

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL RECIPROCITY AMONG THE DIFFERENT GENDERS OF GENERATION Z - AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Being reciprocal is a natural human tendency. In social psychology, reciprocity refers to a social behavioural pattern of responding to a positive action with another similar action with a positive connotation, rewarding like for like. This study attempts to do a comparison between the reciprocity levels of young adults of 18-24 years. The theoretical framework of this study is taken from the R model that is being shaped by the initial works of Eric Berne, John Bowlby, and George Kohlrieser. According to the R-model, reciprocity is an important element that helps in the formation and maintenance of healthy and sustainable human relationships. A questionnaire survey method was employed to collect data which resulted in 140 responses. The study variables included traits like trust, self-assurance, emotions, memory, analytical thinking, altruism, etc. All the statistical analysis about the study is performed using SPSS software and the hypothesis framed could be tested successfully to reach the aims of the study. The study ends with the conclusion that gender does not play much role in deciding the reciprocity level. Other factors like personality traits and the level of altruism have a major role in making an individual reciprocal.

Keywords: Social reciprocity, Generation Z, Altruism, Personality traits etc.

INTRODUCTION

Reciprocity, the notion of individuals being indebted to respond in-kind favors and gifts, constitutes a unique aspect of human culture. Richard Leakey, a Kenyan anthropologist and Roger Lewin, a prize-winning British author, argue that this feature is intrinsic to human nature, positing that the survival of our ancestors was facilitated by the cultivation of a culture where the exchange of services and goods occurred within an esteemed system of obligations ⁽¹⁾. Cultural anthropologists, recognizing reciprocity as an adaptive mechanism crucial for survival, often describe it as a "web of indebtedness" ⁽²⁾.

According to Dennis Regan (1971), the principle of reciprocity has the power to engender a sense of obligation, even in situations where a favor is unsolicited. This effect remains consistent regardless of the personal liking one may have towards the recipient ⁽³⁾. In 1976, American sociologist Phillip Ray Kunz demonstrated the innate nature of reciprocity through an experiment involving Christmas cards ⁽⁴⁾. In this experiment, Kunz sent holiday cards featuring his family photos and a brief note to a group of strangers. Despite his lack of expectation for reciprocation, Kunz received an overwhelming number of holiday cards from individuals who were unfamiliar with him and showed no intention of further acquaintance ⁽⁵⁾.

Additionally, Fehr & Gächter (2000) demonstrated that, within the framework of reciprocity, certain people are inclined to veer away from behaving solely in their self-interest, compared to other social contexts. The prevalence of self-interest versus reciprocity in shaping aggregate outcomes depends significantly on context. In competitive markets or similar situations with incomplete contracts, reciprocity often will take precedence over self-interest ⁽⁶⁾.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL RECIPROCITY

Social reciprocity involves publicly expressing disapproval towards individuals who violate widely accepted norms, such as avoiding free-riding, even if it comes at one's own expense. Unlike standard notions of reciprocity, social reciprocity doesn't require anticipation of future benefits, retaliation, or altruistic motives before taking action. Instead, we suggest that social reciprocity is



a normative response that is initiated promptly. Our experiment illustrates that when reciprocity can be expressed socially, it leads to more socially beneficial outcomes and supports the concept of social reciprocity. We provide evidence that generalized punishment norms persist in one of the two stable equilibria of an evolutionary game with selection drift⁽⁷⁾, offering theoretical support for the concept of social reciprocity.

GENERATION Z

Those who fall between the age range of 18 to 25 years old and were born between 1997 and 2012 are commonly referred to by this phrase. The main distinction between them and other demographic groups, such as millennials, generation X, baby boomers, etc., is that they are digital natives who are used to quick changes and frequently experiment with social media. Due to their extensive use of social media, their views on privacy, information, and relationships have all been completely reframed⁽⁸⁾.

