

Emotion, attribution and action in different forms of Relative Deprivation

Pramthesh Pandey* Rashmi Kumar**

Abstract

Different kinds of emotions experienced and causes attributed by participants in the various conditions of Relative Deprivation such as Egoistic Relative deprivation, Fraternalistic Relative Deprivation and Double relative Deprivation was investigated in this study on 53 students in the age range of 17 to 21 who were selected randomly as the sample. Actions taken after feeling relatively deprived were also seen. Condition of ERD, FRD and DRD was created experimentally by the researcher with the help of instruction, allocation of marks and justifications given to the participants. In order to determine the attributions made and emotions felt during these condition of RD, Likert's five point scale measuring eight emotions- anger, sadness, anxiety, jealousy, discontent, shame, proud and happiness and seven attributions – ability, performance, task difficulty, source, luck, chance and sex discrimination was used. In the results it was found that Anger, sadness, discontent and shame was more prominent in DRD in comparison to other two forms of RD and proud and happiness was more in FRD. Participants considered ability and performance responsible for their deprivation more in the case of FRD and gender discrimination was attributed more in the condition of DRD. Individual Protest was the significant action taken by the participants and it was more prominent in DRD in comparison to other forms.

Key Words: Relative Deprivation, Attribution, Emotion, Action, Forms of Deprivation.

About Authors: *Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

**Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Introduction

“A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small, it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house into a hut” (Marx, as cited in Myers, 1996, p. 446).

In these lines, it is shown that when a person compares him to other people, group or even to himself at different points of his own life, he finds that he has not achieved what he deserves, then the feeling of anger and resentment is generated. For this situation he might blame himself or others. All these subjective evaluation is described in the concept of RD which is a socio – psychological concept and takes emotion, cognition and behaviour in its account.

In its historical background it can be seen that the concept of RD was introduced by Stouffer (1949), enlarged by Merton (1957), and was considered as the large family of concept by Pettigrew (1967). Runciman (1966) broadened its construct by distinguishing between ERD and FRD. When an individual feels deprived after comparing himself/ herself with the member of his /her own group, this is known as Egoistic Relative Deprivation. Comparison of in- group with the out- group leading to the feeling of deprivation is called as Fraternal Relative Deprivation. With the help of history it can also be perceived that a person can be individually deprived (IRD) or on the basis of group he belongs to (GRD). When person and his group both are deprived constitutes of Double Relative Deprivation (DRD).

In the literature three steps have been proposed to define RD. First an individual must compare himself to others as without comparison there is no RD. Second, a cognitive appraisal must lead the individual to perceive that he himself or his group is at disadvantageous position and last but not the least this disadvantageousness must be considered unfair. Therefore, the individual must think that he or his group deserves better and therefore, results in angry resentment. So, the salient features of RD which concerns the individual are – comparison, appraisal, and affect, these are important constructs of this research also.

Different responses occur in different forms of RD is still unclear. Two factors which seem to be responsible in generating different consequences to different forms of RD are cognition and emotion. RD is comprised of both the factors; cognitive and affective. Perceiving the deprivation and contemplating about the causes of RD is cognitive component of RD. Feeling is the affective component of RD. Constitution of these two components of RD provides a strong reason to think that different consequences of RD will occur. For example if an individual applies for a job to which he is qualified but at the end he does not get selected. If he perceives that another person with same qualification got selected he will feel relatively deprived. But what consequences will occur due to this kind of deprivation will depend on causes attributed to the deprivation by the deprived person. If he perceives that lack of effort by him was the reason behind his rejection then he will put more effort to get that job in future. But if he perceives that other member's selection was due to favour of interview board then he may lodge complaint against it. In the same manner, the way one feels due to his/her deprived condition can generate different consequences. For example if person gets angry then he may engage in protest or lodge complaint against interview

board. But if he feels sadness then he may decide not to apply for that job in future. It can also be seen if different kinds of attribution lead to generation of different emotions in a person.

