Interpersonal Differences: Implications for Organizations

NK Natarajan,
Services Selection Board, Bhopal

Dinesh Nagar
Barkatullah University, Bhopal

Deepa Ayachit
Gyan Ganga Institute of Technology and Management, Bhopal

In the present investigation done in the Indian context, it was found that interpersonal scores did not differ very significantly in most groupings except in case of gender where significant differences were observed in both the scales of Inclusion only. Surprising and against common belief, there were no significant differences observed based on caste distinction. However, based on place of upbringing, people from rural and semi-urban upbringing scored higher in the scale of Inclusion Wanted. Interactions of gender, caste and place of upbringing highlight that the male subjects of lower caste from rural and semi-urban upbringing were found to demand inclusion in group activities and seek attention in the organization. They may also express affection as a means to attain inclusion in the group. On the other hand, female subjects of the lower caste brought up in urban areas were found to Express Inclusion. The paper discusses the findings in light of the socio-cultural changes that are taking place in the Indian society.

Sullivan (1953) redefined personality as an interpersonal phenomenon. He viewed 'personality' as a relatively stable pattern of interpersonal behaviors arising from interactions with others. He argued that interpersonal skills and the sense of identity develop from human interactions. Empathy is a central component of socialization, as a skill for evaluating others' needs and abilities. An individual who fails to master the distinctions among social identity, power, and love is at substantial risk for the development of relationships. As fields of research, interpersonal relations (emphasizing dimensions of interaction among individuals) is maturing as alterative, yet complimentary, foci of individual differences (Mahoney & Stasson, 2005). Increasingly therefore, organizations are now looking at this dimension more critically at the time of personnel selection. Yet there are hardly any published research works in the Indian context.

While researchers such as Leary (1957) and Kiesler (1996) focused on two-dimensional (Dominance–Submissiveness) interpersonal model, there has been considerable disagreement as to the components of positive and negative emotional aspects of interaction. Schutz (1958) advanced the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) system. According to him, interpersonal behavior is directed towards the satisfaction of three specific interpersonal needs: control, inclusion, and affection. 'Control' reflects the person's dominance in the interaction - an individual elevated in 'Control' tends to direct, lead, or manipulate the relationship; those persons low in Control tend to emit patterns of behavior that facilitate others to initiate dominance. 'Inclusion' addresses the issue of personal significance in an interaction. A person elevated in inclusion is recognized as positively or negatively significant in an interaction. The third dimension is 'Affection',

a measure of the positive or negative emotional aspects of a relationship. Individuals elevated in affection are emotionally bound to the relationship; those low in affection have little emotional investment in the relationship.

Interpersonal behavior is further defined as a two-way process in which individuals 'express' behavior towards others, as well as 'want' to experience certain behavior from others. He also, defined each of these three relational components as having two distinct tactical operations. Each aspect has an 'Expressed' component and a 'Wanted' component. Inclusion Expressed (IE) behaviors signify a desire to be a member of a relationship. Inclusion Wanted (IW) behaviors are internal desires to be included by others. If the person is socially competent, he or she will manifest appropriate match in Expressed and Wanted aspects. Problems arise, however, for the individual who lacks the interpersonal skills to match Wanted and Expressed needs. Interpersonal incompetence arises from a disjunction in the level of expression versus wanting of a component. Despite mixed evidence on the existence of three components (Schutz, 1978) and lack of evidence on distinction between inclusion and affection (Gough & Bradley, 1996), this scale is quite popular in the western countries.

The FIRO-B manual fails to report data separately for boys and girls. However, Exline, Gray, and Schuette (1965) reported that College-aged women scored higher than did college-aged men on the two inclusion and the two affection scales. However, in a study of undergraduate Canadian business students, McRae and Young (1990) found no significant gender differences. In an Indian study, Arul (1994) found gender differences on FIRO among management students in Gujarat. In yet another study, Mahoney and Stasson (2005) reported interpersonal differences between genders on at least two dimensions: expressed-inclusion, expressed-

affection and wanted affection. They also established interpersonal differences based on geography and suggested that the difference could be due to different cultures in the two regions. Recently, Sayeed (2010) studying public and private managers in India reported the influence of individual differences of leadership styles. He reported positive relationship of Inclusion and Affection dimensions with that of participative and nurturing styles of leaders. The Control Expressed dimension failed to relate with leaders' Task Orientation component. However, he did not carryout a distinctive study based on gender.

'Personality' is an outcome of several factors such as genetics, sociology of the society in which one is brought up, socio-economic background of the family which will determine such things as type and quality of schooling, social status in the society etc. Hence, all these environmental, demographic and socio-economic factors are likely to have an impact on one's interpersonal behavior. It is therefore, important to understand the differences if any, in interpersonal behavior between different groups of subjects. The current study had therefore, aimed at examining the interpersonal differences based on gender, caste: Upper and Lower, and place of upbringing: Rural, Semi-Urban, Urban.