ALTRUISM

"Altruism is the willingness to do things that bring advantages to others, even if they result in disadvantages for yourself," states the Cambridge Dictionary. These are deeds carried out just out of a desire to help, not out of duty, loyalty, or any other similar motivations. It is genuinely selfless when it is done for the welfare of others⁽⁹⁾. Social psychologists have suggested that prosocial inclinations and genetic makeup may be the cause of altruistic acts, but they have not provided a precise explanation. However, neurobiologists claim that charitable deeds cause the brain's reward centers to fire, producing an inexplicable feeling of pleasure⁽¹⁰⁾.

OTHER VARIABLES

Other variables used for this particular study are the different personality traits of human beings. As per the American psychologist Gordon Allport, "personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychological systems that dictate their unique adaptation to the environment." When discussing the determinants of human personality, the primary factors identified include heredity and environment, encompassing family, friends, culture, and situations⁽¹¹⁾. Numerous theories have been put forth regarding the development of human personality, with the trait theory serving as the fundamental focus of this investigation. Several key personality traits that have laid the groundwork for this study include emotions, trust, and others⁽¹²⁾.

EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

A plethora of studies have been identified as foundational for the current research. One such study indicates that personal characteristics, including the gender of decision-makers, decision-making patterns, information sources, and social influences, significantly impact generosity and altruistic behavior (Hoffman et al., 1996; Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Andreoni & Miller, 2002; Cherry et al., 2002; Fong & Luttmer, 2009; Henrich et al., 2010; Brock et al., 2013; DellaVigna et al., 2013). The current study is grounded in several basic models that highlight reciprocal behavior, encompassing altruism demonstrated through utilitarianism (Andreoni & Miller, 2002) or maximin preferences (Charness & Rabin, 2002), as well as various formulations of aversion to inequality (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000). Furthermore, certain research efforts aimed to elucidate the motivations underlying sharing or reciprocal decisions have unveiled a perplexing phenomenon: when faced with the choice of sharing or not sharing, most individuals voluntarily opt to share, yet only a few refrain from making an explicit decision to retain their endowment (Dana et al., 2016; Broberg et al., 2017).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure the social reciprocity level of Generation Z (age group of 18-24)
2. To do a comparison between the social reciprocity level of different genders
3. To measure the altruistic nature of respondents



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2011) conducted with the primary objective of measuring the level of social reciprocity. For the same, a questionnaire was developed consisting of 12 items excluding the demographics.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The study's participants comprise individuals aged 18-25, specifically college students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) from various colleges in Kerala. A total of 140 samples were gathered, evenly split between 70 males and 70 females. Convenience sampling was employed, and respondents were provided with the questionnaire via Google Forms.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study was conducted using the responses from 140 college students of the age group 18-24 years. There are equal numbers of responses from males and females, i.e., 70 each. Out of the 140 respondents, 42 respondents are PG students and the rest 98 respondents are UG students of different streams of study across the state of Kerala. It is found that out of the total 140 respondents only 20 respondents, 14.29% of the respondents, scored above average score (on and above 42 out of the total score of 52), 103 respondents (73.57%) showed an average level of SR which is between 41 to 32 and the rest 18 respondents (12.86%) were below the average score.

Hypothesis 1

H0: There exists no noteworthy contrast in the social reciprocity levels among male and female respondents, indicating that the actual disparity between the mean scores of the two groups is zero.

H1: A notable distinction is evident in the social reciprocity levels between male and female respondents, suggesting that the true difference between the mean scores of the two groups is non-zero.

Independent t test

A t-test is a statistical method utilized in hypothesis testing to compare the means of two groups or to determine if they differ from each other. In this study, an independent t-test was carried out using SPSS software to compare the levels of social reciprocity between two genders: group 1 consisting of female respondents and group 2 consisting of male respondents.

Group Statistics (Table 1)

	Group	N	Mean	Std deviation	Std error mean
Score	1	70	36.3857	4.73743	.56623
	2	70	37.7286	4.91941	.58798

Table 1 of group statistics shows that group 2, i.e., males have a slightly higher reciprocity level compared to group 1 of females.

