

Fraternal Relative Deprivation of Hindus in Bangladesh in Relation to Social, Economic and Political Privileges

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The study was designed to investigate the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation of 'Brahmin' and 'Sudra' Hindus in Bangladesh. The objective of the study was to explore the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation as related to caste, gender and residential background. The sample of the study constituted 200 participants equally divided into high-low caste, men-women and urban-rural origins. The major hypothesis was that Brahmin participants with high caste identity would feel gratification and Sudra participants with low caste identity would feel deprivation in their competitions for social, economic and political privileges. The results indicated that regardless of gender and residential background, Brahmin participants expressed higher gratification and Sudra participants expressed higher deprivation in economic and social areas.

Keywords: theories of deprivation, fraternal deprivation, gratification, Hindu caste system

A review of literature relating to fraternal relative deprivation shows that social violence and protest behavior (Caplan & Paige, 1968; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) stem from perceived feelings of injustice and unequal distribution of resources. Membership in a group may contribute to the development of positive or negative social identity of an individual. People generally compare their own membership group to some other reference group. This comparison is made on some evaluative dimensions, which have clear value differentials (Commins & Lockwood, 1979). The comparison may result in legitimate or illegitimate perception of the group. Legitimate means favorable and illegitimate means unfavorable comparisons, which may be stable or unstable. When the individuals make unfavorable comparisons and they are judged to be both illegitimate and stable, it is said to be a state of relative deprivation. The concept of relative deprivation is a kind of social evaluation theory (Pettigrew, 1967). It formalizes the relationship between social comparison groups. It leads to a variety of behavior outcomes. When the individual's evaluation proves to be negative, the individual experiences relative deprivation. Then he/she is motivated to either change the membership or change the dimensions of comparison, or he/she may also become directed towards revolution for changing the existing social system. Stouffer, Suchman, De Vinney, Star, and Williams (1949), followed by Davis (1959) and Runciman (1966) introduced the initial concept of relative deprivation. Runciman (1966) distinguishes between egoistic relative deprivation and fraternal relative deprivation. When the individual compares him/her with other members of his/her own group and feels deprived in relation to them, it is called egoistic relative deprivation. Fraternal relative deprivation involves the comparison of the in-group to an out-group and the conclusion is that the in-group is deprived. The present study is concerned with an empirical investigation of relative deprivation as related to caste, gender and residential background of Hindus of Bangladesh.

Traditional theory about the origin of caste has been written in the laws of Manu (Buhler, 1886). According to this Hindu tradition, the caste system owes its origin to the four Varnas or caste namely Brahmins, Ksatriya, Vaishyas and Sudras. The tradition says that Brahmin sprang from the mouth of deity, the

Ksatriya was created from his arms, the Vaishya was formed from his thighs and Sudra was born from his feet (Wilson, 1877). Brahmins were assigned divinity and duties of studying, teaching, sacrificing, giving alms and receiving gifts to the end that the Vedas (Hindu scriptures) may be protected. Ksatriya were assigned strength and the duties of studying, sacrificing, giving alms, using weapons, protecting treasure and life to the end that good government should be assured. Vaishya were allotted the power of work and the duties of studying, sacrificing, giving alms, cultivating, trading and tending cattle, to the end that labor should be productive. Sudra was given the duty of serving the other three higher Varnas.

Nesfield (1885) has advocated for the occupational theory of caste system. He regards occupation as the exclusive basis of caste distinction. Blunt (1911) observes that the origin of caste must be sought for in the peculiar circumstances of a complex system of society with a cross division of guilds. Chanda (1916) also traces caste to race and function. Color or race difference, real and fancied, together with hereditary function gave birth to the caste system. Risley (1915) has relied mainly on theories of race and hyper-gamy to explain the caste system. He regards caste system primarily as due to color differences. According to him, intermarriage between fair invaders and dark aborigines provides enough women for the society in question to close its ranks and become a caste. Dutt (1954) has adopted Risley's theory of origin of caste and has attached much more value in the code of Manu to account for the caste system.

