

Social preferences of young children: Linking experimental and survey data



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Background: Social or other-regarding preferences

- Social preferences or other-regarding preferences is about a concern for the welfare of others.
- They are important for human social interaction and cooperation even with strangers (Bowles, 2004; Boyd & Richerson, 2005).
- Social preferences are strongly correlated with
 - willingness to cooperation and fairness (Charness & Rabin, 2002),
 - success in school and juvenile offending (Fehr et al., 2013),
 - political attitudes and the shape of a society's social and political institutions (Kerschbamer & Müller, 2020),
 - and labor market behavior and outcomes (Dohmen et al., 2009; Fehr & Charness, 2023).



Background: Formation of social preferences

- Some evidence showed that social preferences are formed during childhood (Fehr et al., 2008).
- And relatively stable in adulthood (Carlsson et al., 2014).
- A trend of research about the formation of social preferences during young ages and about their contributing factors (see, e.g., Bauer et al., 2014; Falk et al., 2021; Fehr et al., 2008; Fehr et al., 2013).
- Previous studies were conducted with a limited range of studied factors and/or in the context of Western and developed countries.



Objectives of this study

- To describe social preferences among children in Thai rural context using related incentivized economic experiments.
- To investigate the contributing factors associated with children social preferences in Thai rural context.



Contributions

- Using REICE panel data, we have richer background information about children, household, caregiver, and school-related characteristics.
- We can explore how affection influences social preferences.

Methodology

- A. RIECE panel data
- B. Elicitation of child social preferences
- C. Classification of social types
- D. Sample
- E. Potential factors / covariables



A. RIECE panel data

- This paper uses an early childhood panel data from rural Thailand, RIECE panel data. (<https://riped.org/data/>)
- The annual survey has been collected since early 2015 covering 21 subdistricts in Mahasarakham and 2 subdistricts in Kalasin.
- The baseline samples (in 2015) were one-to-five-year-old children.
- The survey comprises of three main components: household, children and teacher/school.
- We conducted social preference elicitation tasks within the regular annual survey with children in 2018-2019.



B. Elicitation of child social preferences

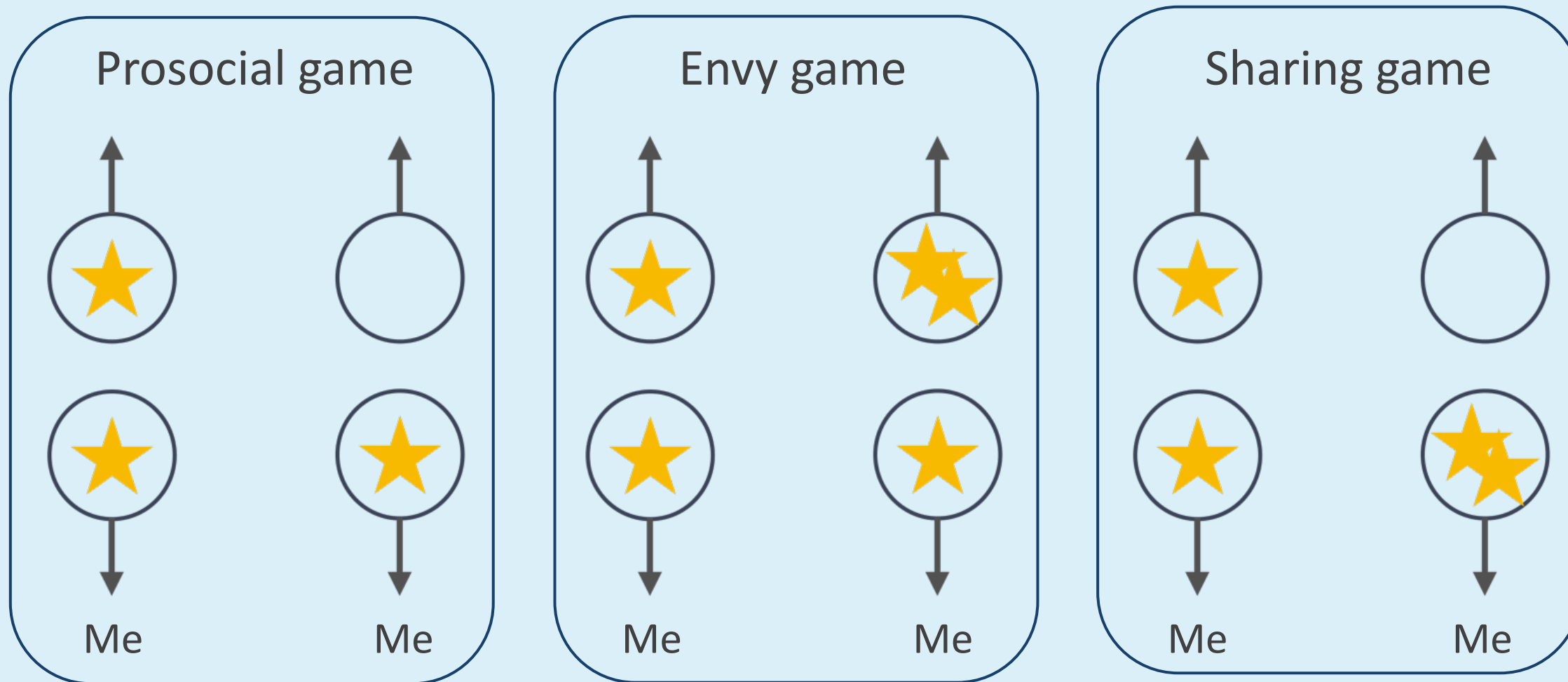
- Incentivized three binary-choice dictator games (Fehr, Bernhard & Rockenbach, 2008)
- Rewarded items included different types of sweets and stationery.
- In each game, a child had to choose an allocation (out of two) of items for self and a partner.
- One allocation (x,y) was always the allocation $(1,1)$, while the alternative allocation was designed to classify different other-regarding preference types.



