



Research in brief

Perceptions of economic globalization, emerging influence, and international organizations in India



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ABSTRACT

This article presents an exploratory study—based on the emerging economy context of India—which examines the relationships among citizens' perceptions of economic globalization, their country's "emerging influence", other key nations, and large international organizations. Demographic and socioeconomic factors influenced respondents' perceptions of economic globalization and emerging influence. Perceptions of economic globalization influenced emerging influence. Perceptions of international organizations were influenced by views of emerging influence, key nations, and economic globalization. Perceptions of key nations were influenced by views of emerging influence and international organizations. The findings are relevant for extended engagement in global public relations and public diplomacy.

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1. Introduction

Global public relations (PR) scholars have increasingly focused on "emerging economies," both in terms of corporate communication and public diplomacy (e.g., Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Lawniczak, 2007; Sriramesh & Duhé, 2009). Emerging economies are defined as those countries transitioning from a socialist or authoritarian system to a liberal market economy (Mitra, Dutta, & Green, 2013). The BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China), post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe (e.g., Hungary, Czech Republic, Ukraine), some Latin American states (e.g., Argentina, Mexico), and others (e.g., Turkey, Israel) usually fit this moniker. Despite this increasing interest, an important gap remains in our understanding of what it means for the people of an emerging economy to be "emerging," and how this might influence their perceptions of the prominent international organizations (e.g., multinational corporations, World Bank) that shape economic globalization policy. This is crucial to global PR scholars and practitioners because of their avowed goal to not just promote particular national/corporate interests, but also engage in mutual dialog with various publics as globalization expands (e.g., introduction of "big box" retailers like Wal-Mart in India). Thus, our article reports the findings of an exploratory study—based on the emerging economy context of India—on the relationships among citizens' perceptions of economic globalization, perceptions of their nation's emerging influence, perceptions of other key nations, and perceptions of large international organizations.

2. Methods

Data from the Public Opinion and Foreign Policy 2006 set, collected by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Asia Society, and East Asia Institute, was used by this study, since it was both large enough to draw reasonable conclusions about the

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general public and was the most recent data set to include items relevant to this study (as per our knowledge). We had access to a representative stratified random sample of all Indian adults aged 18 years or older, drawing from 97% of the country's population geographically and 98% demographically. The final data set comprised of 3132 respondents.

Demographic and socioeconomic variables for the sample included urban/semi-urban/rural location, gender, level of education, self-identified level of household income, and age—all of which were categorical. We constructed a “metropolitan” demographic variable (categorical), depending on respondents' residence in any of the country's four large metropolitan cities or not. Respondents' perception of economic globalization was a categorical variable (good or bad). Perceptions of “emerging influence” was obtained by combining four items related to India's present and expected influence in Asia and the world, on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very high), with moderate $\alpha = 0.71$. Numerical scales were constructed to measure perceptions of international organizations and “key nations,” from items that asked respondents to rate eight prominent organizations and 15 developed and emerging nations, respectively, on a scale of 0 (unfavorable) to 100 (very favorable). Reliability for both these scales was high, at $\alpha = 0.82$ and $\alpha = 0.89$, respectively. Our hypotheses and research questions are stated in the next section.

3. Results

H1 posited that demographic and socioeconomic factors influence respondents' perceptions of economic globalization. A series of six Chi square tests showed statistically significant results, although with low effect size (see Table 1).

H2 stated that demographic and socioeconomic factors influence respondents' perceptions of India's emerging influence. A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample *t*-tests revealed statistically significant results, except for household income, with mostly low effect sizes (see Table 1). However, a high effect size was detected between education level and emerging influence perceptions, $F(4, 2755) = 13.246$, $p = 0.000$, partial eta squared = 0.19. Tamhane's post hoc tests revealed a significant difference between respondents with informal/illiterate and high school education, informal/illiterate and postgraduate education, elementary and high school education, elementary and postgraduate education, high school and university/college education, and between postgraduate and university/college education, $p < 0.05$. Moreover, a medium to high effect size was apparent in the statistically significant relation between respondents' age and emerging influence perceptions, $F(4, 2755) = 7.776$, $p = 0.000$, partial eta squared = 0.11. Tamhane's post hoc test showed a significant difference between those aged under 24 and above 55, aged 25–34 and all other groups except those under 24 years, and those aged 35–44 and above 55, $p < 0.05$.

H3 expected respondents' perceptions of economic globalization to influence their emerging influence perceptions, and an independent samples *t*-test indicated a significant positive relationship, $t(2312) = -10.052$, $p = 0.000$, two-tailed, $d = -0.13$, signifying low effect size. Those with favorable views of economic globalization were more likely to rank emerging influence higher.

RQ1 asked if respondents' perceptions of international organizations were affected by their perceptions of economic globalization, emerging influence, and other key nations. Performing multiple regression analysis, beta coefficients for the predictors were as follows: economic globalization, $\beta = 0.037$, $t = 2.121$, $p = 0.034$, emerging influence, $\beta = 0.306$, $t = 16.831$, $p = 0.000$, and key nations, $\beta = 0.407$, $t = 22.831$, $p = 0.000$ (a dummy variable was constructed for the categorical economic globalization perceptions variable). The regression equation was significant, with a substantial effect size ($R = 0.575$, $R^2 = 0.331$, $F(3, 2249) = 370.622$, $p < 0.000$), so that the three variables were positive predictors and their combination accounted for 33.1% variance in perceptions of international organizations.

RQ2 asked if respondents' perceptions of key nations were affected by their perceptions of economic globalization, emerging influence, and international organizations. Multiple regression analysis indicated no significant relationship between perceptions of key nations and perceptions of economic globalization, $\beta = 0.000$, $t = 0.026$, $p = 0.979$, though the other two measures were significant positive predictors. Beta coefficients for these two predictors were emerging influence, $\beta = 0.06$, $t = 2.932$, $p = 0.003$, and international organizations, $\beta = 0.462$, $t = 22.831$, $p = 0.000$. The overall regression equation was significant ($R = 0.49$, $R^2 = 0.24$, $F(3, 2249) = 237.307$, $p < 0.000$).

For both RQ1 and RQ2, multicollinearity tests indicated very low levels.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study is a preliminary exploration to understand how citizens of emerging economies like India relate to economic globalization processes and prominent international organizations.

The results of H1 and H2 (see Table 1) indicate that, even as India “emerges,” socio-structural inequities remain strong, so that men and urban residents favor economic globalization and emerging influence more than women and rural or semi-urban residents, suggesting that they benefit from these processes disproportionately more than the others. Moreover, the results pertaining to respondents' age and educational level suggest structural restrictions for younger and college-educated respondents, who rated economic globalization least favorably and had among the lowest expectations of their nation's emerging influence. Despite these evident societal stresses, very low income households were most likely to favor economic globalization, whereas high household income households were the least likely, which suggests that while the former retain hopes for a more prosperous future via globalization the latter is disillusioned and/or is more protectionist in stance. Finally,

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