Objectives:

The objective of this study is to verify interpersonal differences based on gender, caste and place of upbringing in the Indian context. It is expected that there will be significant differences as the socialization processes are quite different between gender, caste and place of upbringing.

Method

Participants:

A total of 184 students, 112 boys and 72 girls, participated in the study. All were selected based on convenience sampling

from Engineering and Management classes at a prestigious technical institution at Central India. Approximately 35% of the participants identified themselves as from lower caste and 65% as upper caste. Approximately 23% respondents had rural upbringing, 22% semi-urban and 55% urban. The median age of the sample was 22 years.

Measure:

The *FIRO-B* (Schultz, 1958) consists of 54 items, 9 for each of the 6 scales. For convenience, the scales are labeled IE for Inclusion Expressed, IW for Inclusion Wanted, CE for Control Expressed, CW for Control Wanted, AE for Affection Expressed and AW for Affection Wanted.

Results

Table 1 displays the grouped means of FIRO scale scores separated by gender. It was seen that women scored significantly higher then men on both the Inclusion scales (Equal Variance not assumed). Inclusion Expressed, t (182) = 2.98, p = 0.01; and Inclusion Wanted, t (182) = 2.33, p < 0.05.

Table 2 displays the grouped means of FIRO scale scores separated by caste. It was seen that there is no significant difference between the lower and upper caste.

Table 1. Mean and SD Scores on the FIRO-B Scales of the Whole Group and by Gender

Group	Variables	IE	CE	AE	IW	CW	AW
TotalN=184	Mean	5.22	4.36	2.78	4.19	4.20	2.65
	SD	2.06	2.10	1.95	2.87	2.16	1.63
MaleN= 112	Mean	4.86	4.48	2.83	3.86	4.33	2.70
	SD	2.02	1.96	1.93	2.65	2.17	1.68
FemaleN=72	Mean	5.77	4.18	2.69	4.80	4.01	2.58
	SD	2.02	2.30	1.99	3.10	2.15	1.57
	't' value	2.98**	0.95	0.49	2.33*	0.97	0.49

*p<.05; **p<.01

Table 2. Mean (SD) Scores on the FIRO-B Scales Grouped by Caste

Groups	Variables	IE	CE	AE	IW	CW	AW
Lower Caste	Mean	4.97	4.25	2.84	4.047	4.42	2.55
N= 64	SD	2.17	1.85	2.10	2.73	2.02	1.49
Upper Caste	Mean	5.36	4.42	2.75	4.27	4.09	2.71
N= 120	SD	2.00	2.27	1.88	2.96	2.24	1.716
	't' value	1.22	0.54	0.30	0.51	0.98	0.66

Table 3. Mean (SD) Scores on the FIRO-B Scales Grouped by Place of Upbringing

Group	Variables	IE	CE	AE	IW	CW	AW
Rural	Mean	5.16	4.16	2.79	5.07	4.28	2.79
N=43	SD	1.69	1.87	1.88	2.34	2.04	1.846
Semi-Urban	Mean	5.20	4.83	2.83	4.12	3.78	2.63
N=41	SD	1.96	2.37	2.12	2.59	2.51	1.68
Urban	Mean	5.26	4.26	2.76	3.85	4.35	2.61
N=100 SD		2.26	2.08	1.93	3.12	2.06	1.54
	'F' value	.038	1.322	.019	2.780*	1.038	.187

* p < .065

Table 3 displays the grouped means of FIRO scale scores separated by place of upbringing. It was seen that rural and semi-urban groups scored higher in only one scale of Inclusion: Inclusion Wanted to the extent of $F_{(182)} = 2.78$, $p = 0.065$ level of significance. There were no other significant differences between the groups.

It is seen that gender, caste and place of upbringing interact in predicting four dimension of FIRO scale i.e. Inclusion Expressed, Inclusion Wanted, Affection Expressed and Control Expressed. Female respondents of lower caste brought up in urban area scored significantly higher in the scale of Inclusion Expressed to the extent of $F_{(18)} = 7.80$, $p = 0.04$ level of significance. Also, Male respondents from lower caste brought up in rural area scored significantly higher in the scale of Inclusion Wanted to the extent of $F_{(42)} = 8.37$, $p = 0.001$ level of significance and the ones brought up in semi-urban areas scored significantly higher in the scale of Affection Expressed to the extent of $F_{(42)} = 3.95$, $p = 0.27$ level of significance. Male respondents of upper caste brought up in semi-urban area scored significantly higher in the scale of Control Expressed to the extent of $F_{(66)} = 8.37$, $p = 0.012$ level of significance.

