
SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Advanced Social Psychology

Syllabi

Mapping in Book

UNIT I

A working definition of social psychology, Nature, goal and scope of social psychology, Social psychology and other social sciences, Answering questions about social behavior and social thought, Research methods in social psychology.

**Unit 1: An Introduction to
Advanced Social Psychology
(Pages 3-23)**

UNIT II

Social Perception: Understanding Ourselves and Others

Perceiving Ourselves: Self-concept, Self-esteem, Self-presentation and Self-expression

Perceiving Others: Attribution: Understanding the causes of others behavior, Theories of attribution, Some basic sources of basic impression formation and impression management

Social Cognition: Thinking about others and the Social Worlds: Heuristics, Mental shortcuts in social cognition, Basic aspects of social thought, Tilts tendencies and potential errors, Affect and cognition: How thought shapes feeling and feelings shape thought.

**Unit 2: Social Perception:
Understanding Ourselves
and Others
(Pages 25-48)**

UNIT III

Attitudes: Evaluating the Social World

Nature and function of Attitudes, Forming attitudes, Social learning, Direct experience and genetic factors, Attitudes and behavior: The essential link, Specificity components strength, Vested interest, The role of self-awareness, Accessibility, Persuasion: The traditional and cognitive approaches, Resistance to persuasion, Cognitive Dissonance.

Prejudice and Discrimination: Understanding their Nature, Countering their Effects:

Nature and components of prejudice and discrimination, Acquisition of prejudice, Direct intergroup contact, Recategorization, Cognitive intervention prejudice based on gender. Its nature and effects, Gender stereotypes, Discrimination against females, Sexual harassment.

Interpersonal Attraction:

Getting acquainted, Becoming friends, Proximity and emotions, The need to affiliate and reactions to observable characteristics, Similarity and reciprocity in becoming friends.

Close Relationship: Friendship and Love:

Moving beyond casual friendships, Relationships among-relative's friends and lovers. What is love? What is loneliness?

**Unit 3: Attitudes: Evaluating
the Social World
(Pages 49-105)**

UNIT IV

Social Influence: Changing Others Behavior:

Group influence in action-factors affecting conformity. The bases of conformity, need for individuation and need for control, Minority influences-Compliance: ingratiation, Multiple requests sweetening the deal and complaining -Obedience: Social Influence by demand.

Prosocial Behavior Providing Help to Others

Responding to an Emergency, Bystander behavior. Five necessary cognitive steps for help, Internal and external factors that influence Altruistic behavior, role Models Emotions Characteristics of the Victim-Prosocial behavior: Empathy altruism theory Empathic joy and Genetic Selfishness.

**Unit 4: Social Influence:
Changing Others' Behaviour
(Pages 107-127)**

UNIT V

Aggression: Its Nature Causes and Control

Theoretical perspective on aggression. It is an innate tendency an elicited drive, A reaction to an aversive events and a learned social behavior, Social Determinants of Aggression, Frustration, direct provocation, exposure to media violence. Heightened arousal, sexual arousal and aggression. The effects of Violent pornography, Alcohol and Aggression, Personal causes of aggression type a behaviour pattern, perceiving Evil intent in other, shame-proneness and Gender Difference-Techniques for prevention and control of Aggression punishment, catharsis, Cognitive interventions and other techniques.

Group and Individuals: The Consequences of Belonging in a Group:

Their nature, Function and formation, Groups and task performance, The benefits and costs of working with other, Social facilitation, Social loafing, Decision-making by groups, The decision-making process end; the nature of group decisions and some potential pitfalls.

**Unit 5: Aggression: Its Nature, Causes
and Control
(Pages 129-162)**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
UNIT 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO ADVANCED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY	3-23
1.0 Introduction	
1.1 Unit Objectives	
1.2 Social Psychology: An Overview	
1.3 Nature, Goal and Scope of Social Psychology	
1.3.1 Nature and Goal of Social Psychology	
1.3.2 Scope of Social Psychology	
1.3.3 Social Psychology and Other Sciences	
1.4 Understanding Social Behaviour and Thoughts	
1.5 Research Methods in Social Psychology	
1.5.1 Types of Research	
1.5.2 Other Methods of Study	
1.5.3 Scientific Research Method	
1.6 Summary	
1.7 Key Terms	
1.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'	
1.9 Questions and Exercises	
1.10 Further Reading	
UNIT 2 SOCIAL PERCEPTION: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES AND OTHERS	25-48
2.0 Introduction	
2.1 Unit Objectives	
2.2 Perceiving Ourselves	
2.2.1 The Self-Concept	
2.2.2 Self-Esteem	
2.2.3 Self-Presentation	
2.2.4 Self-Expression	
2.3 Perceiving Others	
2.3.1 Attribution: Understanding the Causes of Other's Behaviour	
2.3.2 Theories of Attribution	
2.3.3 Impression Formation and Impression Management	
2.4 Social Cognition	
2.4.1 Heuristics	
2.4.2 Mental Shortcuts in Social Cognition and Basic Aspects of Social Thoughts	
2.4.3 Affect and Cognition: How Thoughts Shape Feelings and Feelings Shape Thoughts	
2.5 Summary	
2.6 Key Terms	
2.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'	
2.8 Questions and Exercises	
2.9 Further Reading	

UNIT 3 ATTITUDES: EVALUATING THE SOCIAL WORLD

49-105

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Nature and Functions of Attitudes
- 3.3 Forming Attitudes
 - 3.3.1 Social Learning; 3.3.2 Genetic Factors; 3.3.3 Direct Experience
- 3.4 Attitudes and Behaviour
 - 3.4.1 The Essential Link: Specificity, Component, Vested Interest, Attitude, Strength and Accessibility
 - 3.4.2 Self-Awareness and the Attitude–Behaviour Link
- 3.5 Persuasion: Traditional and Cognitive Approaches
- 3.6 Resistance to Persuasion
- 3.7 Cognitive Dissonance
- 3.8 Prejudice and Discrimination: Nature and Components
 - 3.8.1 Nature of Prejudice and Discrimination; 3.8.2 Acquisition of Prejudice
 - 3.8.3 Direct Intergroup Contact and Recategorization: The Motivational Perspective
 - 3.8.4 Cognitive Intervention Prejudice
 - 3.8.5 Competing Prejudice and Prejudice Based on Gender
- 3.9 Gender Stereotypes: Discrimination against Females
 - 3.9.1 Gender Stereotypes and Communication
 - 3.9.2 Discrimination against Females; 3.9.3 Sexual Harassment
- 3.10 Interpersonal Attraction: Getting Acquainted and Becoming Friends
 - 3.10.1 Proximity and Emotions: Explaining the Proximity Effects
- 3.11 The Need to Affiliate and Reactions to Observable Characteristics
- 3.12 Close Relationships: Friendship and Love
 - 3.12.1 Relationship among Relatives, Friends and Lovers
 - 3.12.2 Romantic Relationships
 - 3.12.3 Loneliness
 - 3.12.4 Moving Beyond Casual Friendship: Interdependent Relationships
- 3.13 Summary
- 3.14 Key Terms
- 3.15 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 3.16 Questions and Exercises
- 3.17 Further Reading

UNIT 4 SOCIAL INFLUENCE: CHANGING OTHERS’ BEHAVIOUR

107-127

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Social Influence
 - 4.2.1 Conformity
 - 4.2.2 Factors Affecting Conformity and Bases of Conformity
 - 4.2.3 Need for Individuation and Control
- 4.3 Compliance
- 4.4 Obedience: Social Influence by Demand
 - 4.4.1 Personality and Obedience
- 4.5 Prosocial Behaviour: Providing Help to Others
 - 4.5.1 Bystander Behaviour: Responding to an Emergency
 - 4.5.2 Internal and External Factors that Influence Altruistic Behaviour and Role Models
- 4.6 Characteristics of the Victim
- 4.7 Explanations of Prosocial Behaviour
 - 4.7.1 Empathy–Altruism Theory: Unselfish Helping
 - 4.7.2 Empathic Joy and Genetic Selfishness

- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Key Terms
- 4.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.11 Questions and Exercises
- 4.12 Further Reading

UNIT 5 AGGRESSION

129-162

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Aggression
 - 5.2.1 Aggression: An Innate Tendency and an Elicited Drive
 - 5.2.2 Social Determinants of Aggression—Frustration, Direct Provocation and Exposure to Media Violence
- 5.3 Heightened Arousal
 - 5.3.1 Sexual Arousal and Aggression
- 5.4 Alcohol and Aggression
 - 5.4.1 Personal Causes of Aggression: Types of Behaviour Patterns
 - 5.4.2 Perceiving Evil Intent in Others and Shame Proneness
 - 5.4.3 Gender Differences in Aggression
- 5.5 Prevention and Control of Aggression
 - 5.5.1 Punishment
 - 5.5.2 Catharsis
 - 5.5.3 Other Techniques of Reducing Aggression
 - 5.5.4 Cognitive Intervention and Other Techniques
- 5.6 Groups and Individuals
 - 5.6.1 The Consequences of Belonging
 - 5.6.2 Nature, Function and Formation of a Group
- 5.7 Groups and Task Performance
 - 5.7.1 Benefits and Costs of Working with Others, and Social Facilitation
 - 5.7.2 Social Facilitation and Social Loafing
- 5.8 Decision-Making by Groups
 - 5.8.1 Decision-Making by Groups and Decision-Making Processes
 - 5.8.2 Nature of Group Decisions
 - 5.8.3 Group Decision-Making: Some Pitfalls
- 5.9 Summary
- 5.10 Key Terms
- 5.11 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.12 Questions and Exercises
- 5.13 Further Reading

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Social psychology is a flourishing discipline. It explores the most essential questions of the human psyche. Why do people help or harm others? How do influence professionals get people to do what they want and how can they inoculate themselves against the professionals' sometimes-insidious persuasion tactics? Why do social relationships exert such powerful effects on people's physical health? These are some of the questions that everyone has in their minds, and Social Psychology provides answers to these questions, and it does so with clever, ingenious research methods. Social psychology is the study of the relations between people and groups. Scholars in this interdisciplinary area are typically either psychologists or sociologists, though all social psychologists employ both the individual and the group as their units of analysis.

Despite their similarity, psychological and sociological researchers tend to differ in their goals, approaches, methods and terminology. They also favour separate academic journals and professional societies. The greatest period of collaboration between sociologists and psychologists was during the years immediately following World War II. Although there has been an increasing isolation and specialization in recent years, some degree of overlap and influence remains between the two disciplines.

This book, *Advanced Social Psychology*, will introduce the students to some of the research and other methods used by social psychologists. Social psychologists are trained in rigorous experimental methods within the academic discipline of psychology. Their approach to the field focusses on the individual and attempts to explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of individuals are influenced by other people. Psychologically-oriented researchers emphasize the immediate social situation and the interaction between person and situation variables. Their research tends to be empirical and quantitative, and it is often centred around laboratory experiments, but there are some computational modelling efforts in the field. Contemporary social psychology is 'characterized by a fundamental commitment to the experimental method'. Psychologists who study social psychology are interested in such topics as attitudes, social cognition, cognitive dissonance, social influence, and interpersonal behaviour, including altruism and aggression. All these aspects and characteristics of social psychology are discussed in this book.

The book is written strictly in SIM (Self-Instructional Material) format for distance learning, and each unit starts with an Introduction and Unit Objectives. Then, the detailed content is presented interspersed with Check Your Progress questions. A Summary is provided at the end of the unit for quick revision. Each unit also has a list of Key Terms and Questions and Exercises.

UNIT 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO ADVANCED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

*An Introduction to
Advanced Social
Psychology*

NOTES

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Social Psychology: An Overview
- 1.3 Nature, Goal and Scope of Social Psychology
 - 1.3.1 Nature and Goal of Social Psychology
 - 1.3.2 Scope of Social Psychology
 - 1.3.3 Social Psychology and Other Sciences
- 1.4 Understanding Social Behaviour and Thoughts
- 1.5 Research Methods in Social Psychology
 - 1.5.1 Types of Research
 - 1.5.2 Other Methods of Study
 - 1.5.3 Scientific Research Method
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Key Terms
- 1.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.9 Questions and Exercises
- 1.10 Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is an established fact that humans are social beings. We almost always seek the company of others. Even though we value our privacy, yet we wish to stay connected with others. Human beings in their social context form the subject matter of the study of social psychology. The basis of human interaction has been explained historically with the help of several interpretations.

Plato (*The Republic*) views it as arising out of the need to meet our wants. Since one person is often insufficient to take care of all his wants, collective functioning becomes useful. According to Hobbes (*The Leviathan*) without social interaction, man is solitary, poor, nasty and brutish. So, societal interaction was seen as a refinement. Locke (*Essay on Human Understanding*) argued that social interaction is necessary for the preservation of society. Darwin's theory of evolution also has the concept of social adaptation for survival. So social behaviour has been the subject of immense interest all along the ages. At no time is an individual separate from his/her social context.

In this unit, you will learn social psychology in detail, along with its nature, goals and scope. You will also learn the various research methods adopted in studying social psychology.

NOTES

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and define social psychology
- Study the relations between social psychology and other social sciences
- Learn about social behaviour
- Understand the social thought
- Get an overview of research methods in social psychology

1.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

Other people are central to our lives because we are in a social relationship with them. The presence of others may be real (as when you are in a classroom, party, movie house, etc.), or imagined (you think of what your friend would feel not being invited to the housewarming ceremony). So, one definition of social psychology is that it is the scientific study of the nature and causes of individual behaviour in a social situation. The term 'behaviour' includes thoughts and feelings. Social psychology is the study of social behaviour and the mental experience of people in social contexts. Many authorities view it as occupying the area between sociology on the one hand and individual psychology on the other. It includes the study of social interaction and communication, both verbal and non-verbal, behaviour in groups, social attitudes and persuasion, interpersonal attraction and social relationships, leadership and social influence, aggression and anger, altruism and helping behaviour, attribution and social cognition, bargaining and negotiation, conformity and social influence processes, cooperation and competition, group decision-making, group dynamics, leadership and group performance, obedience to authority, prejudice and inter-group conflict, self-presentation and impression management, sex roles, sexual behaviour, social learning and socialization.

The birth date of social psychology is often given as 1908, when two influential early texts by McDougall (a psychologist) and Ross (a sociologist) were published, but the field did not really evolve a separate identity of its own until the mid-1930s and did not gain momentum until after World War II. The early development of social psychology was dominated by theories and research generated in the United States, although many of the most influential pioneers, including Fritz Heider and Kurt Lewin, were emigrants from Europe. After the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology in 1967, pressure began to build towards reducing the global dominance of American social psychology. European social psychology has maintained the American tradition of experimental research, but has also tended to give more prominence to non-experimental approaches,

such as discourse analysis, social representations research and various qualitative methods.

World War II and its impact

After a decade of little progress, World War II and later part showed growth in several directions. The role of group membership and its influence on individual behaviour, personality traits and social behaviour was explored. The cognitive dissonance theory developed by Festinger (1957) was another landmark. The theory focussed on how human beings disliked inconsistency between their attitudes and behaviour and proposed that there was a motivation to reduce it. This opened up a significant research area. This gave impetus to the study of social attraction, pro-social or helping behaviour, social perception, stereotypes and a host of other related topics. Such types of research led to the growth of the applied field in social psychology. Areas like health, organizations, legal process and environmental issues were studied in terms of the individual in these contexts.

Looking to the future it becomes clear that issues like ethnicity, migration, conflicts, catastrophes (natural and otherwise), population, effects of technology, and so on would gain a lot of importance. The essence of the focus is bound to be the contextualization of social behaviour aimed at human welfare.