Table 2 of t test

Independent Sample Test						
Levene's Test of Equality of Variances						
	F	Sig.	t	df.	Significance	
					One sided p	Two-sided p
Equal variances assumed	.331	.566	-1.645	138	.051	.102
Equal Variances Not assumed			-1.645	137.804	.051	.102



Table 3 of t test

Independent Sample Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Score	Cohen's d	4.82928	.278	-.610	.055
	Hedges correction	4.85573	.277	-.607	.055
	Glass's delta	4.91941	.273	-.606	.062

Tables 2 and 3 display the outcomes of the t-test, revealing a t-value of -1.645 alongside p-values of 0.051 (one-sided) and 0.102 (two-sided). The t-statistic assumes a negative value if the mean of group 2 (M2) surpasses that of group 1 (M1), and conversely, it is positive if M1 exceeds M2 (Chadha, Priyanka, 2021). As both p-values exceed our predetermined significance level (alpha value) of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant disparity in the social reciprocity levels across genders.

Correlation analysis

H0: No meaningful correlation exists between the degree of altruism and the level of social reciprocity.

H1: A substantial correlation is observed between the level of altruism and the degree of social reciprocity.

Table 4 below shows the result of the correlation analysis performed to find out the correlation between altruism and SR level.

Table 4

Correlations			
		Altruism	SR
Altruism	Pearson Correlation	1	.606**
	Sig (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	140	140
SR	Pearson Correlation	.606**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	140	140

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The table illustrates a robust correlation of 0.606 between the level of altruism (the independent variable) and the level of social reciprocity (the dependent variable).

Regression analysis

The same hypothesis was further taken forward to do regression analysis, the results of which are shown below

Table 5

Model Summary (Table 5)				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.606	.367	.363	3.870



Table 5 (model summary) displays an R value of 0.606, indicating that the independent variable, altruism, can predict 60.6% of the variance in social reciprocity level. This signifies a strong relationship, as achieving a predictive ability of 30% is considered substantial in social sciences. Table 6 (ANOVA) indicates a significance level of <0.001, which is deemed appropriate and indicates a well-fitted model.

Table 6

ANOVA						
Model	Sum Squares	of	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1200.141		1	1200.141	80.133	<0.001
Residual	2066.795		138	14.977		
Total	3266.936		139			

Table 7 of coefficients also supports the correlation and gives the relationship model a good fit. Given the significance level of <0.001, which is considerably lower than the α value of 0.05, we have grounds to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests a significant relationship between altruism and the level of social reciprocity.

Table 7

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	24.767	1.408		17.596	<.001
Altruism	1.510	.169	.606	8.952	<.001

FINDINGS

The current study, comprising 140 respondents (70 males and 70 females) from Generation Z, revealed that the majority, specifically 73.57%, fall within the average score category concerning their social reciprocity level. Additionally, 14.29% of respondents exhibited an above-average level of social reciprocity. Hypothesis 1 aimed to ascertain whether a significant difference exists in social reciprocity levels between genders. An independent t-test yielded results indicating no notable distinction in social reciprocity levels based on gender. Hypothesis 2 was formulated to explore the relationship between altruism and social reciprocity levels through correlation and subsequent regression analyses. The test outcomes demonstrated a moderate positive correlation between the dependent variable 'social reciprocity' and the independent variable 'altruism,' thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

The study could successfully reveal the social reciprocity level of Generation Z, i.e., the college-going students of the Kerala state as well as it could accomplish the other set objectives too. The study revealed the fact that gender is not a major determinant of the social reciprocity level of this age group and it may be the impact of other variables that make them differently reciprocal. But at the same time, it was evident that altruism is one of the major factors that make individuals socially reciprocal, and altruistic individuals demonstrate reciprocal behaviour more in a social setup.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE SCOPE

The major limitations were the amount of sample chosen and the age group of the respondents. Also, only a few independent variables were chosen for the study, when there could be many other factors determining the social reciprocity level in human beings. These limitations pave scope for the future study since a lot of unexplored areas of human personality can be included.

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