Theory of the origin of caste, which combines both functional and racial origins, has been put forward by Slater (1981). He has suggested that caste system existed across India before the Aryan invasion as a result of occupations becoming hereditary because of sexual maturity in early age and marriage being arranged by parents within the society of the common craft, so as to preserve the trade secrets. As a result of magic and religious ceremonies also, exclusive occupational groups were built up and marriage outside the group became prejudicial and contrary to practice. The Aryan invasion had the effect of strengthening the tendency to highlight difference of color strengthening the tendency for the caste to be placed in a scale of social precedence. In spite of these interpretations an explanation about the emergence and development of caste system, it is important to note that the general Hindu feeling about the caste system is that it has been established by divine ordinance or at least with divine approval. This takes precedence of all other obligations including friendship and kindred feeling.

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Thus, it is clear that the caste system is a unique social phenomenon and the factors contributing to it are varied in number. In a word, geographical and migration considerations together with matrilineal and patrilineal societies are responsible for the emergence and development of caste system. Further, the beliefs of mana, taboo and magic which surrounds the primitive philosophy of soul or life-matter and which have enriched the Hindus may be accounted for the creation of caste system in Indian sub-continent.

Finally, caste system in Hinduism is a kind of social categorization and it imposes boundaries on intergroup behavior. As a result, unfavorable comparison between groups may lead to the emergence of fraternal relative deprivation. The purpose of the present study was to investigate fraternal relative deprivation as it is related to caste, gender and residential background of Bangladeshi Hindus. Thus, it is necessary to give a short theoretical description of the concept of relative deprivation.

Theoretical Construct of Relative Deprivation

Runciman (1966) has given the basic components of relative deprivation theory. He has stated that a person is relatively deprived of any valued object when four conditions are present. For example, a person does not have 'X', he sees other people having 'X'. Now the person wants 'X' and he thinks that he should have 'X' because he has the necessary qualities and abilities to possess 'X'. Thus, according to Runciman (1966) relative deprivation has two dimensions, magnitude and degree. Magnitude is the participative extent while degree is the emotional intensity with which deprivation is felt.

Gurr (1970) has defined relative deprivation as an individual's perception of discrepancy between his value expectations and value capabilities. Value expectations were defined as those goods and conditions to which actors believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are those, which they think they are capable of getting and keeping. According to Gurr, value expectations do not necessarily depend upon the value attainments with reference to others, but can arise from a variety of specifiable sources. Finally, Gurr proposed that variation in intensity and score of relative deprivation in a collectivity would be strongly related to its potential for collective violence. On the basis of these explanations of relative deprivation theory, Gurr has postulated that both the level of anticipated future relative deprivation and the anticipated increase in relative deprivation may predispose people to collective violence. Further, he has suggested that increase in relative deprivation from past to present will also lead to collective violence. It means that if there is any change in relative deprivation, present and future will be associated with greater political protest behavior.

In Bangladesh context, Huq (1988) conducted an empirical investigation to explore the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation and intergroup behavior in the social context of Bangladesh. A linear pattern of relationship emerged for both gratification and deprivation for the respective majority and minority groups. It seemed to suggest a closer correspondence for perceived deprivation or gratification corresponding to socio-economic status levels. In another study, Huq (1991) explored the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation of Bangladeshi students as related to gender and residential background. This finding showed that the socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh has generated a lot of complexities in understanding fraternal relative deprivation.

Huq and Saha (1992) investigated environmental effect on perceived fraternal relative deprivation. Results showed that both physical and social environments were found to account for perceived fraternal relative deprivation of Hindus in Bangladesh in differential amounts. It seems to indicate that both physical and social environment independently and profoundly influence the nature of fraternal relative deprivation of Hindus in Bangladesh. Tripathi and Srivastava (1981) reported that in India relatively deprived Muslims had more positive ingroup attitudes as well as more negatives outgroup attitudes than those of Muslim who did not feel relatively deprived.

