Prosocial Behaviour of Citizens in Bangalore City, Karnataka State

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Abstract

Of late there is an increase in the number of harmful incidence in public spheres. Hence, the prosocial behaviour of bystanders is important to support persons in such incidents. This study aims at understanding the prosocial behaviours of bystanders of the metropolitan city in the southern part of India. A qualitative exploratory study was conducted with six respondents aged between 30-50 years. In-depth interviews were conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed later. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The qualitative analysis found two major themes such as factors that encourage citizen's prosocial behaviour that includes sense of belongingness, empathy, positive experiences, convenience and factors that discourage citizen's prosocial behaviour that include fear of being blamed, fear of being attacked, corruption and time-consuming procedures, barriers in understanding language, negative experiences.

Keywords: prosocial behaviour, citizen, bystander

Introduction

Humans are social beings who depend on one another for everyday interactions. These interactions have a motive to either benefit themselves and others. Actions that aim to benefit others fall under acts of charity. These selfless services can be distinguished between prosocial behaviours and volunteering. Volunteering requires the duration of commitment and constant engagement with the recipient of help. Whereas, prosocial behaviour is immediate help often a one-time aid. The term 'prosocial behaviour' originated in contrast to the term 'antisocial behaviour'. Prosocial behaviour includes a broad range of actions that aim to benefit another person (Hinde&Groebel, 1991). Prosocial behaviour requires a series of decisions; an individual must go through five sequential steps: they must notify the event, must understand the event as an

emergency, and believe that they are responsible for intervening. Also, they must know how to offer help and take corrective actions (Latané& Darley, 1970). Studies show that emergency incidents attract a more prosocial response from rural dwellers than urban dwellers (Steblay, 1987). But Indian statistics show there is an increased number of incidents of crime and road accidents being reported in urban metropolitan (Crime in India 2016, 2017) (Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India 2015, 2017). Hence, prosocial behaviour in the urban scenario is a relevant field of study. The objective of the study is to assess the factors that influence prosocial behaviour among citizens and to understand how citizens perceive emergency situations.

Procedure

Qualitative Exploratory design was used to conduct this study. The study aims to understand the prosocial behaviour among citizens in Bengaluru city, Karnataka State in India. The study is situated in South Bengaluru specifically around Adugodi, Koramangala, and SuddaguntePalya. The universe of the study includes all prosocial citizens residing in Bengaluru City. The study population includes people living in South Bengaluru. The method of sampling used for this study was non-probability convenient sampling. A total of 6 samples were selected from the population of the study. Persons currently residing in Bengaluru City are included in the study. The study also includes individuals who have migrated to Bengaluru City. Individuals currently pursuing their education were excluded from the study. The researcher personally interviewed the participants through a face to face interview to collect the data. Thematic analysis was selected for data analysis in this research study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The participant's responses were transcribed verbatim. The researcher repeatedly read the transcription to get familiarized with the content and scope of research. The researcher identified and assigned codes. QDA Miner Lite qualitative data analysis software was used for data management and coding. The codes were later categorized under suitable and relevant themes. The themes were identified and compared among the six participants.

Results

A total of two themes and ten subthemes were identified from the data.
The subthemes include :
  I.   **Factors that encourage citizen's prosocial behaviour:**
  II.   **Factors that discourage citizen's prosocial behaviour:**

I. Factors that encourage citizen's prosocial behaviour:
Efficacy

Efficacy is an individual's belief in their abilities to carry out a course of action. Participants who have a vehicle during the emergency event acknowledge feeling equipped and capable to carry out prosocial behaviour.

Participant 2, 45 years of age, an auto driver working for the last 15 years, hospitalised a person who had an epileptic attack and was bleeding. He took the injured person in his auto-rickshaw to the hospital. Participant further narrates having offered ride to vulnerable women in the streets. Auto drivers have the advantage to extend

help as they are both present in public spaces as well have a vehicle which is a reliable means of transport. *Participant 4,*48 years of age, a women who was born and brought up in Bengaluru, presently resides in a small busy lane beside the Hosur main road. She is familiar with her locality and has been residing there for the last 20 years. She has more than once helped children and adult victims of a road accident and has taken them to hospital. She credits owning a vehicle for making her confident to help others. With the emphasis on The Good Samaritan Guidelines introduced to the Supreme Court within the last decade, she further narrates. "*Government is using television advertisements to encourage citizens to help victims of road accidents. These awareness campaigns give an important message that the victims should immediately be admitted to the hospital and that Samaritans need not fear police harassment*".Information about one's rights and methods of helping equips persons with clarity in performing prosocial action.

Convenience
Participants need to have the ease of time to be prosocial. Auto drivers especially find it difficult to help when they have a customer and a ride to complete.

