

# The Affect of Ethnic Minority People: A Prediction by Gender and Marital Status

A. K. M. Rezaul Karim, Abu Yusuf Mahmud, S. H. Mahmud

**Abstract**—The study aimed to investigate whether the affect (experience of feeling or emotion) of ethnic minority people can be predicted by gender and marital status. Toward this end, positive affect and negative affect of 103 adult indigenous persons were measured. Analysis of data in multiple regressions demonstrated that both gender and marital status are significantly associated with positive affect (Gender:  $\beta=.318$ ,  $p<.001$ ; Marital status:  $\beta=.201$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but not with negative affect. Results indicated that the indigenous males have 0.32 standard deviations increased positive affect as compared to the indigenous females and that married individuals have 0.20 standard deviations increased positive affect as compared to their unmarried counterparts. These findings advance our understanding that gender and marital status inequalities in the experience of emotion are not specific to the mainstream society; rather it is a generalized picture of all societies. In general, men possess more positive affect than females; married persons possess more positive affect than the unmarried persons.

**Keywords**—Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Ethnic Minority, Gender, Marital Status.

## I. INTRODUCTION

PSYCHOLOGISTS and other behavioral scientists have shown much interest to the study of human affect in recent decades. However, they have given little attention to the affect of indigenous community, a group having distinct cultural and social identity. This has given us incomplete understanding of the nature of human affect. Thus it is important to study the affect of indigenous people as is important to study the affect of the people of mainstream society. Affect refers to the experience of feeling or emotion as distinguished from cognition, thought, or action [1]. It is a key part of the process of an organism's interaction with stimuli. Research into psychology of emotion has described various dimensions and structures of affect. Three major approaches have been proposed to the general dimensions of affect. The first approach emphasizes on activation, also known as arousal, energy, tension, and activity. A second and older approach has focused on valence which is sometimes referred as the only general factor of self-reported affect [2]-[6]. In the third approach, both valence and activation have been included as

separate and equally emphasized dimensions within one descriptive structure [7]-[12].

Although there have been several models of affect, the present study uses the model put forward by Watson and Tellegen [13]. In their model, Watson and Tellegen [13] proposed the two-dimensional structure of affect in which positive affect and negative affect were defined and measured as bipolar opposites. They interpreted the positive and negative dimensions in terms of valence – high versus low positive affect and high versus low negative affect (Fig. 1).

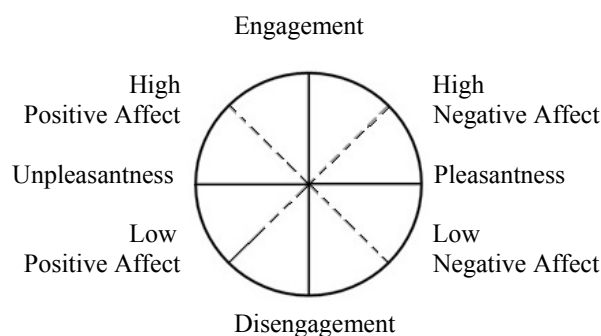


Fig. 1 Watson and Tellegen's model of the core affect (Source: [14])

Research on happiness and subjective well-being suggests a mixed picture of the relationship between positive affect and negative affect. Some studies have shown that positive affect and negative affect are inversely related [15]. Other studies have demonstrated that over time, positive affect and negative affect are independent across persons, thus denying the concept that positive affect and negative affect are two opposite poles of a single hedonic dimension. For example, Wessman and Ricks [4] conducted a study to examine the fluctuations of daily affect in a small group of students. They found that persons differed in terms of their day-to-day affective states along two basic dimensions that were independent of each other. Bradburn [16], who made another important contribution in this area, collected data in several national samples and reported that positive affect and negative affect, when measured separately, varied independently. That is, the amount of positive affect a person felt did not substantially correlate with the amount of negative affect he/she experienced. In support of their independence, Zevon and Tellegen [17] found a two-dimensional structure of positive affect and negative affect after comparing individual with group factor solutions. They deduced that these dimensions are unipolar which supports Bradburn's findings. Diener and Emmons [18] got the same findings of Bradburn, using a diversity of measures and techniques. Diener and

A. K. M. Rezaul Karim (PhD) is an Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Dhaka, 1000 Dhaka, Bangladesh (email: karim.akmr.monscho06@gmail.com).

Abu Yusuf Mahmud is a Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Dhaka College, 1205 Dhaka, Bangladesh (phone: +880-1919412343; e-mail: aymahmud@gmail.com).

