is untrue for the large majority of those who

are working in the U.A.E, due to the higher cost of living.

Rejection sensitivity model of Levy et al. (2001) suggested that rejection sensitivity will get activated when rejection cues are detected from valued others. When the behaviour of others are perceived as "rejecting", negative affective states as hurt and anger will trigger, which in turn reduce the probability to behave prosocially. However, individuals' expectations (anxious vs. angry) and behavioural reactions (avoidance vs. intimacy seeking) in social situations may vary according to the situations (Levy et.al, 2001).

Prior rejection experiences may usually lead to the formation of rejection expectations any time later in life. There are conflicting opinions regarding whether social rejection leads to antisocial or prosocial behaviour. Previous studies have shown that if the rejected individual believes in the possibility of subsequent reconnection, even negative experiences can lead to prosocial behaviour (Maner et al., 2007; Romero-Canyas et al. 2010; Vollhardt, 2009). Maner et al. (2007) found that after a rejection, individuals were willing to behave in positive and ingratiating ways toward a new individual, not toward the person who had rejected them. Individuals will make efforts to connect with others after rejection only if their efforts have the potential to positively influence or reverse their rejecters' evaluation of them (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007).

#### **Implications and Future Direction:**

This study primarily focused on the relation between 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 relation could be established between prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity. As no considerable relation could be established between prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity from the current sample, alternate reasons 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 a correlation put forward by the researcher.

It leaves Indian expatriates with smaller savings. However in order to manage expectations of their friends and relatives with the earnings in the U.A.E. which is naturally based on the higher exchange rate, they tend to display higher prosociality in

the form of “giving beyond their means”

### Limitations:

1. The first major limitation of the study to be pointed out is that the size of the sample 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.
2. Samples collected from expatriate Indian population in the U.A.E does not represent at a pan India level. 28 states of India has varied cultures, customs, language, religious beliefs, values etc.
3. There are no equal representations of people of different states residing in the U.A.E. So it may be worth grouping Indian expatriates in different zones. A larger sample size would have increased the generalizability of the results.
4. 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 relationship between prosocial behavior and rejection sensitivity among expatriates. The finding of the study itself gives a scope to probe more psychosocial factors contributing prosocial behavior among expatriates.

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