A critical review of these theoretical explanations of the concept of relative deprivations shows that Davis (1959), Runciman (1966) and Gurr (1970) differ among themselves on certain points. For example, Davis did not mention about the feasibility of the object, but Runciman added that the individual must think that it is feasible to obtain the object, 'X'. In contrast to Runciman, Gurr claimed that an individual experiences deprivation only when he thinks that it is not feasible to obtain 'X'. It is thus clear that three theories of relative deprivation as proposed by Davis, Runciman and Gurr differ with respect to the elements of feasibility. For Runciman, deprivation exists when the perceived feasibility is high. For Gurr, deprivation exists when perceived feasibility is low and for Davis, feasibility is irrelevant. In a word, it may be said that Gurr has created a more dynamic model of relative deprivation than Davis or Runciman. Gurr differs from Runciman in that he has focused on the consequences of deprivation while Runciman is more interested in the antecedents.

The empirical research findings about relative deprivation and its correlates as reported here were conducted in different countries and in varied situations. These research findings show that relative deprivation in general and fraternal relative deprivation in particular may emerge due to social injustice, racial discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and discriminative treatment to one group by another group. All these aspects of relative deprivation were utilized in the present study.

On the basis of above discussions about the emergence and development of caste system and the concept and theoretical construct of relative deprivation it is clear that caste system in Hinduism is a kind of social categorization and it imposes boundaries on intergroup behavior. As a result, unfavorable comparison between groups may lead to the emergence of fraternal relative deprivation.

The present study is an empirical investigation of fraternal relative deprivation as related to caste, gender and residential background of Hindus in the social, economic and political context of Bangladesh. Particularly, high caste Brahmins and low caste Sudras were taken into consideration along with their men-women categorization and urban-rural dimension.

Hypotheses

The major hypotheses formulated for the study were as follows:

1. Brahmin participants with high caste identity would feel gratification and Sudra participants with low caste identity would feel deprivation in their competitions for social, economic and political privileges.
2. a. Brahmin men would express higher feelings of gratification in comparison to Brahmin women.
b. Sudra women would express higher feelings of fraternal relative deprivation in comparison to Sudra men.

3. Residential background in terms of urban and rural origins would show differential impact on gratification as well as deprivation of the participants.

Majority Bangladeshi population belongs to rural areas. A small portion of the population lives in urban areas. It is observed that a good portion of urban population has come from rural areas. Because of this uneven distribution of population between urban and rural areas, it is quite difficult to separate urban characteristics from rural characteristics. In spite of that it is important to note that many social, economic and political privileges are unique in the rural context, which are absent in the urban context. Similarly, there are many social, economic and political privileges that are exclusively enjoyed by the urban population. Hence, in spite of little differences between urban and rural populations, it is expected that differentials in gratification or deprivations would be observed due to differences in situational conditions between urban and rural areas. Thus, it has been hypothesized that residential background in terms of urban-rural origin would have differential impact on gratification as well as deprivation of the participants.

Method

Sample

Sample of the study constituted 200 participants equally divided into Brahmin and Sudras. Each group of Brahmins ($n = 100$) and Sudras ($n = 100$) was equally divided into men ($n = 50$) and women ($n = 50$). Each group of men and women was again subdivided into rural ($n = 25$) and urban ($n = 25$) origin. The respondents' age range was 20 to 25 years with the mean age of 23 years. The educational level of the participants was controlled.

A stratified sample was used in this study. The investigator individually approached each participant and asked them about his/her caste identity. Participants who identified themselves as Brahmin were taken as higher caste and participants who identified themselves as Sudra were considered as low caste. All participants selected were Hindus (Brahmin & Sudra) graduate students of Rajshahi University, Bangladesh.

Instruments

Fraternal Relative Deprivation (FRD; Huq, 1985). It contains 9 items covering political, economic and social privileges. Each item has been framed under some hypothetical situations. Each item is to be rated on an 11-point scale ranging from 0-10. Thus, the highest possible score for the scale is 90 and the lowest possible score is 0. The items have been selected on the basis of

100% agreement among the judges. The split-half reliability corrected by Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was .89.