S. H. Mahmud (PhD) is a Visiting Professor, Department of Psychology, Trier University, D 54286 Trier Germany, on leave from the Department of Psychology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh (e-mail: shmahmud\_bd@yahoo.co.uk).

Emmons's results were on the basis of an ecological sampling of daily affect and the use of broad affective terms. Although the correlation between positive and negative emotions was inverse for brief time periods, they found that the two were independent across individuals when longer periods were considered. Thus it can be concluded that the overall amounts of positive affect and negative affect a person experiences are unrelated to each other [19].

In addition with relative independence of the positive affect and negative affect scientists have shown that affect or emotion can be different from male to female and from married to unmarried persons. Specifically, self-perceptions of emotional behavior have indicated that the typical female shows emotions more extremely than the typical male [20]. Lutz [21] attributed this fact partly to the differences in socialization and partly to the differences in biological processes (e.g., birth, menstruation, specific hormonal secretion) that produce emotion. Research on socialization describes that women are socialized to be more expressive of their feelings in both verbal and non-verbal (e.g., facial expression, gesture) communications [21], [22]. For example, Lutz [21] found that women talked about the control of emotion more than twice as often as did men. Socialization happens through parental practices where both mother and father have been found to display affect and put emotional words more towards girls than boys [23]-[25]. Brody and Hall [26] argued that gender differences in emotions are adaptive for the differing roles that males and females play. Enactment of caretaker roles by women is likely to involve sensitivity to the needs of others, and emotional expression, whereas men's roles are less likely to emphasize emotional responsiveness [27]. Scientists have also shown that marriage has a positive relationship with increased positive well-being and attenuated negative outcomes for both men and women [28]. Married individuals report lower rates of psychological symptoms than do the unmarried, and they seek psychological services less frequently [29]. The effects in relation to marriage and positive well-being have been obtained with reported happiness, life satisfaction, and aggregate indices of the occurrence of positive and negative emotions [16], [30]-[32]. Thus gender- and marital status- linked differences in human emotion or affect are well documented. Yet, the scenario is confined to the main stream society only. Data on the affect of indigenous people with respect to their gender and marital status are almost non-existent. That is, we still do not know whether indigenous men and indigenous women differ in emotional expressivity or affective state, nor do we know whether married and unmarried people express their affect or emotion in a different way. The present study was, therefore, designed to understand the affective state of the ethnic community in relation to their gender and marital status.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

A total of 103 indigenous people aged 18 to 54 participated in the study. They were from Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

and Greater Mymensingh Area (GMA). There were 8 types of indigenous community including Chakma (62.1%), Tripura (19.4%), Marma (8.7%), Garo (5.8%) and others (4%). 71.8% of the participants were males and 28.2% were females; 18.4% of them were married and 81.6% were unmarried.

### B. Measure

#### Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale

An adapted Bangla version [33] of the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) was used in the study. It was originally developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen [34]. The PANAS comprises 20 mood expressing items to be rated on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (very slightly) to 5 (extremely). Ten of the items measure Positive Affect (PA) and the other ten items measure Negative Affect (NA). Watson et al. [34] reported high internal consistencies (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) ranging from .86 to .90 for PA and .84 to .87 for NA. The test-retest reliabilities over a 2-month period were also satisfactory. The original scale has good convergent (correlations with factors range from .89 to .95) and discriminant validity (correlations range from 20.02 to 20.18). Significant correlations with other measures of psychological distress (e.g., Beck Depression Inventory) support its external validity [35]. Correlation between the Bangla and English versions of the full length PANAS was .58 [33]. Correlations between the Bangla and English versions were .52 for PA and .77 for NA [36]. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for the Bangla version of PA and NA were .69 and .85 respectively [36].