If the emotional reactions because of RD are discussed then anger and resentment are considered key characteristic when RD is a relational theme (Lazarus, 2001) or interconnected belief (Kessler & Mumendey, 2002). As from the literature it is clear that anger and resentment has been given more emphasis than other general negative affective measures of RD. So, the question arises whether RD elicits anger only or other emotions too, as it has been recognized that illegitimate group disadvantage may make people feel sad or anxious (Smith, Cronin & Kessler, 2006). Different moral emotions such as contempt or disgust (Rozin, Lower & Imada, 1999, van Zomeran & Lodewijkx, 2005) were also found to be associated with RD. Glick (2002) argued in his socio psychological analysis of holocaust found that chosen out-group is the target of “envious” prejudice and viewed with envy, fear, resentment and hostility. Fear and anxiety was also reflected in dominant's group's hostile collective behaviour. It has been seen that different individual of a group can see their personal disadvantage in similar manner but can experience different emotion altogether, like some might feel angry, others might feel sad, still others might feel anxious or scared. Therefore, in this research aim of the researcher is to capture these emotions along with positive ones too. This study examines the diverse emotions which people can feel in response to RD and its prevalence in different forms of RD.

To find the emotions felt and shaping of people's emotional experiences, there is a need to identify the appraisal factors. It has been found in the previous researches that appraisal of responsibility shapes the emotional experiences. If a person considers himself responsible for the

situation for negative outcome, then they will report sadness and depression (Frijda, 1993; Roseman et.al.1990; Weiner, 1995) and if another person or group is consider responsible, he will be angry (Major et.al. 2002). Now, the question arises that in which forms of RD people will shift their focus from self to the system that produces inequities.

Literature review related to RD shows that different forms of RD are related to different types of consequences. Group level responses are related to FRD and individual level responses are related to ERD. State of the art related to emotions also shows that discrete emotions lead to distinct consequences. For example anger leads to aggression and sadness leads to withdrawal – FRD is related to the consequences like protest, riots and militancy which are often triggered by anger discontent or resentment. ERD is associated with responses like juvenile delinquency and quitting ones job, which are individual level responses and often triggered by emotion like sadness and fear.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is threefold: intensity of felt emotion was measured and it was seen if these emotions are different in the different forms of Relative deprivation. Different kinds of attributions made for deprivations experienced were also explored. Different behavioural actions which could be taken as a consequence of Relative Deprivation were also studied.

On the basis of conceptual definition of RD and the literature related to emotions felt and attribution made after the experience of RD, researcher proposes an affective hypothesis: emotions like anger and discontent will be felt more in case of DRD and FRD in comparison to ERD. Emotions like sadness and shame will be felt more in ERD in comparison to DRD and FRD and an attributional hypothesis: Attribution will be more on external factors than internal factors in case of FRD and DRD in comparison

to ERD. Third hypothesis was related to Action i.e. participants in DRD condition will show more willingness to participate in collective action.

Method

Participants:

Sample – In this study 53 students (24 male and 29 female), from Allahabad University were taken as sample. Their age range was 17 to 21. The participants were selected using purposive sampling technique using randomization as only those students included in the study who met the “wanting” pre condition of Relative Deprivation.

Measures:

Relative deprivation was manipulated at three levels- ERD, FRD and DRD, by giving instructions, allocating the marks and by giving justifications and its effect on attribution and emotion was measured by using Likert's five point scale.

Emotion Questionnaire: Eight emotions- anger, sadness, anxiety, jealousy, discontent, shame, proud and happiness. Participants rated their affective state arises due to three different forms of Relative deprivation on 5 – point scales.

Attribution questionnaire –Seven causal categories, i.e. ability, performance, task difficulty, source (favor from authorities), luck, chance and gender discrimination were used. The participants rated the contribution of these causes on separate 5 – point scales

Action Questionnaire- Seven action categories i.e. Accept the result, Self improvement, Individual protest, Withdrawal from such activities, Collective protest, Individual positive action, Collective positive action were taken and participants rated these behavioral actions on 5 – point scale.

