

THE ATTITUDES OF THE REFUGEES: A PILOT STUDY

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Introduction.—With the partition of India on August 15, 1947, more than half of the area of Bengal was truncated off the original state to form a new state, East Pakistan, under a separate government. Since then an unending trail of grief-stricken, panicky human beings have been continuing to cross the border of East Pakistan to reach West Bengal. They are the refugees. In the beginning their numbers were not much; the rehabilitation did not seem to be a serious problem. In some quarters it was felt that this was a temporary migration and that the refugees would go back to their home land after a few days. This did not prove true.

All these years they are pouring in, sometimes like an avalanche. Compelled by circumstances they left their homes and faced an uncertain future and created a major problem for the new government of West Bengal. With meagre resources the state government fought hard to cope with the situation. Later, the Central Government rendered all necessary help but the problem was not wholly solved. Some schemes were implemented more or less successfully. Dandakaranya scheme was chalked out to rehabilitate a vast number of refugees.

In spite of the governments' help in these years there came a constant opposition from the majority of the refugees against almost all plans and programmes of the government. A state of tension prevailed in the state province and created almost a baffling problem for all. An analysis of the problem revealed that the economic insecurity played an important role in their plight, but that was not the only factor responsible for the tension. One is led to the conviction that mere economic solutions of the problems of the refugees may not always lead to a permanent settlement of the refugees. Along with economic problems one must consider the mental aspect of the refugees. With severe frustrations and hardships of existence their attitudes have been changed to a great extent. To understand their attitudes is to understand their minds which would definitely be an important contribution to any planning for their betterment.

Considering this point in question, the present work was planned to have an idea and measure the attitudes of the refugees. The results of the study, it may be expected, would help in the task of smooth rehabilitation.

Method.—Of all methods of measurement of attitudes, the most prominent, the most widely used and the most carefully designed and tested is the attitude scale. In essence, the method of scaling requires that the individual reacts verbally with expressions of approval or disapproval, agreement or disagreement to a set of carefully standardized items on propositions.

Various types of scales were devised and used by different psychologists to measure the attitudes towards a number of things. Among these most commonly used scales are Thurstone's and Likert's. The relative merits of Thurstone's and Likert's methods of scale construction have been discussed in detail by many workers in this field.^{1,2} While the advantage of using one scale over the other is still a disputed fact, the researches on both the types of scales continue to flourish to a great extent. Here, Likert's methods of scale construction has been followed.³

To get a first hand knowledge about the conditions of the refugees from East Pakistan and to make acquaintance with their attitudes a general opinion survey was conducted. Accordingly, refugees were interviewed

¹D. Krech and R. S. Crutchfield, *Theory and Problems of Social Psychology*, 1948, pp. 218-19.

²L. W. Ferguson, *Personality Measurement*, 1952, p. 123.

³R. Likert, "A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes," *Arch. Psychol.*, 1932, No. 140.

separately and were asked to express their views on different aspects of their difficulties in rehabilitation. This interview continued uninterrupted for one to two hours in each case and the whole proceedings were noted. This had been used as one of the resources in constructing the items of different scales. Other than this, the daily newspaper reports of different activities and statements of the refugees helped immensely to that purpose. On critical examination of these, it was revealed that in finding out a way to smooth the rehabilitation work it was essential to know the attitudes of the refugees towards five different aspects, namely, Islamic religion, India government, Pakistan government, inhabitants of West Bengal and themselves.

The questions were framed according to the rules provided for it and especially the directive laid by Likert was kept in view. The experienced colleagues of the author were invited for suggestion in framing the questions and relevant modifications were made. As the task of putting right and accurate questions in the scale was important matter in this case, the questions were repeatedly read by many psychologists and were asked to forward their comments. Finally, seven items for each scale of Islamic religion and India Government, five items for Pakistan Government, eight items for the inhabitants of West Bengal and eleven items for the scale meant for measuring attitudes towards themselves, were selected to measure the attitudes towards all these five aspects.

An information schedule was prepared with necessary queries in it. It was revised with much care.

As the information of this kind of researches was not available five open-end questions, one for each scale, were included in order to use the results to find out the validity of the scales.

Sampling.—As this pilot study was consider-

ed more or less true indicator of the success of the final programme, the question of sampling was of much importance.

Here according to the suitability, the method of stratified sampling was used.⁴ The population was divided into two homogeneous groups or strata based on socio-economic status, (the refugees resided in camps sponsored by the Government, who were to depend on the monthly doles and the refugees who were comparatively better off could build their houses with partial financial help of the Government and got some occupation, etc.) In short, inmates of camps formed one group and the residents of colonies composed the other. There was difference between these groups in standard of education also.

Next, a simple random sampling from each of these segments or strata was done. From the list of serial names obtained, every tenth name was selected as a subject in one camp, where they numbered about 350. In the case of another colony a similar procedure was followed. For this pilot study out of 65 data 60 collected for the final treatment.

TABLE 1

Scales	Median values of the total scores
1st	23.8
2nd	22.2
3rd	11.1
4th	26.5
5th	42.5

On the basis of median values of scores of different scales, the percentage of favourableness and unfavourableness has been calculated.

TABLE 2

Scales	Favourable in percentage	Unfavourable in percentage
1st	38.4	61.4
2nd	45.0	55.0
3rd	42.4	57.0
4th	48.3	51.7
5th	56.8	43.2

⁴D. W. Paden and E. F. Lindquist, *Statistics for Economics and Business*, 1956, pp. 136-38.

TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND ATTITUDE SCORES

Edu. level	1st Scale		2nd Scale		3rd Scale		4th Scale		5th Scale	
	M.	Diff.	M.	Diff.	M.	Diff.	M.	Diff.	M.	Diff.
I	20.8	Sig.	22.5	not	9.5	Sig.	26.1	not	36.1	Sig.
II	23.8	at .05 level	24.1	Sig.	12.3	at .05 level	26.3	Sig.	45.4	at .01 level
II	23.8	not	24.1	not	12.3	not	26.3	not	45.4	not
III	25.6	Sig.	24.7	Sig.	12.4	Sig.	27.6	Sig.	43	Sig.
I	20.8	Sig. at	22.5	not	9.5	Sig. at	26.1	not	36.1	Sig. at
III	25.6	.02 level	24.7	Sig.	12.4	.02 level	27.6	Sig.	43	.01 level

Interpretation of the Result.—After tabulating the scores the median value of each scale had been calculated. In Table 2, the percentage of favourableness and unfavourableness of the attitudes of the refugees had been found out. In the first scale, the attitude towards Islamic religion was unfavourable, the percentage being 61.4. It was evident from the table that the percentage of unfavourableness in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th scales was greater than the percentage of unfavourableness. The attitudes of the majority of the refugees towards Islamic religion, India Government, Pakistan Government and the inhabitants of West Bengal were not favourable. In the case of the 5th scale, attitude towards themselves was favourable. In all the scales the difference between the percentage of favourableness and unfavourableness varied widely.

Whether different educational levels of the refugees made any difference in the attitude scores that had been calculated and the results were placed in Table 3. The total number of refugees was classified under the categories,

just literate(I), under matriculate(II), and matriculate and above(III). In the first scale, the difference between the means of categories I and II, and I and III was significant, while the difference between the means of categories II and III was not significant. In the second scale, in no case the difference between means was significant, hence the refugees of various educational levels were unanimous in their attitudes towards India Government. In the 3rd scale the only significant difference occurred between the categories I and II. The results in the 4th scale indicated no significant difference present between the means of categories towards the inhabitants of West Bengal were alike. In the case of the 5th scale, which may be called more or less self-rating type, the difference between the means of categories I and II, I and III was highly significant. It was evident from the table that the educated refugees were more self-confident than the uneducated refugees.

Internal-consistency reliability.—The inter-

nal-consistency reliability⁵ of each scale had been found out by calculating correlations between each item score and the total score. The result is given below.

1st scale	2nd scale	3rd scale	4th scale	5th scale
.47	.59	.73	.73	.40
.50	.56	.58	.68	.42
.59	.51	.60	.89	.28
.64	.52	.75	.89	.62
.72	.58	.60	.77	.43
.54	.65		.69	.65
.53	.69		.72	.58
			.88	.60
				.69
				.69
				.64

The suitability of each item to be included in the final scale was dependent on the amount of correlations present between that item and the total score. Accordingly, the item which did not hold good correlations with the total score must be omitted from the scale. Higher the correlation higher will be the chance of retaining the item in the final scale. Here in a very few cases the correlations were much higher. But considering the paucity of data, it would be better to omit only those items which correlate negligibly with the total score.

Validity of the Scales.—It is very difficult to determine the validity of any attitude scale perfectly owing to lack of suitable criteria and especially, the difficulty assumes greater when no parallel test of any contemporary research is available in the field. In this case, there are no large scale researches in India concerning the refugees available, the materials of which can be kept as a criterion in determining the validity of the scales.

So there was no alternative but to follow a method which was inherently weaker in comparison with other methods. The present method required to put in the same questionnaire, certain open-end direct questions to be answered by the subjects. Here, five open-

end direct questions were kept, one for each scale, in order to get their frank attitudes towards Islamic religion, India Government, Pakistan Government, inhabitants of West Bengal and towards themselves. The answers of these questions were classified into two groups, favourable and unfavourable. Then, the biserial correlations were calculated between their response in each question and the total score of each scale. The validity of the scales could be determined after considering the amount of correlations are given below.

SCALES correlations (biserial) between the responses to the open-end questions and the total scores in the scale.

1st scale	...	.42
2nd scale	...	.43
3rd scale	...	.53
4th scale	...	.46
5th scale	...	.58

In no case the amount of correlation can indicate the good validity of the scale. Here the factors responsible for the drawback in getting better amount of correlation might be lack of a truly representative sample and poor criterion. To achieve much better result the nature of criterion should be improved, which is, in the present case, not possible.

⁵W. J. Goode and P. K. Halt. *Methods in Social Research*, 1952, pp. 271-76.

Apart from this, during construction of the scales, the items were gone through by some experts. The validity of each item was increased to a considerable extent.⁶

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this pilot study is to find out the effectivity of the items and the scales in measuring the attitudes of the refugees. Accordingly, the aim is to pick up only the most valid and reliable items to be put in the final questionnaire and to discard the unreliable ones.

The results reveal more or less satisfactory indication of the fulfilment of our purpose. As far as the reliability of the items is concerned, there are only a few items which do not correlate much with the total score; so these items would be discarded. The improvement of the validity of the scales is another

important point to be considered. However, in this case, there is no alternative but to expect better result when the final questionnaire would be applied to a large sample.

The percentage of unfavourable attitudes is not greater, as it was expected. In rehabilitating the refugees, one must ponder about the question of favourability of attitudes. Otherwise, whatever opportunities the refugees may get, they will not be at ease with themselves permanently in any situation. Of course, there is a good point in the result that the refugees do not lose their confidence in themselves. The result also shows that (Table 3), in this case, education has got some influence on the formation of attitudes. Though the difference in attitudes between the educated and uneducated persons is not always significant in this small sample, it is expected that the difference will increase when the sample will be more truly representative.

⁶H. Gullisken, "Intrinsic Validity", *American Psychologist*, 1950. 5. (From Lindzey, G., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. 1, 1954, p. 340.)