### C. Data Processing and Analysis

Participants' responses were scored according to the scoring system of the PANAS mentioned above. Each participant received two scores on the scale: a PA score and an NA score. As the present study was correlational in its design, data were analyzed in multiple regression using PA and NA as the criterion variables, and gender and marital status as the predictor variables. Prior to analysis major assumptions of the multiple regressions were examined. The assumption of linearity was examined by partial regression plots, the assumption of normality by histogram and normal P-P plot, the assumption of homoscedasticity by scatter plots and multicollinearity by the tolerance or variance inflation factor (VIF) of each predictor. All these assumptions were met in the present data.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adjusted  $R^2$  in Table I indicates that the model was significant and explains 12.7% of the variance in participant's PA. However, a non-significant model emerged for NA (data not shown). Standardized  $\beta$  values in Table I show that both gender ( $\beta=.318$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and marital status ( $\beta=.201$ ,  $p<.05$ ) were significant predictors of PA. Part correlation coefficients (Part  $r = .318$  for Gender,  $.201$  for Marital Status) indicate that the unique contribution (squared of part correlation multiplied by 100) to the variance in PA was 10.11% for gender followed by 4.04% for marital status. Thus the study demonstrated that gender and marital status contribute to the positive affect (PA)

but not to the negative affect (NA). Specifically, results indicated that males have 0.32 standard deviations increased positive affect as compared to females. This result is supported by a number of previous studies in the mainstream society showing that men and women differ in yielding certain positive and negative feelings. For example, men of the mainstream society report more positive feelings than women, which have been explained by the differences in social position, household income, and other gender inequalities in the family and workplace [37]. We argue that like women of the main stream society women of the ethnic community also experience discrimination or differential treatments in every

sphere of their lives. For example, they experience less educational opportunities, less participation in decision making, family and social activities, higher financial disparity etc. All these together might lead to lower positive affect in the indigenous women. However, this should not be necessarily compensated by a higher negative affect as the negative affect and positive affect are independent of each other [4], [16]-[19]. Thus, positive affect and negative affect are possibly two different constructs and a difference in one should not necessarily be accompanied by a difference in another.

TABLE I  
 REGRESSION OF PA ON GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS

Predictor variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p	Part r
	B	SE	$\beta$			
(Constant)	30.932	1.173		26.36	.000	
<sup>1</sup> Gender (M)	4.629	1.348	.318	3.434	.001	.318
<sup>2</sup> Marital Status (Ma)	3.394	1.563	.201	2.172	.032	.201

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=.127 (F<sub>2,100</sub>=8.405, p<.001)

<sup>1</sup>Gender (M) was used here as a dummy variable coded as '1' or '0'. '1' stands for a membership of the male category and '0' for a non-membership of the male category (Female). When '1' changes to '0' the variable switches to Child's Gender (F).

<sup>2</sup>Marital Status (Ma) was used as a dummy variable coded as '1' or '0'. '1' stands for a membership of the married category and '0' for a non-membership of the married category (Unmarried). When '1' changes to '0' the variable switches to Marital Status (Un).

Like gender, marital status was strongly and positively associated with the participants' positive affect only ( $\beta$ =.201, p<.05). Results indicated that married indigenous people have 0.20 standard deviations increased positive affect as compared to their unmarried counterparts. This result also echoes the findings of the previous studies. Researchers have documented a wide range of benefits from marriage which leads to better physical and psychological health e.g., less substance abuse and less depression [38]. Studies have shown that marriage goes in line with higher happiness levels [39], [40]. In general, married women are happier than unmarried women, and married men are happier than unmarried men. Stutzer and Frey [38] demonstrated that married persons have greater subjective well-being than persons who have never been married or had been divorced, separated or widowed. Married women and married men tended to possess similar levels of subjective well-being [38]. Marriage provides additional sources of self-esteem by releasing from stress, and gives more life satisfaction. Married people have a chance to enjoy supportive intimate relationship, and suffer less from loneliness [38].

As stated earlier and above the past studies have shown gender and marital status inequalities in the affect of the people of main stream society. The present study advances our understanding that gender and marital status inequalities in the experience of emotion (affect) are not specific to the mainstream society; rather it is a generalized picture of all societies. That is, men possess more positive affect than females; married persons possess more positive affect than the unmarried persons.

Some inconsistency is noticeable in the present study. That is, gender or marital status has no contribution to the negative affect, a finding contrary to the finding for positive affect.

This was unexpected and cannot be explained by the present data. The study has also some inherent limitations. For example, it cannot explain a large proportion of the variance in positive affect. To exclude such limitations, further studies can be carried out on a large scale sample comprising all types of tribes from different parts of Bangladesh. Future research can build upon a large number of predictors such as age, tribal type, family type, socio-economic status, educational qualification, marital adjustment etc. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study would have both theoretical and practical implications. For example, the present data can be useful for modifying the existing models of affect which are based on research in the main stream society only. The findings can be utilized by the psychologists, social workers and other professionals working with the indigenous people for the purpose of maintaining good affect in the indigenous community.

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