Discussion

In the present investigation interpersonal scores did not differ very significantly in most groupings except in case of gender where significant differences were observed in both the scales of Inclusion i.e. Inclusion Wanted and Inclusion Expressed. The female subjects have been found to include and want to be included in the activities more then their male counterparts. It may be said that women are likely to include others in their activities and like to be included in others' activities. They enjoy the opportunity to provide input and don't like to get cut off from information and updates. They may seek recognition and endorsement from colleagues and superiors and do not make much distinction between work and social gatherings. They may also withdraw first if they sense a possibility of being rejected by others. This finding is not very surprising in the Indian context. It is common knowledge that women in India are subjected to considerable subjugation right from early childhood. Perhaps, this feeling of subjugation and deprivation finds expression for inclusion as they mature. In the present study the subjects were of the adult age group, doing professional courses like engineering and management and are in the verge of joining work organizations. Further, most of them have been staying in hostels where they get greater opportunity to socialize which could be a contributing factor towards women scoring high on both scales of inclusion, and attaining interpersonal balance between expressed and wanted dimensions of Control and Affection. Hence, lack of significant differences except in case of 'Inclusion' is not very surprising. The findings are somewhat in line with the findings of Arul (1994) though the instrument used by him was a modified version. Further, the results are partially consistent with the findings of Exline, Gray, and Schuette (1965), and Mahoney & Stasson (2005). In both these studies significant differences were found based on gender on the two inclusion and affection scales. Though, there is some consistency in the results, comparing it with the results of a totally divergent cultural context would be unreasonable. Hence, what would be relevant to us is the sole Indian study by Arul (1994).

Surprisingly and against common belief, there were no significant differences observed based on caste distinction. This may be a good indicator of the erosion of caste distinctions in the Indian society. However, based on place of upbringing, significant difference (p=0.065) was found for 'Inclusion Wanted'. It was seen that subjects with rural and semi-urban upbringing seek more

inclusion in group activities than their urban counterpart. This could be seen as a new social divide emerging in India. Indian society had a very strong legacy of the cast system and even though it now appears to be fading the mindset of divided society is perhaps getting expression in the form of rural-urban distinction. As stated earlier, personality is an outcome of several factors including sociology of the society in which one is brought up, socio-economic background of the family which will determine such things as type and quality of schooling, social status in the society etc. It is common knowledge that rural population in India is agrarian, poor and deprived of the comforts of modern urban living. Hence, the mass migration of people from rural to urban settings is likely to result in a struggle between the two sections. In this context, the finding of the present study that rural and semi-urban subjects seek more Inclusion in the group activities is not very surprising. Interactions of gender, caste and place of upbringing highlight that the male subjects of lower caste from rural and semi-urban upbringing will demand inclusion in group activities and seek attention in the organization. They will also express affection as a means to attain inclusion in the group. This may be because of caste discrimination that they may have experienced in the rural / semi-urban societies and hence wish to be included at par with others. On the other hand, female subjects of the lower caste brought up in urban areas will include others in the activities and will not mind others getting attention. This may be due to self assurance developed in an urban society where gender/caste discriminations are quite insignificant.

Implications for organizations

Indian society has been discriminatory in nature for years. Post independence, several measures have been taken by the government to eradicate caste and gender based discrimination and the resultant push and pull of the various sections of the society

do play a major role in the development of interpersonal styles of the youth. The findings of the study stand to corroborate the expected outcomes of the governmental measures of creating an all inclusive society. It is common knowledge that most people have discriminatory biases and hence their interpersonal interactions are to some extent influenced by these biases. In this regard, a recruiter is no exception. The study very categorically brought out that there hardly exist any major interpersonal differences in terms of gender, caste or place of upbringing.

With hierarchy giving way to team form of working, it is important that employees have a balanced interpersonal style in terms of Control, Inclusion and Affection in both dimensions of expressed and wanted. In team functioning conflicts are inherent and for the team to be effective, conflicts have to be resolved. Having a balanced interpersonal style is imperative to handling conflicts amicably. The study has brought out that while there are no significant differences in the dimensions of Control and Affection, women believe in inclusion and being included. It may therefore, be concluded that in situations where teamwork is of paramount importance to the organization, a women employee that too brought up in urban areas will be a better fit than men. Since they believe in inclusion and being included they may also exhibit a participative and nurturing leadership styles as reported by Sayeed (2010). On the other hand, men brought up in rural and semi-urban areas may feel neglected in organizations and seclude themselves unless a conscious intervention is practiced to being them at par with others. Apart from these minor differences, it may be said that modern educated Indian youth are shaping up as adults with balanced interpersonal styles.

Direction for future research

This study can be criticized for homogeneity of the sample as most of the subjects were from the same cultural /

geographical context of Madhya Pradesh. Also, most of them were engineering and management students adding to the issue of homogeneity of the sample. Further, the fact that the subjects were volunteers may also have biased the findings to some extent. It may therefore be wise to take samples from across the country so as to generalize the findings on a national level. The findings being of relevance to HR managers / recruiters, it is suggested that a pan India study be done with household income as one of the variables.

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NK Natarajan, Commander, Senior Recruiter, Services Selection Board, Bhopal

Dinesh Nagar, PhD, Professor, Barkatullah University, Bhopal

Deepa Ayachit, Asst. Professor, Gyan Ganga Institute of Technology and Management, Bhopal