The links of social psychology to psychology

The emergence of social psychology was very gradual. So, no clear markers are identifiable. As mentioned, the earliest use of the term social psychology is credited to William McDougall (1908), who published a book titled *Introduction to Psychology* based on the notion of instincts. This view does not enjoy much currency in modern times. The second recorded evidence is a book written by F.H. Allport (1924), called *Social Psychology*. He proposed that social behaviour arises from several factors including the presence of others and their actions. This view is much closer to present day interpretation.

These were followed by the definitive studies of two pioneers Mazafer Sherif and Kurt Lewin. Sherif (1935) studied social norms by which any group rules were developed for managing a set of individuals. Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) studied leadership and group processes. This marked the beginning of the systematic scientific study of social psychology.

Origins of social psychology

The word 'social' has been traced to the Sanskrit word 'sacati' which means 'follows' or 'accompanies'. This is also related to the Latin term 'socialis'. The Greek and the Roman languages also have 'sharing' as one of the concepts associated with social.

Aristotle in his treatise on politics indicated an instinctual basis for man's social interactions in society. These linguistic explorations speak about the recognition of social interactions as the main stay of human existence.

NOTES

1.3 NATURE, GOAL AND SCOPE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

NOTES

1.3.1 Nature and Goal of Social Psychology

According to psychologist Gordon Allport, social psychology is a discipline that uses scientific methods 'to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings' (1985). Social psychology looks at a wide range of social topics, including group behaviour, social perception, leadership, non-verbal behaviour, conformity, aggression and prejudice. It is important to note that social psychology is not just about looking at social influences. Social perception and social interaction are also vital to understanding social behaviour.

The goal of social psychology is to understand cognition and behaviour as they naturally occur in a social context, but the very act of observing people can influence and alter their behaviour. For this reason, many social psychology experiments utilize deception to conceal or distort certain aspects of the study. Deception may include false cover stories, false participants (known as confederates or stooges), false feedback given to the participants, and so on.

The practice of deception has been challenged by some psychologists who maintain that deception under any circumstance is unethical, and that other research strategies (e.g. role-playing) should be used instead. Unfortunately, research has shown that role-playing studies do not produce the same results as deception studies and this has cast doubt on their validity. In addition to deception, experimenters have at times put people into potentially uncomfortable or embarrassing situations (e.g., the Milgram experiment, Stanford prison experiment), and this has also been criticized for ethical reasons.

To protect the rights and well-being of research participants, and at the same time discover meaningful results and insights into human behaviour, virtually all social psychology research must pass an ethical review process. At most colleges and universities, this is conducted by an ethics committee or institutional review board. This group examines the proposed research to make sure that no harm is done to the participants, and that the benefits of the study outweigh any possible risks or discomforts to people taking part in the study.

Furthermore, a process of informed consent is often used to make sure that volunteers know what will happen in the experiment and understand that they are allowed to quit the experiment at any time. A debriefing is typically done at the conclusion of the experiment in order to reveal any deceptions used and generally make sure that the participants are unharmed by the procedures. Today, most research in social psychology involves no more risk of harm than can be expected from routine psychological testing or normal daily activities.

1.3.2 Scope of Social Psychology

An underlying assumption in the development of social psychology has been the belief that some aspects of human nature are the same in all cultures and across

NOTES

history. So, although we want to understand the extent to which our behaviour changes in different social and cultural contexts, we are fairly confident that there are some important and basic aspects of human nature which are not affected by changes in social circumstances. Indeed, if there were no common bases for comparison, differences and similarities across cultures could not be assessed at all. This means that social psychologists are interested in variations in social reactions and their origins and in the consistency or predictability of human behaviour. In the twenty-five years after World War II, social psychology continued to be an active growing field of scientific enquiry. Attention continued to be focussed on the influence of groups and group membership on individual behaviour, but the field expanded into virtually every area of social interaction. In the introduction to the very influential *Handbook of Social Psychology* published shortly after World War II, Gordon Allport (1954) argued strongly that we can improve our social welfare via the systematic application of social science and, in particular, social psychology. This optimistic view of social psychology is held even more strongly today. The 1954 edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* also assigned great importance to the role of methodology in the complex field of social psychology, and development of research methods in this area is still continuing today.

In the last twenty-five years, the development of social psychology has continued with the addition of new areas of research such as attribution—how we infer the causes of behaviour of others and of ourselves—the study of gender roles and gender-role stereotyping and the study of helping or prosocial behaviour. Underlying the recent developments in social psychology have been two major themes. The first has been an increasing emphasis on using our knowledge of cognitive processing to understand the complexities of social phenomena. The second discernable trend is an increasing interest among social psychologists in analysing current social problems and applying their knowledge to practical issues, such as organizations and workplace settings. These trends reflect an increasing awareness of the need to draw on our knowledge of basic psychological theory and research in order to help understand the complexities of our social world.

1.3.3 Social Psychology and Other Sciences

Since social psychology focusses on the study of the individual in the social context of other individuals, sociologists study the individual as a member of a social group—the society. Anthropologists look into the genesis of the human being in a larger ethnic/cultural context. Economists examine the individual's economic/commercial behaviour in the context of monetary/economic factors.

Marketing people are keen on studying consumer behaviour of an individual in terms of business/buying behaviour. Political scientists seek to study human political behaviour in the context of leadership, governance, international relations, etc. These show that such disciplines are related, but their perspectives differ. Also, the basic principles as gained from research in the field of psychology have become the backbone for their applications in the allied fields involving human behaviour.

NOTES

How is social psychology different from other disciplines?

It is important to understand how social psychology differs from other disciplines. Social psychology is often confused with folk wisdom, personality psychology and sociology. What makes social psychology different? Unlike folk wisdom, which relies on anecdotal observations and subjective interpretation, social psychology employs scientific methods and empirical study of social phenomena.

While personality psychology focusses on individual traits, characteristics, and thoughts, social psychology is focussed on situations. Social psychologists are interested in the impact that social environment and interaction has on attitudes and behaviour.

Finally, it is important to distinguish between social psychology and sociology. While there are many similarities between the two, sociology tends to look at social behaviour and influences at a very broad-based level. Sociologists are interested in the institutions and culture that influence social psychology. Psychologists, instead, focus on situational variables that affect social behaviour. While psychology and sociology both study similar topics, they look at these topics from different perspectives.

1.4 UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND THOUGHTS

Understanding the causes of social behaviour forms the centrepiece of social psychology. This means identifying those factors that shape our feelings, thoughts and behaviour, in social situations (refer Figure 1.1).

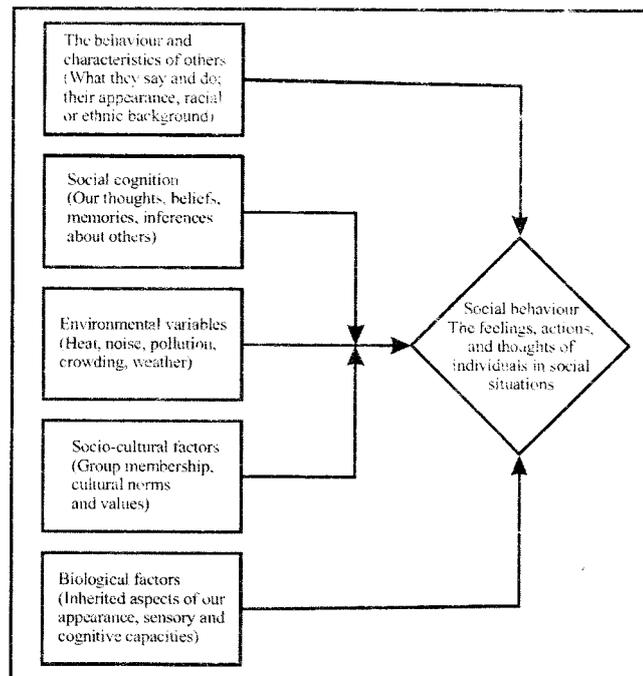


Fig. 1.1 Understanding Social Behaviour

Social behaviour: A summary of its major causes

Social behaviour—made up of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour—stems from several causes. The following points explain Figure 1.1 better:

- Box 1: How would our feelings, thoughts and behaviour be affected when we are introduced to a person who is attractive, smart and pleasant, with a smile?
- Box 2: Someone jumps the queue while we are law-abiding and waiting for our turn, patiently.
- Box 3: Recall how irritated and unpleasant we were in routine interaction with others on a hot, sweaty/humid day in contrast to the cooler, comfortable times.
- Box 4: Remember how we relate better to those persons who share our cultural, linguistic and value orientations as compared with those, who are different in these respects.
- Box 5: Our own appearance, strengths and limitations in terms of our capabilities and other personal attributes that have a significant impact in terms of determining our social behaviour.

Social behaviour and social thoughts can be better understood from the following findings of a study about people with ASD (autism spectrum disorders). Our friends are people who make us feel good about ourselves. While this is a simple truth, creating those friendships is a complex process, especially for individuals with ASD, with their pervasive social learning challenges.

Another truth, one gleaned from years of working with high-functioning individuals with ASD and discussing their social desires with them, is that all persons on the autism spectrum want people to be friendly to them. They desire friendships and dislike having enemies. They are no different from neurotypical people in their desire to create and maintain healthy relations. The difference in is their brain's ability to negotiate the subtlety of keeping relations friendly.

Children and adults with ASD have difficulty interpreting others' intended social messages. They also more frequently send 'mis-cues' to others about their own social intentions. Even many higher functioning students with Asperger Syndrome go unaware of how other people perceive them, and the unintentional message their social actions send. They may be oblivious to the fact that others see them as sullen and do not desire their friendship because they fail to initiate or respond to a social greeting.

It is important to break down these complex concepts into concrete, understandable steps. To begin with, let us understand when and where social thinking is involved. It is a common misconception, especially among students that social thinking is involved only in social interactions, such as hanging out with friends or playing a game. It takes much discussion for students to begin to realize that social thinking is active any time they share space with others, even if they are

NOTES

NOTES

not in direct communication. How many of us move our shopping carts out of the way of a fellow shopper walking down the same aisle of a grocery store? That is social thinking.

Social thinking is active not just when we are in the company of others but any time we are thinking about others. When alone, do not we analyse past social interactions in our heads, wondering if the other person perceived our actions in the intended way? We make a call or send an e-mail to clarify a message or offer an apology when we realize we may have been misinterpreted, or that our actions were just plain wrong. This is again social thinking at work.

Social thinking dominates our overall thinking time in a day. We use social thinking before, during and after a social encounter. Social thought helps us determine how best to shape our behaviour so that others have good thoughts about us in return. If our goal is to help our students become better social thinkers, simply teaching a social skill is not enough. We must also teach these students about the presence of other people's own minds and social thoughts.

A useful strategy with middle school and older students is to use 'The Four Steps of Perspective Taking'. These steps help students recognize and consider the extent to which we think about others and adjust our behaviour even in the absence of intentional communication. We engage the following four steps in any social interaction:

- (i) **Step 1:** As soon as two people share a common space, they have a thought about each other. I have a thought about you; you have a thought about me.
- (ii) **Step 2:** I consider the other person's intentions and motives. If they seem suspicious, I will monitor the person more closely. The other person will also consider my intentions and motives.
- (iii) **Step 3:** Each person considers what the other may be thinking about him. Is it positive, negative, neutral? Is there a history between us upon which we weigh these thoughts?
- (iv) **Step 4:** I monitor and possibly modify my behaviour to keep the other person thinking about me the way I want them to think about me. They are doing the same for me.

These four steps happen within milliseconds and at an intuitive level, below our immediate consciousness. The first three steps involve social thought; behaviour is involved only in Step 4.

It should be kept in mind that this process is based on the basic assumption that we all desire people to have reasonably nice thoughts about us, even when our encounters are brief. Embedded in this assumption is its opposite: we do not want people to have bad thoughts about us. It can be challenging for people with ASD to just perceive that others have different thoughts, let alone think that we all have good thoughts and weird thoughts about others. Most people with

ASD never stop to consider that they, too, have bad thoughts about other people.

Many people appreciate the role that social memories play in day-to-day interaction. We all have social emotional memories of people based on how they make us think about them over time. Those people whose actions plant 'normal' to 'good' thoughts in other people's minds are much more likely to be considered friendly and have higher chances of making friends than those who create a lot of weird thought memories in the minds of others. The reason we may go call a friend or co-worker to apologize for how our actions may have been interpreted is to foster better social memories about ourselves in their brain.

The Four Steps of Perspective Taking are at play any time we share space with others, and are a requirement for any functioning. Even in a classroom, hidden rule of the classroom environment is that all students and teachers join in mutual social thought about the others in the class, and that each student is responsible to monitor and adjust his behaviour accordingly. A student who is not proficient in the four steps is usually considered to have a behaviour problem.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define social psychology.
2. What are the topics covered by social psychology?
3. What is the goal of social psychology?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Knowledge is the bulwark of any discipline. Valid knowledge is obtained through scientific investigation. This implies that methods for obtaining knowledge have to be thorough and systematic. Empirical research leads to theory building. Theories form the framework for understanding any phenomenon. The starting point of all research is common sense. In order to establish the truth behind common sense, the scientific method is used.

Every scientific method is based on robust data or evidence, accurate measurement and description, and controlled observation and repeatable results. According to Bunge (1984), the main purpose of all research is to find answers to questions that are proposed for understanding.

NOTES

NOTES

Some of the common objectives of research methods in social psychology are as follows:

- To achieve new insights into phenomena that lead to exploratory and formative research endeavours
- To carry out descriptive studies
- To carry out diagnostic studies
- To carry out hypothesis-testing (research studies)

1.5.1 Types of Research

- **Descriptive versus analytical**

Descriptive research involves obtaining facts through surveys and other procedures. This is to understand things as they stand. Analytical research uses the data/facts already existing to make critical evaluations for the purpose of knowledge.

- **Applied versus fundamental**

Applied research has an action orientation. Here, the aim is to find a solution for an existing problem. The problem can be in the area of business, government, education or society. In fundamental research, also called basic research, the focus is on knowledge for its own sake. This is also called 'pure' research, which is engaged in theory building. It is aimed at gathering information to advance scientific knowledge.

- **Quantitative versus qualitative research**

Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It relates to phenomena that are quantifiable; for example, weight, loudness, etc. Qualitative research is concerned with discovering the underlying factors that govern behaviour; for example, motivation, anxiety, etc. This type of research is especially important in the social and behavioural sciences. Qualitative research utilizes experimental data for valid extensions.

- **Conceptual versus empirical research**

Conceptual research involves study of some theory or concepts. This helps in understanding new concepts or reinterpreting existing ones. Empirical research relies on observations or data for system or theory building. This is data-based research. It is a form of experimental type of research. It aims to obtain facts first. All the steps needed to generate data are used here. Evidence obtained from empirical research is viewed as the most powerful of supports for any attempt at knowledge gathering.

Some other types of research

There are more variations of the types of research previously indicated. Time available for research, the environment in which research is carried out and

other factors also have a bearing on the type of research that has to be executed. They are as follows:

- (i) **One-time research:** When the time available is limited, or the research is of a particular event, one-time research is carried out. Here, a single time period is involved.
- (ii) **Longitudinal research:** Here, research is carried out over a long time period. For example, developmental studies that involve a lifespan or a longer time span. Such a type of research can be set in a field, laboratory, or involve simulation (e.g., teaching to drive a vehicle, airplane, etc.).
This type of research follows the progress across time, in a systematic way.
- (iii) **Diagnostic research:** This type of research is used in the clinical field. Here, in-depth methods and case studies are examined for understanding the problem on hand.
- (iv) **Exploratory research:** The objective of this type of research is to develop hypotheses, rather than testing them. This is opposed to formal research where a hypothesis is tested.
- (v) **Historical research:** Here, documents, archival data, and other historical information are researched for understanding the origins and development of an event or a concept.
- (vi) **Oriented research:** Here, the researcher redesigns the enquiry into a problem and proceeds to conceptualize it as he/she deems fit. The object of decision-oriented research is to help in making decisions with the help of quantitative evaluations of any situation or phenomenon.