B. Elicitation of child social preferences

Game	Option 1	Option 2	In short	Model-based explanation
Prosocial	1 item for me 1 item for partner	1 item for me 0 item for partner	(1,1) vs (1,0)	Avoid inequality, altruism at no cost, payoff max, Inspired by experiments with chimpanzees
Envy	1 item for me 1 item for partner	1 item for me 2 items for partner	(1,1) vs (1,2)	Aversion to disadvantageous inequality at no cost, payoff max / spiteful
Sharing	1 item for me 1 item for partner	2 items for me 0 item for partner	(1,1) vs (2,0)	Preference for reducing inequality, altruism at the cost of oneself

B. Elicitation of child social preferences





B. Elicitation of child social preferences

- One-shot experiments
- Randomly selected partner, but we asked the children whether they liked to play with this child or not.
- Reward for self: in a bag directly after the activity
- Reward for the partner: in a bag with different color labeled with partner's name left with their classroom's teacher

B. Elicitation of child social preferences



- November 2018 – May 2019.
- The choices were made privately with only an experimenter.
- Test questions: 102 from 1117 children could not answer them correctly.
- Order of the games and sides of choices stayed the same.

C. Classification of social types

Types	Prosocial (1,1) vs (1,0)	Envy (1,1) vs (1,2)	Sharing (1,1) vs (2,0)
Strongly generous	(1,1)	(1,2)	(1,1)
Weakly generous	(1,1)	(1,2)	(2,0)
Strongly egalitarian	(1,1)	(1,1)	(1,1)
Weakly egalitarian	(1,1)	(1,1)	(2,0)
Spiteful	(1,0)	(1,1)	(2,0)

- **Generous:**
Maximize partner's payoff.
- **Egalitarian:**
Minimize differences in payoffs.
- **Spiteful:**
Minimize partner's payoff.

D. Sample

- Children who decided all three games: 1117
- Passed the test questions: 1015
- Aged between 4 to 8 years old: 1001

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
3	6	0.59
4	106	10.44
5	212	20.89
6	303	29.85
7	251	24.73
8	129	12.71
9	8	0.79
Total	1015	100.00

E. Potential factors: children

Variables	N
Age (months)	1001
Female (1=yes)	1001
Math ability (age-standardized)	1001
Literacy ability (age-standardized)	996
Patience (from time preference task)	995
Internalized behavior problems score (IRT)	1001
Externalized behavior problems score (IRT)	1001
Only child (1=yes)	1001
First-born (1=yes)	1001
Number of siblings	1001
Number of children (0-12 yo) in the HH	1001
Sleep time (age-standardized)	999
Screen time (age-standardized)	999
Fieldtrip day (age-standardized)	999
Roleplay day (age-standardized)	999



E. Potential factors:

Parent, caregiver, and household

Variables		N
Parent	Living with parents	1001
	no parent	
	one parent	
	both parents	
	Parents are divorced (1=yes)	1001
Caregiver	Caregiver's age (years)	998
	Caregiver's gender (1=female)	1001
	Caregiver's education (years in school)	998
Household	Number of HH members	1001
	HH Wealth	1001
	HH expenditure on donation	
	(average between 2016-2018)	990

E. Potential factors: school-related

Variables	N
Number of children in the same class	924
Number of years the child has been going to a school	1001
Being in the childcare center with a RIECE teacher	1001
Never	
Only in 2015	
Only in 2016	
Both in 2015 and 2016	



Thank you for your attention.
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