Procedure

There are three experimental conditions in this experiment; their description is as follows. Experiment was done in two phases. In the first phase of the experiment students were given false information by their course instructor regarding an issue related to higher education. They were asked that human resource ministry is going to constitute a council for higher education in place of university grant commission. Ministry wants to ensure the participation of teachers, experts from every subject and as well as students. So, for this purpose the ministry has given responsibility to the universities to select few students from their campus so that a core group of students selected from different universities can be created and can give their opinion to the council. To become the part of the core group student must have ability to express their ideas and good comprehension and writing skills. Students who will be selected in this core group will be provided some extra facilities; like students can visit any national library to avail their facilities and they will also get TA and DA for that. Students will also get chance to meet with members of the council time to time. After giving this information they are asked whether they want to be the part of this core group or not? Out of 60 students only 53 students showed their willingness to be the part of core group. Those who say yes were taken in this experiment. After this they were asked to write an essay on the topic 'reservation in higher education'. Students were told that they will be selected on the basis of their performance in this essay. They were given 45 minutes to write the essay. A confederate was used in this experiment as representative of HRD ministry to make the situation real for the subjects. When they finished the essay they were asked that result of this test will be declared after a week. After this essay were checked and for experimental

conditions were created on the basis of marks they had obtained. 20 marks was the cut off out of 50 to get selected. In first condition those subjects were selected who have obtained 20 marks or more than this and even then they were not selected in the SCG. In the second condition those subjects were placed who have obtained required marks but not get selected. This was the condition of double relative deprivation, because in this condition neither subject was selected nor his membership group was selected. In the third condition those subjects were selected who have obtained required marks for being selected in the core group and were select in the SCG. Result of the test was declared after a week as per pre decided schedule subjects were individually told about their result. Subjects in each condition were given justification for their selection and rejection. Feeling of relative deprivation was manipulated by these justifications. After announcing the result, a questionnaire comprised of items related to attribution, emotion and actions were given to them and asked to give their response on it. Confederate was present at the time of declaration of result. When they completed the questionnaire they were debriefed about the experiment, they were told that it was an experiment and they were part of it and they were lauded for their cooperation and participation in the experiment.

Research Design-

Between groups experimental design was used in this experiment. There were three experimental conditions in this experiment; (1) ERD but no FRD (2) ERD and FRD (3) FRD but no ERD.

Result

Table No. 1: Means and F values of different emotions in various forms of relative deprivation.

Emotion	ERD (mean)	FRD (mean)	DRD (mean)	F
Anger	1.785	1.21	2.58	7.103**
Sadness	2.78	1.35	3.16	12.103***
Anxiety	3.50	2.35	3.16	.392
Jealousy	1.85	1.50	2.50	2.745
Discontent	2.07	1.42	2.91	9.054***
Shame	2.76	1.14	3.08	19.350***
Proud	2.92	3.92	2.75	4.049*
Happiness	2.64	4.21	2.41	13.125***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

This table shows mean scores of ERD, FRD and DRD on different types Emotions and the F ratio was calculated for each types of Emotions on each dimension of Relative deprivation. Inspection of mean and F – values in table depicts that Anger is experienced more in subjects experiencing DRD in comparison to ERD and FRD ($2.58 > 1.785 > 1.21$) and F value shows that this difference is statistically significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 7.103$; $p < 0.01$]. Mean comparison in the case of Sadness reveals that it was experienced more in the case of DRD in comparison to other two groups ($3.16 > 2.78 > 1.35$) and this difference proves to be statistically significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 12.103$; $p < 0.001$]. Participants in DRD condition experiences more Discontent in comparison to other two groups of ERD and FRD ($2.91 > 2.07 > 1.42$) which was statistically significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 9.05$; $p < 0.001$]. Emotion of Shame was also more prevalent in the group of DRD than other groups of ERD and FRD ($3.08 > 2.76 > 1.14$) and F value of 19.35 is significant at $p < 0.001$.

Emotion like Proud and Happiness was seen to be experienced by the group of FRD than other groups of ERD and DRD which can be seen from the comparison of means ($3.92 > 2.92 > 2.75$) and ($4.21 > 2.64 > 2.41$) and F values were also found to be significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 4.04$, $p < 0.05$] and [$F_{(2, 50)} = 13.125$, $p < 0.001$]. So, the F ratios reveal significant difference for most of the variables of emotions in all the groups of relatively deprivation.

Table No. 2: Means and F values of different attributions in various forms of relative deprivation.

Attribution	ERD (mean)	FRD (mean)	DRD (mean)	F
Ability	2.71	3.85	3.33	9.833***
Performance	2.71	4.00	3.08	10.367***
Task difficulty	2.57	3.00	2.83	0.688
Gender Discrimination	1.16	1.71	3.41	16.454***
Source (favour from authorities)	1.78	2.23	2.08	0.486
Luck	2.35	2.785	2.08	1.076
Chance	1.85	2.71	2.25	1.876

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

In this table, Participant's attribution is depicted in various conditions of Relative deprivation. So, it is revealed that participants in the condition of FRD attributed their deprivation to Ability and Performance more in comparison to other two groups of DRD and ERD which can be seen in the mean comparison (3.85>3.3>2.714) and (4>3.08>2.714) and F ratio was also found to statistically significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 9.83, p < 0.001$] and [$F_{(2, 50)} = 10.36, p < 0.001$] respectively. Participants in the condition of DRD considered sex discrimination more responsible for the deprivation than other groups (3.416>1.71>1.16) and this difference was significant too [$F_{(2, 50)} = 16.45, p < 0.001$].

Table No. 3: Means and F values of different actions in various forms of relative deprivation.

Action	ERD (mean)	FRD (mean)	DRD (mean)	F
Accept the result	3.57	2.92	3.41	1.401
Self Improvement	4.64	4.50	4.33	0.745
Individual Protest	1.14	1.35	2.33	5.606**
Withdrawal from such activities	1.5	1.5	1.3	0.121
Collective Protest	1.35	1.42	1.83	0.764
Individual positive action	2.21	2.60	2.58	0.395
Collective positive action	2.57	3.57	2.91	2.910

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

In this table anticipated action taken by Participated after feeling relatively deprived was depicted. Observation of the table reveals that Individual Protest in the form of action was most preferred in DRD in comparison of FRD and ERD ($2.33 > 1.35 > 1.14$) and F value was found to be significant [$F_{(2, 50)} = 5.606, p < 0.01$]. When F values of other actions were observed it was found that the values were not significant.

Discussion

Result obtained after the analysis, refutes first hypothesis that negative emotions will be felt more in FRD and DRD in comparison to ERD. This expectation was tested by executing analysis of variance. To do so, three groups were created experimentally on the basis of three different types of relative deprivation. Table No. 1 portrayed that emotions like anger, sadness discontent and shame are felt more in ERD in comparison to FRD. This result is contrary to the expected result. It was expected that intensity of negative emotions will be more in case of FRD than ERD, because according to RD researches for example (Pettigrew, 1964; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972; Walker & Mann, 1987) behaviours like violent protest, militancy and riots are caused by FRD, and according to emotion theories (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman, Wiest & Swartz, 1994) nature of behaviours are determined by the type and intensity of emotions. There may be two possible reasons for this result. (1) Reason may be related to the design (2) Reason may be theoretical one. Result shows that positive emotions are also felt in RD. and it provides support to Crosby's (1982) assertion that RD may lead to positive behaviours. Table no.1 indicates that positive emotions like proud and happiness are felt more in FRD. Again this finding is contrary to the existing results. Design of this experiment seems to play an important role behind this result. By the definition of FRD, it's a group level which

occurs when we perceive that our membership group is worse off in comparison to an out group. In all the definitions of RD it has been stated that it is a group level feeling, but nothing has been said what will happen if person is feeling gratified at individual level but feeling deprived at group level. In this experiment the condition which has been created for FRD, the participants were led to believe that they are in gratified condition and their membership group is in deprived state. So this could be one explanation of why the intensity of positive emotions is being felt more in FRD. Because individual in this condition is in advantageous position so he is feeling more proud and happiness. Because of this advantageous condition individual's feeling of dissatisfaction arising due to disadvantageous condition is being allayed. Personal gain is subsiding the group loss. On the basis of this finding it can be inferred that if the self is in advantageous condition and group is in disadvantageous state then positive emotion will be felt with more intensity. Further it can also be said that in condition like this people will not participate in violent and protest behaviour because emotion precedes behaviour (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Shure, 1989; Smith & Kessler, 2004). Relative deprivation researches have not yet studied this condition of FRD in which individual (I) is in advantageous state and membership group (we) is in deprived state. It will be worthwhile to study this form of RD because it can give the answer of 'why' many people of disadvantaged group do not participate in protest to bring change in existing social structure.

Table 2 shows that cause of not getting selected in SCG have been attributed more in case of FRD in comparison to ERD. Further table shows that performance has also been attributed more in case of FRD than in comparison to ERD and DRD. These findings are totally diametrical of what was expected.

Participant in each the conditions were asked what factors they think are responsible for their result. Subjects in the FRD conditions have attributed the cause of their result more on performance and ability in comparison to the participant of any other condition. According to the theory of attribution (Weiner, 1986; Kelly, 1982) in case of failure causes are attributed to external factors. One reason which seems behind this result is the manner in which conceptualization of FRD is done in this research. In this experiment in case of FRD individual or self is benefited (got selected in SCG). So when they were asked about the causes of their result, they focused more on the individual gain, and this personal gain overshadowed the impact of group loss. As we know that in case of success causes are attributed more on internal factors and subjects in this condition have done the same. In spite of being in the state of FRD they have attributed the causes more on internal factors.

Table no. II also shows that subjects in the FRD conditions have attributed more on gender discrimination. This result frails the argument that participants have paid less attention to the group loss. Here result indicates that participants are also aware of their group loss and this is why they are considering gender discrimination a potent cause behind the rejection of in-group members. This result (attribution on gender discrimination) provides an empirical support to this assertion that FRD is a group level phenomenon.

In table no. III it was seen that among all the actions significant difference in all the conditions was only found for individual protest. It is evident from the table showing mean values that participants in the DRD condition were showing more willingness to participate in individual protest. This result is new and contrary to our expectation. It was hypothesized that participant in DRD condition will show

more willingness to participate in collective protest. More willingness to apt individual protest indicates that collective participation is not the only response to overcome the feeling of relative deprivation. One reason which seems behind this result is that students are not seeing collective protest better option. Mean value of FRD is higher for both individual and collective positive action in comparison to ERD. Which means in such case of fraternalistic deprivation where self is in advantageous condition but group is deprived, people inclined towards positive actions at both the levels group as individual level. Significant difference is not found for self -improvement but mean value is high in case of ERD. It means people tend to put more effort to bring change in themselves in ERD condition than in FRD and DRD.

When causes were explored for getting results contrary to existing one, many reasons upsurges from literature and researcher also tried to explain the result. It is evident that this research was conducted on the sample of students who are high on achievement motivation and always think about self growth. Education system of our country makes them to think about their personal academic achievement and then later about group. And also in our culture Teacher and their decisions are never questioned therefore, this might have hindered them to go for collective action. In one of the previous researches it was seen that student's perception of qualification had generated hope for future feasibility and therefore, did not lead to resentment. In the literature it has been seen that all the types of RD are intertwined (Petta & Walker), there is a possibility of getting such kinds of result. Another factor of Self presentation i.e. use of public behavior to create impression in other's eyes (Jones & Pittman, 1982), might have affected student's behavior.

Limitations

There are three limitations of this result. (1) When it was asked what causes participants have attributed to their result then this question seems little bit ambiguous for those participants who are in the FRD condition. It should have been asked in different way, like 'what factors you consider responsible for your selection and the rejection of your in-group. (2) If one more condition of RD has been created in which nothing has been said to the subject about his or selection and only had been given information about the rejection of his membership group then it would have given scope to compare this with the condition of RD where subject has been selected and in group is rejected. This comparison would have made us able to say something more about the role of self in RD. (3) Third limitation is related to setting of the experiment. The setting in which experiment was carried out was the educational one. Competition among the students is an important aspect. Need for achievement motivation is found high in the university students. So it may be a reason why participants focused more on individual gain and did not perceived group discrimination.

References

- Crosby, F. J. (1982). *Relative deprivation and working women*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frijda, N. H. (1993). The place of appraisal in emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 7, 357–387.
- Jones, E. E., & Pittman, T. S. (1982). Toward a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological Perspectives on the self* (Vol. 1, pp. 231–262). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Kawakami, K., & Dion, K. L. (1993). The impact of salient self-identities on relative deprivation and action intentions. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 23, 525–540.
- Kelley, Harold H. (1952) "Two functions of reference groups." In: *Society for the psychological study of social issues, readings in social psychology*. Edited by Guy Swanson, Theodore Newcomb, & Eugene Hartley. New York: Holt. pp. 410-414. Reprint in: *Readings in reference group theory and research*, Edited by H. Hyman & E. Singer. New York: Free Press, London: Collier-Macmillan Limited. pp. 77-83.
- Kessler, T. & Mummendey, A. (2002). Sequential or parallel processes? A longitudinal field study concerning determinants of identity management strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 75-88.
- Major, B., Quinton, W. J., & McCoy, S. K. (2002). Antecedents and consequences of attributions to discrimination: Theoretical and empirical advances. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 251–330.
- Merton, R.K. (1957) *Social Theory and Social Structure*. The Free Press of Glencoe, London.
- Pettigrew, T. (1964). *A Profile of the Negro American*. New York, Van Nostrand.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1967). Social evaluation theory. In D. Levine (Ed.) *Nebraska symposium on motivation* (Vol. 15, pp. 241 - 315). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Roseman, I. J., Spindel, M. S., & Jose, P. E. (1990). Appraisals of emotion eliciting events: Testing a theory of discrete emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 899–915.

- Roseman, I. J., Weist, C. and Swartz, T. S. (1994). Phenomenology, behaviours, and goals differentiate discrete emotions'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 206-221.
- Rozin, P., Lowery, L., & Imada, S. (1999). The CAD triad hypothesis: A mapping between three moral emotions (contempt, anger, disgust) and three moral codes (community, autonomy, divinity). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 574–586.
- Runciman, W. G. (1966). *Relative deprivation and social justice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smith, H. J., Cronin, T., & Kessler, T. (2006). Anger, fear or sadness: Faculty members' emotional reactions to group relative deprivation. Unpublished manuscript, Sonoma State University.
- Smith, H. J., & Kessler, T. (2003). Group-based emotions and intergroup behavior: The case of relative deprivation. In L. Z. Tiedens & C. W. Leach (Eds.), *the social life of emotions* (pp. 43–63). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stouffer, S. A., E. A. Suchman, et al. (1949). *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Vanneman, R. D., & Pettigrew, T. F. (1972). Race and relative deprivation. *Race*, 13, 461 -486.
- van Zomeren, M., & Lodewijkx, H. F. M. (2005). Motivated responses to “senseless” violence: Explaining emotional and behavioural responses through person and position identification. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35, 755–766.
- Walker, I., & Mann, L. (1987). Unemployment, relative deprivation, and social protest. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 13, 275 -283.
- Weiner, B. (1986). *An Attribution Theory of Motivation and Emotion*. Springer-Verlag, New York.
- Weiner, B. (1995). Inferences of responsibility and social motivation. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 27, 1–47.