Participant 4, is a woman uses her scooter to help victims of emergency situations. She couldn't escape the guilt of not helping. She narrates an incident where on one occasion she reassured her conscience for inaction. "*We might think someone else will look after the victim and hence leave. This isn't right. We should take responsibility and help. Life is very precious it comes only once*". Participant 3, 43 years of age, a mechanic by profession, finds it easy to help victims of an accident due to the nature of his work. He has on one occasion used the victim's vehicle to take him to the hospital. If the vehicle is damaged he parks the vehicle in his garage and uses his personal vehicle to take victims to the hospital.

Sense of belongingness
Social support helps individuals to share responsibility and contribute. Individuals who have social support also have a sense of belongingness towards their locality. Citizens get strength and courage by the presence of fellow prosocial citizens. The number of prosocial citizens reduces the likelihood of blame and other unanticipated troubles. *Participant 3,* a mechanic by profession runs a garage situated in Adugodi. He has been working there for the last 30 years and narrates that in Adugodithe citizens both attend to the victim as well as compel the offender to attend to the needs of the victims. *With the fear of serious repercussions, the offender sometimes rides away. In such a case, we start our vehicle and follow him. He won't go anywhere far due to traffic. We catch hold of him, beat him if need be and confiscate his vehicle. He is asked to take the victim to the hospital for treatment and only when he returns with the victim from the hospital, his vehicle will be returned*".Prosocial behaviour in this incident is directed towards punishing the offender. Participants assume the role to provide justice and take law in their own hands. Other incidents of prosocial helping; *Participant 4,* a woman who helps her husband in the retail business, is a prosocial helper in her locality. During accidents, she and her fellow neighbours take the injured persons to

the hospital together. Both participants have been living in the locality for a long time; they have social support which is advantageous for prosocial behaviour.

Empathy
When citizens relate to being in a similar situation they are further motivated to help. *Participant 2*, an auto driver had the strength and willingness to stay in the hospital because he could empathise. When he couldn't summon any relative of the injured patient he decided to spend the night at the hospital. "*People should have humanity. They should think*, "*what if it happens to me?*" *They should put themselves in the situation. Participant 1*, 37 years of age, an auto driver once witnessed eve-teasing. He immediately empathise the victim and stood alongside to confront the offender.

Positive experiences
Successful experiences as prosocial citizens reinforce future attempts to help individuals. Accompanying a victim of a road accident to hospital increases the likelihood of similar attempts of prosocial helping in the future.

Participant 2, an auto driver has often reported fights by calling the police control room. He has in many occasions cooperated and accompanied police to give his statement. *Participant 4*, a women retailor lives in a residential lane near Adugodi. People in her locality have a good rapport with police. Police inspectors frequently visit, share their personal numbers and encourage citizens to report a crime or public nuisance. This has built and assurance among those citizens.

When participants have taken initiation to approach the police and witnessed positive experiences their prosocial behaviour was reinforced. Such participants express a trusting relation with Bengaluru police.

Factors that discourage citizen's prosocial behaviour:
Negative experiences
Unfortunate incidents while helping can often be disheartening. *Participant 6*, 35 years of age, is a domestic worker, brought up in Bengaluru. She reports being disturbed when she sees people fighting in public. Sometimes regardless of the number of onlookers to the incident; people neither intervene nor support her prosocial behaviour. "*People who create a nuisance, ask me, why I get involved. They don't appreciate my help and they think of me as an uninvited intruder. I refuse to help during such incidents in the future. But I shall continue to help where help is reciprocated, like when someone falls I will help them*".Participants are more encouraged when their prosocial behaviour is met with gratitude and results in an impactful change in the situation.

Fear of being blamed for the incident
There have been instances where prosocial citizens were falsely blamed. *Participant 2*, narrates how his friend, a fellow auto-driver, was falsely blamed for stealing the victim's vehicle. Lack of support from law enforcing agencies reduces citizen's willingness to help. Prosocial citizens sometimes have to incur expenditure or pay

compensation when they are falsely held responsible. Instead of being appreciated they are harassed for intervening.

Fear of being attacked
Participant 5, 32 years of age, migrated from Madhya Pradesh and is residing in Bengaluru for the last 5 years. He is a panipuri vendor. He reports having seen people belonging to Bengaluru (also known as locals) getting an unfair advantage and social support in contrast to people who identify as migrants (also known as outsiders). His help is often misinterpreted and unappreciated. He is hesitant to intervene when a fight involves locals.*" It wasn't the bike rider's mistake, but the car had 3 to 4 passengers and the man riding the bike was alone. I went to support him but the 4 passengers in the car told me to leave the scene, they were locals and they threatened to slap me. The bike rider was from Rajasthan. Since we both didn't know the local language we couldn't fetch help and we left".*Participants acknowledged that locals who regularly drink and create nuisance have negative social backing. Even when a man under the influence of alcohol is harassing an innocent, people witnessing are hesitant to interfere for their own safety.

Barrier in understanding the language
The language barrier makes it difficult for citizens to assess the problem. To act as a prosocial citizen in Bengaluru city, migrants feel obligated to know the vernacular language. Participant 5, is a panipuri vendor who migrated 5 years back. His illiteracy in Kannada, the state vernacular makes him inactive during incidents of harassment. *"I don't understand the local language very well which is why I don't take much interest in other's business. If some argument or quarrel happens and it involves a local, it is required that you too should know the local language. People listen to such persons who can speak vernacular language and influence support".*He narrates another instance that reflects the citizen participation in his vicinity. *"Everyone was watching, standing in a line waiting for the rain to stop. Two persons were fighting. A man and his wife were both holding the other man's collar but no one came to support him. Not even the locals, I happen to be an outsider, my language is different.*

The sense of responsibility to help the victim is reduced when the person can't relate with the victim and language is a very important tool for social interaction.

Corruption and time-consuming procedures
These are reasons, citizens do not approach the police unless the matter is severe. *Participant 5*, a migrant panipuri vendor, experiences as an outsider to Bengaluru city. *"We will be ignorant to think that the police investigation will proceed in our benefit and the offender will be prosecuted. On the contrary, if the offender is a local, he can settle matters easily. Political support also influences justice".*Participant 3*, a mechanic narrates that corruption is also a reason why people prefer citizen settlements instead of reporting police.*"The drawback of our legal system is that if individuals approach police they will have to repeatedly keep visiting the police station when called, so instead individuals in conflict compromise. Prosocial citizens take an unbiased stand and help with settlements. We decide the cost of repair and ask the*

party at fault to pay the other in cash". Few participants are resistant to report to police. They rely on personal or second-hand accounts of negative experiences limiting them to inaction.

Discussion

The study helps to identify factors that encourage and discourage prosocial behaviour among citizens. In a help-seeking situation, people tend to weigh the cost and reward of helping and not helping. According to the cost-reward analysis, people are motivated to maximize reward and minimize their costs. (Dovidio, J. A. Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, & Clark, 1991) (J.A. Piliavin et al.,1981). The study is consistent with a similar finding. Not all participants can afford the cost of help, such cost being time and money, especially during their work hours. Depending on the situation persons decide whether to help or not. When participants who are helping are not appreciated or even stopped and blamed, they feel deprived of the reward associated with helping, such reward being recognition and praise. Such negative incidents reduce the likelihood of future prosocial behaviour. A participant reported that failing to help on an occasion made her feel guilty. Avoidance of guilt is another reason why persons carry out prosocial behaviour. Fear of harm to self and fear of being blamed are other cost participants calculate before helping.

The study is consistent with the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Along with helping behaviour which is egoistic, true altruism also plays a role in motivating individuals to help. (Batson, 1991) Empathy can be driven due to a deliberate attempt to understand others or due to similarity to the person (Dovidio, 1984). Respondents in the study have in many occasions put themselves in the place of the victim, to empathise and relate to the victims. Often it increases their willingness to take injured persons to the hospital. In this study persons with similar language empathise and support one another due to similarity to the person.

Social learning theories: altruism and socialization for helping identify three types of social learning: Experiencing direct reinforcement for behaviour, observing helping models in the environment and being told things about helping (Rushton, 1982). In this study, participants relied on information from television and direct instruction for police for prosocial actions. It was also observed that participants who had succeeded in providing prosocial help were reinforced by their altruistic behaviour.

In our study participants who had social support showed increased helping behaviour. These findings are consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel& Turner, 1979) (De Cremer, 2002) when people share respect and strong attachment towards group members they tend to be coordinated. They share a sense of belongingness which tends to increase their prosocial behaviour (Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal, & Weitzman, 1996) (Hornstein, 1976).

Through its deficiencies, this study suggests that future researches would require rigors methods and an increased sample size to give an adequate representation of the population.

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The findings of the study have many implications for social work. There is a need for positive experiences to encourage prosocial behaviour among citizens. Social workers can promote platforms to build a trusting relationship between citizens and law enforcing agencies to increase citizen participation in cities and to increase the reporting rate of crime.

This study also suggests the need for awareness programs among citizens about their rights. Many participants were unaware of the Good Samaritan Guidelines which were approved by Supreme Court in 2015. These guidelines were resultant of advocacy to encourage citizens to help victims of road accidents and to protect prosocial citizens from liabilities. With an increasing crime rate, there is a need for advocacy to bring similar guidelines to encouraging citizens to help all injured persons irrespective of the circumstance.

Future research is needed to examine punishing behaviours, where citizens take law in their own hands and there is a need to distinguish punishing behaviours from prosocial behaviour.

Another strategy to increase prosocial behaviour in the public sphere is to introduce prosocial behaviour intervention studies to empower citizens with precise knowledge and techniques to reach for emergency situations.

Conclusion

Helping behaviour can protect individuals in situations where they find themselves helpless. Prosocial behaviour depends on many social judgments that can change dramatically as a result of the change in the circumstances. Citizen's prosocial behaviour depends on the nature of the incident such as the level of violence and time of the event. Social support and positive experiences build efficacy that increases willingness to intervene.

Acknowledgments

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