Design

The present study used caste, sex and residential background as independent variables and fraternal relative deprivation as dependent variable. Accordingly, the study used a factorial design of '2 x 2 x 2' involving two levels of caste (Brahmin/Sudras), two levels of gender (men/women), and two levels of residential background (urban/rural).

Procedure

Each participant was asked to give a judgement for each statement on FRD scale in terms of percentage about certain privileges in political, social and economic areas by the group concerned in relation to the relevant outgroup. Participants were required to respond twice on each item. First, each participant had to give his/her attitudinal preference for his/her own group and secondly, he/she had to give his/her own opinion about the relevant outgroup for the same item. There was no time limit, but the participants were asked to complete the task as early as possible. Each participant judged about the possibility of getting certain political and social privileges for his own group and relevant outgroup in terms of percentage.

Results

A discrepancy score ('D' score) was obtained by subtracting out-group possibility from in-group possibility. A score with (-) sign was considered as deprivation score and a score with plus (+) sign was considered as gratification score. A constant of 100 was added with each score to eliminate minus (-) sign. The data was analyzed using 2 x 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with independent variables of caste, gender and residential background and a dependent variable of 'D' scores. The main effect of caste was significant $F(1, 192) = 57.97, p < .01, MSE = 622.27$; Brahmin participants with high caste identity expressed significantly more gratification ($M = 16.99, SD = 1.23$), while Sudra participants with low caste identity revealed significantly more deprivation ($M = -9.87, SD = 1.03$). There was no significant difference in deprivation score as a function of gender.

Interaction effect

As the Table 1 indicates, two-way interaction between caste and sex was statistically significant $F(1, 192) = 4.28, p < .05$ in

Table 1

Three way ANOVA of 2(Caste) X 2(Gender) X 2(Residential Background) for Relative Deprivation Scores

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Caste(A)	36073.00	1	36073.00	57.97**
Gender (B)	41.10	1	141.10	0.23
Residential background(C)	640.80	1	640.80	1.03
A X B	2664.50	1	2664.50	4.28*
A X C	3.90	1	3.90	0.01
B X C	8.10	1	808.10	1.30
A X BX C	421.63	1	2421.63	3.89*
Error	119474.80	192	622.27	
Total	159327.83	199		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

which Brahmin men have high level of gratification ($M = 19.50$, $SD = 1.98$) as compared to Brahmin women ($M = 14.18$, $SD = 1.23$). In case of Sudra caste identity, Sudra men felt more fraternally deprived ($M = -14.36$, $SD = 1.79$) as compared to Sudra women ($M = -5.38$, $SD = 1.49$).

Three-way interaction between caste, sex and residential background was also significant $F(1, 192) = 3.89$, $p < .05$. Brahmin urban men had higher level of gratification ($M = 20.40$, $SD = 1.24$), as compared to rural men ($M = 19.20$, $SD = 0.82$) and both urban ($M = 17.44$, $SD = 1.01$), and rural women ($M = 10.92$, $SD = 0.59$). For Sudra caste identity, Sudra urban men had more fraternal deprivation ($M = -7.36$, $SD = 1.15$) as compared to rural men ($M = -21.36$, $SD = 0.89$) and both urban ($M = -9.08$, $SD = 1.27$) and rural women ($M = -1.68$, $SD = 0.09$).

Discussion

The present study was designed to explore the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation and an attempt was made to make a comparative study between Brahmin and Sudra participants of Hindu community in social, political and economic areas in Bangladesh. The unequal status relationship between Brahmin and Sudra has direct relevance with the theory of intergroup relation such as social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), relative deprivation theory (Stouffer et al., 1949) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954).