Processing scientific enquiry

There are five steps in the process of any scientific enquiry that are as follows:

- (i) Observation
- (ii) Defining a problem
- (iii) Hypothesis formulation
- (iv) Testing the hypothesis
- (v) Accepting or rejecting the hypothesis

A hypothesis is a hunch or a tentative explanation of any phenomenon that has been observed; for example, frustration gives rise to aggression. Then the operational definition of the problem is to be specified. This is the testable proposition. Let us assume frustration in any thwarting of a goal-directed activity. If a person's goal is blocked, he will be frustrated every time his goal is blocked. Evidence is measured in terms of the number of insults noticed. It has to be verified whether this occurs or not every time frustration is induced. If it occurs in more than a random manner then the hypothesis is accepted, or else it is rejected (refer Figure 1.2).

NOTES

NOTES

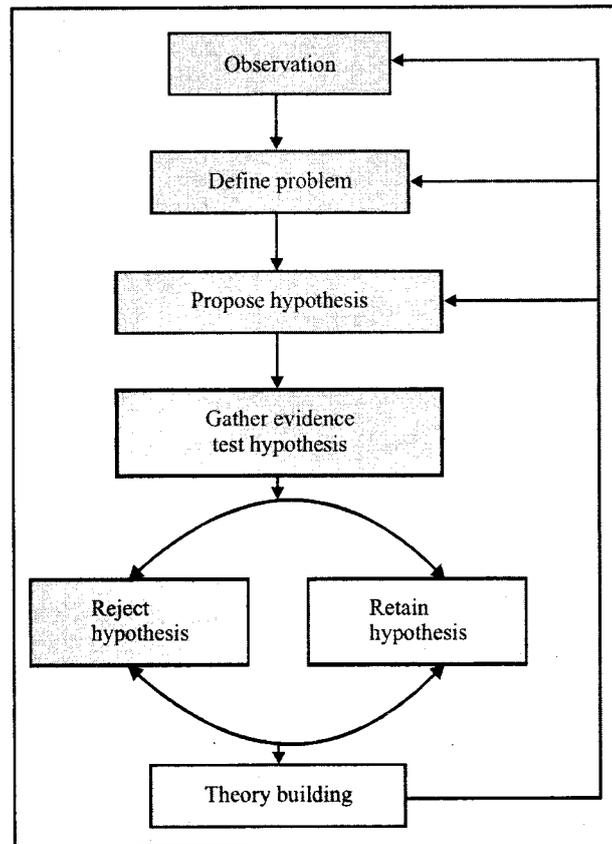


Fig. 1.2 Frustration Hypothesis

Research methods used in social psychology fall under the following two categories:

(i) Experimental method: This is a formal systematic test of a fact or principle. It is the most powerful research tool available. It is carried out under strict conditions.

An experiment is a situation where cause and effect are tested/measured. Procedures involved in an experiment include the following:

- a. Directly varying a condition that you think might cause a change in the effect (behaviour).
- b. Create two comparable groups and these groups should be alike in all aspects except the condition that is being varied.
- c. Record whether the varying condition has any effect on the behaviour observed; for example, study to find out if hunger affects memory. Let us conduct an experiment to understand it better.

Experiment 1.1

Form two groups, as follows:

Group 1 is starved for a given length of time and then given a test of memory.

Group 2 is given a satisfactory meal and then given the same test of memory.

Group 1 is called the experimental group.

Group 2 is called the control group.

The experimental group has received the experimental or independent variable. This condition is intentionally varied.

A variable is any condition that can change and that might affect the outcome of an experiment.

The control group does not receive the experimental variable. A control group provides a point of reference for comparing the measures or scores with the experimental group. This comparison enables one to determine whether the experimental variable has had an effect or not.

There are three types of variables in an experiment involving cause and effect that are as follows:

- a. **Independent variable:** This is a condition that is altered or varied by the experimenter. It is under the control of the experimenter. The size, amount or value of the independent variable is set by the experimenter. Independent variables are thought to cause differences in behaviour.
- b. **Dependent variable:** This measures the results of the independent variable that has been introduced.
- c. **Extraneous variables:** These are conditions that exist in any experiment, that are not being manipulated or varied, and most researchers wish to prevent its presence from affecting the outcome of the experiment. Sometimes, these variables cannot be controlled because of the inherent nature of psychological research. To this extent, the outcome would contain some amount of contamination. This reduces the power of the conclusions drawn. This variance is attempted to be controlled by methodological procedures.

Figure 1.3 illustrates a simple psychological experiment.

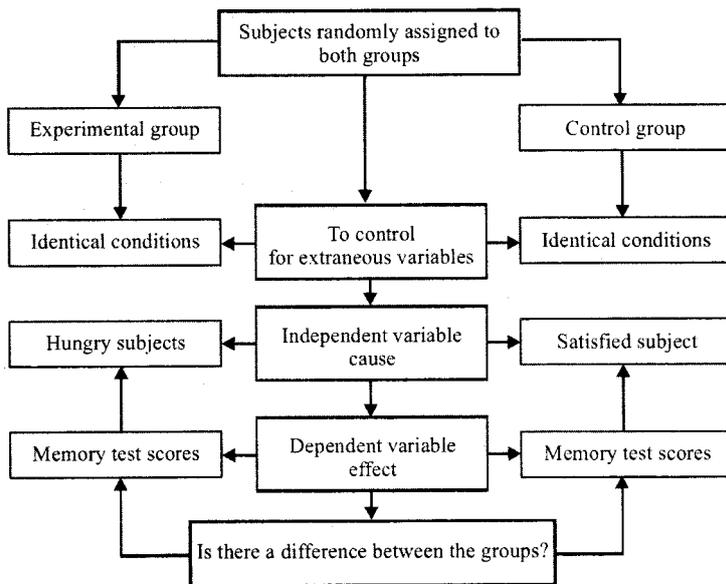


Fig. 1.3 A Simple Psychological Experiment

NOTES

NOTES

The decision whether or not the independent variable made a difference is subjected to statistical determination. If it is statistically significant, it means that the results obtained would occur very rarely by chance alone. To be statistically significant, a difference must be large enough so that it would occur by chance in less than five experiments out of 100. Further research findings become stronger if they can be duplicated or repeated.

(ii) **Correlational method:** This method seeks to examine the degree of relationship between two events or behaviour.

Let us consider the relationship between crime and poverty, or physical attractiveness and social popularity. Correlational studies can be carried out in a lab or in a natural setting.

To begin with, the factors of interest are measured. A statistical procedure is then applied to determine the nature and degree of correlation. The strength of a relationship is expressed as the coefficient of correlation. This is simply a number falling anywhere between +1.00 and -1.00. If the number is zero or close to zero, the association between the two measures is weak or non-existent. For example, the correlation between size of clothes and intelligence is zero. If the correlation is +1.00, then a perfect relationship is thought to exist. If the number is -1.00, then a perfect negative relationship is discovered.

A positive correlation means that increases in one measure are matched by increases in the other or a decrease in one corresponds with a decrease in the other. A negative relationship implies that increase in one measure corresponds to decrease in the other. They are further discussed as follows:

a. Positive correlation: In pre-adolescents, as height increases, weight gains are also seen.

b. Negative correlation: As the hours of television viewing increase each day, there is a lowering of grades as compared to those students who watch less TV (other things being constant or similar) (refer Figure 1.4).

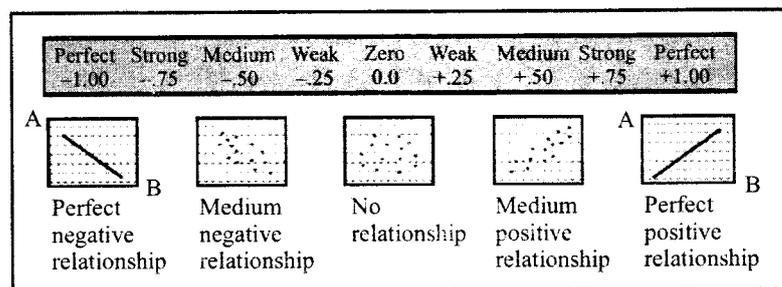


Fig. 1.4 Correlation Method

One must, however, be forewarned about using correlation statistics to arrive at spurious associations; for example, the amount of ice-cream eaten in America and the poverty levels in India. Perhaps, this could yield a positive correlation but it is surely absurd in terms of meaningfulness of the association.

The most significant advantage of the correlational method is in terms of its usefulness to study events in real-life settings. This is more so because several psychological experiments cannot be carried out in real life owing to practical and ethical constraints.

Causal connection and correlational connections are the two important techniques used in the study of psychology. Social psychology extends these methods into its realm as well, with great benefits.

NOTES

1.5.2 Other Methods of Study

- (i) **Questionnaire:** A paper-pencil test that consists of questions that reveal aspects of a person's thoughts and traits, to a limited extent.
- (ii) **Rating scale:** A list of personality traits or aspects of behaviour in a given situation that are rated.
- (iii) **Behavioural assessment:** This involves recording the frequency of the occurrence of various types of behaviour. It can be done by a single evaluator or by several persons, at the same time and then the tally of all evaluations, obtained.
- (iv) **Situational test:** Here, a real-life condition is simulated, so that the person's reactions can be directly observed and recorded, for example, anxiety before an impending interview or appearing before an audience to make a speech.
- (v) **Structured interview:** This is a prearranged series of planned questions aimed at understanding a given thought, feeling or behaviour.

The problem with all these instruments is by and large that of design. Another difficulty encountered is that of getting the subjects to cooperate and take the task seriously and answer genuinely. There are also the issues of giving socially acceptable responses.

Experimenter bias/effect

Often, when we are unwell and visit the doctor, we tend to feel a lot better after we walk out of the clinic even before the medication has had time to act on the body. This is the effect of the doctor's attention and the decision to take care of your health problem. Similarly, in psychological research also, the presence of an experimenter or the fact that a particular set of people have been selected to participate in a study, creates some special feelings in the subjects that their responses are not as true to what would have been registered, in their natural settings; for example, if one were to measure the effect of different types of music on the human system and one looked up to various monitors and instruments it would invariably alter the reactions. This is due to the following:

- (i) One is conscious of being evaluated.
- (ii) Subtly, one is aware of the possible kind of reactions that one is expected to have; for example, in sad music all systems lowered, in happy music all system raised.

All these are effects of the situations and measurement.

NOTES

Experimenter bias—Definition

Experimenters are human beings with various set prejudices and expectations. So, when they evaluate some of these may contaminate the findings, inadvertently. For example, teachers are told about the new students who are promoted from their earlier class, as to what their performances were in the various years. Even as these teachers carry out their own evaluations in the courses that they teach, some of the biases of what they had heard do come to influence their current evaluation. This implies that even the most careful and objective evaluations suffer from the earlier biases gathered from various sources.

This shows the importance of objectivity, fairness and dispassionate attitude towards any form of measurement or judgement as crucial for reliable outcomes.

Conclusion

Experimentation: S-R study

(Stimulus: Response)

Correlation: R-R study (Response – Response)

Methods are procedures for systematic enquiries: The choice of the method is to be determined by the purpose of the study, the nature of the theme to be investigated, the time constraints, availability of the subjects for the study and several other factors that are part of any research endeavour.

No single method may be complete in all aspects. Therefore, combining methods is recommended. For example, the experimental method can be used with the method of introspection. This would provide objective data as well as subjective experiences that are part of the feelings and thoughts while undergoing a particular phenomenon.

1.5.3 Scientific Research Method

The scientific research method involves the study of any phenomenon using logical methods. Here, the mind is trained in the process of logical thinking. This enables the systematic inter-linking of facts. So, experimental observations could lead to accurate conclusions. These can be compared to possible outcomes in a clear manner. Thus, observed facts get linked to concepts in a rigorous way. So, new relationships among variables can be established and inferences drawn and conclusions made.

Basic postulates of the scientific method are as follows:

- (i) It relies on empirical evidence.
- (ii) It is objective in its pursuit.
- (iii) It is interested in predictions.
- (iv) It is capable of being replicated.
- (v) It has theory building as the ultimate goal.

Knowing how research is done and carrying out systematic research needs the understanding of the research process.

The research process involves a sequence of closely related activities that is shown in Figure 1.5.

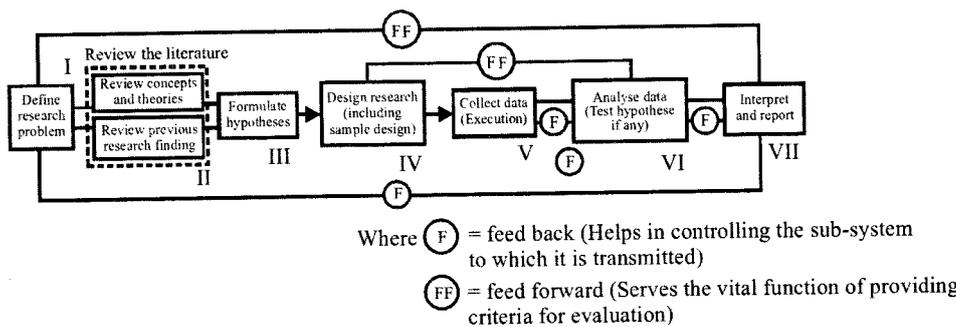


Fig. 1.5 Flow Chart of Research Process

NOTES

The steps involved in research are as follows:

- (i) **Formulating the research problem:** One relates to the problem or issue in hand; the other pertains to the relationship between variables — here the conceptual and theoretical background should be studied to identify the problem. Then the operational or analytical steps to be undertaken for studying the problem should be specified. Extensive survey of literature is suggested for this purpose. This should be followed by developing a working hypothesis required. The role of the hypothesis is to limit the area of research within a given band of study. This enables better focus. The hypothesis must be stated clearly and precisely. A specific hypothesis is the first step in the research process.
- (ii) **Designing the research:** The research design is the conceptual structure within which research is to be conducted. The design would provide for data collection, categorization and analysis of the information that is gathered in advance. The design can be experimental or non-experimental in nature. Designs have to be prepared keeping the following in mind:
 - a. The means for obtaining data
 - b. The skills available for research
 - c. The purpose of the study
 - d. The time available for the research
 - e. The cost factor involved
- (iii) **Determining the sample:** All inquiries involve a 'universe' or 'population'. When the entire population is included, it is called a census survey. But this is rarely possible and only a select few can be studied. This is technically known as a sample. Samples can be probability samples or non-probability samples. In a probability sample, each element has a known probability of being included in the sample. In a non-probability sample, this is not possible. Probability samples are based on simple random sampling. Systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster or area sampling are other forms of

NOTES

sampling. Various forms of non-probability samples are convenience sampling, judgement sampling and quota sampling.

Some of the important sample designs are as follows:

- a. **Deliberate or purposive sampling:** It is a type of convenience sampling.
- b. **Simple: or random sampling:** There is a chance that every element of the population is represented in the sample.
- c. **Systematic sampling:** Every tenth item or name is included in the sample.
- d. **Stratified sampling:** If the population is not homogenous then this procedure is useful in obtaining a representative sample. Here, the population is stratified into a number of non-overlapping sub-populations or strata and sample items are selected from each stratum. First, there is stratification and then random sampling is done. So, it is also called stratified random sampling.
- e. **Quota sampling:** Here, the quota from different strata is selected to form the sample. The size of the quota is generally proportionate to the size of the stratum in the population. Quota samples are largely judgement samples, rather than random samples.
- f. **Cluster or area sampling:** This involves grouping the population and then selecting the groups—clusters, rather than individual elements for inclusion in the sample. Example – the number of women employees in The BPO industry in a company is 15,000. The sample size is kept to 450. Then these 15,000 employees could be formed into 100 clusters of 150 in each. Five of these clusters can then be selected to be the random sample.

Similarly, area sampling is done using geographical regions.

- g. **Multi-stage sampling:** This is useful for large areas like a country or region. The first stage is to select a large primary area (a state) then districts, towns and finally some households. The technique of random sample is applied at all stages. This is known as multi-stage random sampling.

The sample design to be adopted must be decided by the nature of the inquiry and the other needs and constraints that exist in a context.

- (iv) **Collecting data:** Data can be of two types—primary and secondary data. Primary data is more robust as compared to secondary. But when primary data collection is not possible, then other data sources are used. Primary data is collected by:

- a. Observation
- b. Interview
- c. Telephone interview
- d. Mailed questionnaires
- e. Schedules—containing relevant questions

Any one of these methods can be used for obtaining data.

- (v) **Execution of the study:** If the study is carried out according to the predetermined lines of the design, sample etc., then the data collected would be dependable.
- (vi) **Analysis of data:** This can be done with the help of coding, tabulating and then sorting out the data suitably.
- (vii) **Statistical treatment:** This is the application of statistical procedures to the data, to determine whether the hypothesis should be rejected or accepted.
- (viii) **Generalizations and interpretations:** The conclusions and the ability to apply the findings, widely, complete the research process. List of charts, graphs, etc. could be included.
- (ix) **Report preparation:** A report of the research must be presented under the following heads.
- Introduction (the objective of the research or the hypothesis tested)
 - The methods/tools used
 - The sample size and the method of the sample selection
 - The conduction of the study (with the variables involved)
 - The statistics applied
 - The findings, conclusions and applications
 - Suggestions and limitations of the study
 - References

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. What is quantitative research based on?
5. What is the objective of the correlational method?
6. What does the scientific research method involve?

1.6 SUMMARY

- Social psychology is the study of social behaviour and the mental experience of people in social contexts.
- The emergence of social psychology was very gradual. So, no clear markers are identifiable.
- According to psychologist Gordon Allport, social psychology is a discipline that uses scientific methods 'to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings'.

NOTES

- An underlying assumption in the development of social psychology has been the belief that some aspects of human nature are the same in all cultures and across history.
- Understanding the causes of social behaviour forms the centrepiece of social psychology. This means identifying those factors that shape our feelings, thoughts and behaviour, in social situations.
- Knowledge is the bulwark of any discipline. Valid knowledge is obtained through scientific investigation. This implies that methods for obtaining knowledge have to be thorough and systematic.
- There are various types of research, like descriptive, analytical, applied, fundamental, quantitative, qualitative research, conceptual and empirical research.
- Time available for research, the environment in which research is carried out and other factors also have a bearing on the type of research that has to be carried out.
- Scientific research method involves the study of any phenomenon using logical methods.

1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Applied research:** Has an action orientation, the aim is to find a solution for an existing problem
- **Variable:** Any condition that can change and that might affect the outcome of an experiment

1.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Social psychology can be defined as the scientific study of the nature and causes of individual behaviour in a social situation.
2. Social psychology looks at a wide range of social topics, including group behaviour, social perception, leadership, non-verbal behaviour, conformity, aggression and prejudice. It is important to note that social psychology is not just about looking at social influences. Social perception and social interaction are also vital to understanding social behaviour.
3. The goal of social psychology is to understand cognition and behaviour as they naturally occur in a social context, but the very act of observing people can influence and alter their behaviour.
4. Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It relates to phenomena that are quantifiable.

5. Correlational method seeks to examine the degree of relationship between two events or behaviour.
6. The scientific research method involves the study of any phenomenon using logical methods. Here, the mind is trained in the process of logical thinking. This enables the systematic inter-linking of facts. So, experimental observations could lead to accurate conclusions.

NOTES

1.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the goal of social psychology?
2. Why is scientific method used in social psychology?
3. List some common objectives in social psychology.
4. What are the three types of variables in an experiment?
5. What are the important types of sample designs?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the goal of social psychology.
2. Explain the various types of research.
3. What are the categories of research methods? Give a brief note of each.
4. Describe the steps involved in the scientific research method.

1.10 FURTHER READING

Baron, R.A. and D. Byrne. 1999. *Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Feldman. R.S. 1985. *Social Psychology: Theories, Research and Application*. New Delhi: Tata Mcgraw Hill.

C.R., Kothari. 1990. *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: Wishwa Prakashan.

UNIT 2 SOCIAL PERCEPTION: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES AND OTHERS

NOTES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Perceiving Ourselves
 - 2.2.1 The Self-Concept
 - 2.2.2 Self-Esteem
 - 2.2.3 Self-Presentation
 - 2.2.4 Self-Expression
- 2.3 Perceiving Others
 - 2.3.1 Attribution: Understanding the Causes of Other's Behaviour
 - 2.3.2 Theories of Attribution
 - 2.3.3 Impression Formation and Impression Management
- 2.4 Social Cognition
 - 2.4.1 Heuristics
 - 2.4.2 Mental Shortcuts in Social Cognition and Basic Aspects of Social Thoughts
 - 2.4.3 Affect and Cognition: How Thoughts Shape Feelings and Feelings Shape Thoughts
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Key Terms
- 2.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.8 Questions and Exercises
- 2.9 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

People are an enigma. Often, we find it difficult to understand, what we say and do and do not do. Yet, since other persons are significant in our lives, it is important that we develop some understanding about others' motivations, thoughts, intentions, etc. Upon this understanding, we can base our interactions with others. The process of seeking such information is social perception.

In this unit, you will learn the process of perceiving ourselves and understand the notion of self-concept and the components of the self. You will also learn how to perceive others. You will also learn about social cognition and learn how to describe the mental shortcuts in social cognition. Finally, you will learn how thoughts shape feelings and feelings shape thoughts.

NOTES

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the process of perceiving ourselves
- Understand the notion of self-concept and the components of the self
- Perceive others
- Know about social cognition
- Describe the mental shortcuts in social cognition
- Understand how thoughts shape feelings and feelings shape thoughts

2.2 PERCEIVING OURSELVES

The self is one of the oldest and the most enduring concepts in psychology. Philosophers have always been interested in knowing the self. The self is a social construction formed on the basis of interaction with others. This concept of the self affects the way we relate to others, judge others, etc. because of the way we see ourselves. So the self is used as reference point for social interaction and perceiving others.

The self has multiple components. Yet, we all have an integrated view of ourselves. This is the core of every individual. It is the basis of social identity. The self helps us to evaluate our very being.

2.2.1 The Self-Concept

'Self-concept', also referred to as self-perspective or self-construction, is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of 'self' in relation to any number of characteristics, such as academics (and non-academics), gender roles and sexuality, racial identity, and many others. While closely related with self-concept clarity (which 'refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable'), it presupposes but is distinguishable from self-awareness, which is simply an individual's awareness of his self. It is also more general than self-esteem, which is a purely evaluative element of the self-concept.

Self is a highly complex, but unified image of an individual. The self is held together by a cognitive framework called the schema. It is a guide to how we process information about ourselves. It is a coherent unit of our affective and cognitive structures that gives meaning to our experiences.

Since the self is the core of every social being, all information that is significant for the self would tend to be better processed than any other type of data. Higgins and Bargh (1987) indicate that self-relevant information is more readily attended to, retained in memory better and also recalled more effectively. Such a process is

known as the self-reference effect. This effect has been established experimentally, as well.

Many selves

Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest that each person's self-concept is a working self-concept at any time. This is open to change as new experiences and new information come by. For example, we change our appearances, learn new skills, develop newer attitudes, etc. These result in a new self. Individuals themselves could consciously develop a new self, which the others might also acknowledge.

Time and experiences can lead to a newer self. Sometimes, traumatic experiences can also lead to such an alternation in the self; for example, the death of a close and significant person or some disastrous episodes in one's life.

Alternative selves can affect us in several ways that are as follows:

- (i) The image of our future self can act as a motivator to work hard, study, overcome bad habits, etc., because an ideal self exists before us.
- (ii) Often we see ourselves as we wish to be, while other people see us as we really are, at the present time. The attempt must be to bring the two as close as possible.
- (iii) There are individual differences among people in terms of how they view the future self. Some are optimists and see positive changes in the future; while the pessimists see little or no change or view the future in negative terms.

Individuals need to recognize that everyone has several possible selves and this is an accurate way to conceive of themselves.

2.2.2 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to one's attitudes about oneself. It is the evaluation we make of ourselves. It can be negative or positive. People with high self-esteem perceive themselves as good, competent, worthy etc.; while those with a low self-esteem see themselves as unworthy, incompetent, etc.

Self-concept is determined by significant others' opinions about us or the person concerned; for example, the views of parents, teachers, friends, etc. contribute to the way we see ourselves. Self-evaluations are also affected by the characteristics of others with whom we compare ourselves. Therefore, comparison with those who are worse off, (downward comparison) tends to make us feel better about ourselves, while the opposite could hold true with upward comparison.

Low self-esteem affects feelings and behaviour, negatively. It could lead to personal unhappiness and also interpersonal difficulties. Poor social skills could lead to loneliness and eventually to depression. Depression could further result in a tendency to devalue oneself.

NOTES

NOTES

Depression is not only the result of low self-esteem, but could also arise from variable self-esteem. This means even minor changes in life experiences can swing our self-esteem levels considerably. This occurs because self-worth is not based on stable sources.

Managing variable self-esteem

To begin with, it is important to elevate our own behaviour to match the ideals or goals that have been set. Alternatively, it is wise to lower our standards so that it meets with our own behaviour. For example, if we wish to excel in anything that is to be undertaken, the chances of success are inherently low. So setting reasonable levels of perfection may be a winning solution. This would help keep the self-esteem intact.

Self-esteem is to be viewed largely as a factor determined by one's experiences. Childhood experiences are important because these are the formative periods of self-esteem. Here, parental evaluation is crucial. Negative childhood experiences like parental divorce, chronic illnesses, death and other traumas have a telling effect in terms of how the self-esteem develops. Early experiences have long-lasting effects on self-esteem as compared to later-life experiences.

High self-esteem does act as a buffer against negative or threatening experiences. It is a form of protection for the ego state of the individual.

Self-monitoring behaviour and the self

Self-monitoring refers to the degree to which individuals regulate their behaviour, either on the basis of the demands of the external situation or in terms of their beliefs, attitudes and orientations. High self-monitoring people perhaps engage in skilful role playing as required by the situation. Politicians, actors, salespersons, etc., are all seen as displaying such capacities.

Self-monitoring can also be viewed as the result of an internal 'script' that people have in terms of what constitutes appropriate behaviour in a given situation (Schwalbe 1991). For example, many people are friendly and easy going with peers, but more reserved and quiet in the presence of seniors/elders. According to Schwalbe, there are two types of self-monitors—one, guided by the audience present, and the others who regulate their behaviour in terms of what is suitable in a particular situation, regardless of who the present members are.

Those individuals who fall in between these two extremes were found to be better adjusted.

Self-focus

Self-focus refers to the centrality of a person's sense of self. This has significance in the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of oneself. Self-focussing results in better self-insight. This leads to more attempts to reduce the discrepancies between actual behaviour and the self-concept. Self-focussing could also help in behaviour that is consistent across situations. It is important that self-focussing is not misunderstood as selfishness.

Conclusion

If the self is well differentiated, i.e., the self has several domains—for example, profession family, friends, hobbies, health, finances, etc.—it is likely that some areas are positive while others are not. In the event of any stress, a compartmentalized concept of the self is capable of weathering the harmful effects of the stress better. Here, the positive components of the self can be utilized to manage and overcome the stress effects.

2.2.3 Self-Presentation

As the existence of multiple selves have already been recognized, it is likely that people may choose to present themselves differently on different occasions. The self which is chosen to be presented at a given time is a form of self-presentation. Barry R. Schlenker (1980) explained self-presentation as a process when an individual projects some aspects of the self to the exclusion of others. According to him, it is a form of impression management and is defined as ‘the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions.’

Theories of self-presentation

The theories of self-presentation are known as symbolic interactionism and are discussed as follows:

- (i) Charles Horton Cooley (1902/1922) has emphasized that participants in a social interaction take the role of others and see themselves as others see them. This process helps them to know how they appear to others. This understanding permits them to guide their social behaviour in the direction that they feel is most desirable.
- (ii) Erving Goffman (1967) considers this to be like a theatre performance where each person acts out a ‘line’, i.e., a set of carefully chosen verbal and non-verbal acts that express an individual’s self. So, effective social interaction requires that people be able to regulate their self-presentation such that others perceive and evaluate it appropriately.
- (iii) Alexander and Knight (1971) opine that self-presentation is a fundamental fact of social interaction. They suggest that for every social setting there is a pattern of social behaviour that conveys a particular identity that is best suited to that setting. This behavioural pattern is described as situated identity. People try to create the most foreword situated identities for themselves in their social encounters; for example, a businessman would try to present a professional identity at a business meeting, a more casual identity in the office and an informal identity during an office party event. A situated identity is tied to a situation while a role is related to behaviour that is appropriate. The image projected in a specified situation is critical in a situated identity while a suitable behaviour is stressed in a role.

NOTES

NOTES

Each of these three theories emphasize the fact that other people form impressions about us and according to these impressions steer their interactions towards us. All these theories present strategies used by people to manage and control the images they present to others.

Reasons behind self-presentations

There are a number of reasons for the occurrence of self-presentation; some of them are as follows:

- (i) To be liked by others.
- (ii) To gain social approval.
- (iii) Social approval can have other gains also. It can lead to more power, prestige, status, money, friendship, etc., all of which are valued by most people.
- (iv) Impression management, which allows for a sense of control over a given situation. This has a distinct advantage, at all times.

These are powerful motivations for regulating self-presentation.

Self-presentation tactics

Apart from the general images that people seem to project, a variety of specific tactics are also used by people in presenting themselves to others. Jones and Pittman (1982) have identified five clear, well-utilized strategies; they are (i) ingratiation, (ii) intimidation, (iii) self-promotion, (iv) exemplification, and (v) supplication.

These tactics are examined in detail as follows:

- (i) **Ingratiation:** The main goal of this tactic is to be seen as likable. There are a number of ways in which this is achieved; for example, by complementing or flattering we can gain the goodwill of others. Another tactic is to conform to the opinions and behaviour of others. This is a kind of pretence of agreeing. To applaud and concur with what the other does is sure to win affection for the person pretending. This would fail if the pretence or the motivation for agreeing is seen through.
- (ii) **Intimidation:** In this tactic, fear is aroused as a way of gaining control over a situation; for example, robbers, rapists, etc. Parents also use threat to get children to conform or obey. Threats are negative and could lead to bitterness and escape on the part of the weaker partner in any relationship.
- (iii) **Self-promotion:** This involves making claims about one's competency in an area. As long as this quality is true, there is no danger of any unfavourable exposure.
- (iv) **Exemplification:** This is a tactic aimed at establishing a person's integrity and moral worthiness; for example, 'I will stay and finish the work, even if we are in a hurry to go.' The purpose is to create some guilt in the other

person and project oneself as a martyr and thereby influence the other and create the desired impression.

- (v) **Supplication:** In this case, a person who wishes to gain some power or privilege announces openly his or her weakness. While the exemplifier is seeking respect, the supplicant is gaining sympathy. This strategy is used only if all other attempts fail or are likely to fail. Presenting an image of helplessness is the key.

These tactics are used on different occasions, depending on the situation and need. Some people may specialize in the use of one tactic relative to others. All tactics have the same goal of creating the desired impression in order to obtain the desired response.

2.2.4 Self-Expression

Self-expression is the expression of our personality through the medium of speech or art. It is also a means of expressing our feelings and thoughts. