



Components of Emotional Meaning: A sourcebook

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CHAPTER

31 The GRID study in India

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Abstract

The GRID study was conducted in Pune, India, using the Hindi language. 122 participants filled out questionnaires containing 144 questions on the GRID questionnaire. Results revealed a general distinction on the VALENCE dimension between positive and negative emotions. New evidence on compassion and contentment revealed these as distinctive in terms of evaluation and social relevance. Finer distinctions were not found; possible causes relating to participant characteristics of unfamiliarity and lack of understanding are discussed in the chapter. Methodological issues in administration such as technicalities and translation are mentioned. These will be useful directives to future researchers in the field.

Keywords: India, Hindi, compassion, contentment, valence, methodology, participants, future directives

Subject: Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology

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The experience of using the GRID in India was educative, inasmuch as apart from that fact that it yielded data that was incongruent with the findings from other countries, it provided useful pointers about the methodological issues that need careful attention in the future. It provided the first empirical evidence for the emotions of compassion and contentment that are central to the Indian cultural milieu.

The GRID in India was administered in the Hindi language. Hindi, which is an Indo-Aryan language spoken or understood by at least half of the Indian billion plus population, is closely associated with Sanskrit. Many of ancient India's rich tradition of music and drama was in Sanskrit, some dating back to as far as 1500 BC. One of the most notable is the *Natyashastra* (Bharata, 1956), an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts. While the *Natyashastra* primarily deals with stagecraft, it also contains a description of various emotional states. According to the *Natyashastra*, emotions are composed of antecedents, consequents, subjective experience, and physiological correlates. Further, separate bodily components are clearly distinguishable for each of these emotions (Hejmadi, Davidson, & Rozin, 2000).

The componential approach of the GRID (Fontaine et al., 2007, Scherer, 2009c) has great utility for comparative studies of emotion, including in the Indian context. The questionnaire covers a broad spectrum of emotion terms, including a few that are common in the Hindi lexicon and have sociocultural relevance. At the present time, there is a lack of detailed empirical evidence accounting for how Indians actually represent these emotions or their basic components, and this gap in knowledge will be well served by an empirical approach such as the GRID study.

Although the length of this chapter does not permit a detailed analysis of all possible emotions or emotion families that could be significant in the Indian psyche, it would be educative to discuss briefly the data pertaining to quintessentially Indian emotions like compassion and contentment. The emotions of compassion and contentment are described in ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts, which inform sociocultural norms in India (Gandhi, 1927, Jeste & Vahia, 2008, Sharma, 1999). The data collected by the GRID study provides the first systematic attempt to collect descriptive data on the emotional meaning and interpretation of compassion and contentment for the Indian population. In particular, it was of interest to compare the data on these emotions to the other positive emotions, for example, pleasure, happiness, and joy. While individual pleasure may definitely be seen as positive, Indians perceive contentment and compassion to be especially positive, and socially desirable. It is also possible that within the category of evaluation, the emotions could be associated with their traditions, passed down by ancestors, and sanctioned by relevant divine texts.

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31.1 Method

Participants

Usable data was collected from 122 adults. Of these, 102 were white-collar postal workers and the remaining were students from a local college. There were 69 females and 53 males with ages ranging from 18 to 51. 65% had passed High school or its equivalent, and 35% were either enrolled in a further course of study or had a bachelor's degree in a subject from an Indian University.

Instruments

The GRID instrument in Hindi was used in this study. The author solicited the help of two Hindi scholars—a teacher of Hindi at a local college and a Hindi translator employed in a Government department—to do the translation and back translation of the Hindi words to their English equivalents. Initially, an attempt was made to computerize the questionnaire, but technical issues while posting the Hindi on to the GRID website, and the availability of computers to record the participant's responses limited our options to using paper and pencil questionnaires. Subsequently, participant data had to be manually entered into the computer.

Procedure

The GRID questionnaire was administered in sessions involving not more than 8 to 10 participants. Typically each session lasted for about an hour. While the postal employees participated in the testing sessions either during their lunch break or at the end of their work shift, the college students were tested between the class breaks. During each testing session, a supervisor initially gave detailed instructions about how to fill up the data sheet and responded to participants' questions.

31.2 Results

General

The results from the Indian GRID data indicated that the Indian clusters were incongruent with the typical emotion profiles for most of the other countries and consequently merited a separate explanation than the ones applicable to other countries. Upon further analysis, it was seen that while the overall reliability of the Indian data was somewhat low, there was significant consistency between raters in distinguishing between positive and negative emotions.

The GRID data from India showed that the emotions of sadness, guilt, shame, disappointment, despair, stress, anxiety, fear, jealousy, hate, irritation, anger, surprise, being hurt, disgust, and contempt were consistently reported as being negative. There was equal consistency in reporting compassion, love, contentment, happiness, pride, pleasure, joy, and interest as positive. It was also interesting to note that the participants did not seem to differentiate significantly between the emotions on any of the other dimensions.

There are several possible reasons why this might have occurred. It is relevant to examine the factors that influenced the results, to provide guidelines for future researchers. The section on “future directions” discusses this in some detail.

Compassion and contentment

p. 453 A novel aspect of this study was the systematic study of the emotions of compassion and contentment, which are significant in Indian sociocultural context, but have hitherto received no actual empirical scrutiny. A closer look at certain features of particular categories showed some interesting results in the categories of evaluation, subjective experience, and the general category of social acceptance and desirability. In comparing the ranking of the positive emotions, compassion and contentment consistently figured in the top three rankings (on a scale of 1–10), especially in the categories of evaluation (in itself, consequences), subjective experience (felt positive), and general social (socially acceptable and frequently experienced) categories. The “influence of ancestors/divinity” was another aspect that showed a higher rating than all of the other emotions studied, pointing out a possibly strong cultural influence. A certain amount of self-other overlap was, in addition, seen in the emotion of compassion. For instance, in the case of the category of evaluation, particularly for the specific question of the emotion in itself being pleasant for self and other, there was no significant difference (t value df . 19, -0.32 , $p > 0.05$) between self and other. Similarly, for the “consequences as positive for self and other” feature, there was a significant self-other overlap (t value df . 19, 0.469 , $p > 0.05$). This could be an indication that the emotion of compassion is seen by Indians to be agreeable, both to the self and in the case of others. The consequences of being compassionate are not only beneficial to oneself, but also to others in society. The general trend of these emotions shows that there is promise to this particular type of study, and it can reveal important characteristics of emotions that are pre-eminent in particular cultures.

Limitations and future directions

This chapter may not be able to cover all the points, but picks out a few that could be especially useful in the light of sharing with future researchers who might attempt similar studies. Certain factors could have influenced this trend of the data, and may be kept in mind for future researchers. Possible confounds could be as follows.

First, unfamiliarity of participants with data collection and entry, may have had an effect on the data. Using participants who have more experience with questionnaires, who are more motivated, and able to handle the

challenge of a longer questionnaire could yield better results in future. Regarding the nature of the participants, who were mainly postal workers, addressing the questionnaire could have proved to be too arduous a task. Some may not have followed the instructions, which may explain the fact that we had to discard about 25% of the questionnaire responses, due to participants not completing the required questions.

Using non-students could pose difficulties in data collection and accuracy of response, so student groups with a higher education level, and an interest and understanding of the concepts would be more effective as participants. Students would also be more capable of distinguishing between particular characteristics and distinctiveness as opposed to mere global distinctions.

Third, possible difficulties with translation and back translation, especially in concepts where Indians may have more than one word in the lexicon or may not distinguish easily (pleasure and joy, despair, disappointment, and sadness, for example). Unfamiliarity with certain emotion terms such as stress, which are not common in everyday language use, could have influenced the results.

Finally, there were difficulties with administration of the instrument, including access of participants in India (and other developing countries) to computers and reliable electrical supply, and using paper and pencil questionnaires vs online versions (perhaps the latter would have yielded more accurate results). Targeting institutions with computer access and student populations may yield more reliable results in the future.

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Notes

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