It was found that regardless of gender and residential background the Brahmin participants expressed significantly higher feelings of gratification and Sudra participants expressed significantly higher feelings of deprivation. It indicates that Brahmins as higher caste feel that they are entitled to some privileges in the society to which Sudra as low caste should not have access. Sudras, on the other hand, feel that the injustice to which they are subjected by the high caste Hindus and the privileges granted to the high caste Hindus are not fair. These feelings of injustice and inequality may be accounted for by the reported fraternal relative deprivation in Sudra Hindus. In other words, Sudras as low caste Hindus feel that they are prevented from using their abilities and get ahead in society. All these findings provide confirmation to the hypothesis that Brahmin participants with high caste identity would feel gratification and Sudra participants with low caste identity would feel deprivation in their competitions for social, political and economic privileges.

In case of men-women differentiation it was found that men with Brahmin identity expressed significantly higher feelings of gratification as compared to their women. Similarly, men of Sudra identity perceived significantly higher fraternal relative deprivation than their Sudra women. Thus, the findings related to men-women comparisons of Brahmins support the hypothesis that in case of Brahmins, men would express higher feelings of gratification in comparison to women. But the second part of the hypothesis that Sudra women would express higher feelings of fraternal relative deprivation in comparison to the men was not supported. Sudra men showed significantly higher feelings of fraternal relative deprivation than Sudra women. It could be that men are not concerned about the social privileges unlike the women. Consequently, it may be argued that Sudra men compare themselves with Brahmin men and Sudra women do not make such a comparison. It is therefore plausible to say that the relative deprivation in Sudra women is more egoistic and less fraternal in nature.

A differential pattern of gratification as well as deprivation was obtained for residential background. It was found that Brahmin men from urban areas expressed significantly higher feelings of gratification as compared to rural men and both urban and rural

women. Again, Sudra men from rural residential background showed significantly higher feelings of fraternal relative deprivation as compared to urban male, and both urban and rural women. These findings provide empirical support for the hypothesis that residential background in terms of urban and rural origin would have differential impact on gratification as well as deprivation of the participants.

The results of the study have provided some additional information that might be relevant to the feelings of gratification and deprivation. For example, Brahmin men of urban origin expressed significantly more feelings of gratification as compared to women. No such differential pattern was obtained on deprivation scores for Sudra participants in economic areas. Similarly, Brahmin men of rural origin expressed significantly more feelings of gratification than their counterparts in social areas. But no such difference was obtained for Sudra participants in economic areas. However, no significant mean differences were obtained for Brahmin participants on gratification scores and Sudra participants on deprivation scores in political areas. These empirical findings seem to indicate that economic and social privileges are more important and valuable dimension for comparison between Brahmin and Sudra Hindus than the political areas. In other words, economic and social benefits have direct relevance for the uplift of social status than the political gains for Brahmin and Sudra Hindus in socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh.

These findings lend strong support to social identity theory that disadvantaged groups will engage in direct competition with dominant group if they perceive intergroup boundaries to be impermeable, if they perceive their lower status to be illegitimate and unstable, and if they can conceive a new status quo that is achievable (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Huq & Saha, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to Wright, Taylor, and Moghaddam (1990), if the members of a disadvantaged group believe that entry to an advantaged group is open, even slightly (only a token percentage of people can pass), they shun collective action and instead individually try to gain entry to the advantaged group. Collective action is most likely to be taken when entry to the advantaged group is closed.

In fact, the Sudra have polarized around the feelings of deprivation and the Brahmins have polarized around the feelings of gratification. Thus, it is evident that the identification of Hindus into high caste Brahmins and low caste Sudras is group oriented. As a result, high caste and low caste Hindus representing Brahmins and Sudras exhibit such psychological phenomena as group members. Competitive as well as discriminatory behaviors were also found to work as separate group entity. Because of these predisposing causal factors, the feelings of gratification or deprivation were found to occur.

Limitations and Suggestions

It can be said that the present study was not amply sufficient to explore all the aspects of relative deprivation. To understand the phenomenon of fraternal relative deprivation of Bangladeshi Hindus, it is necessary to utilize multi-dimensional factors and it needs extensive empirical verification.

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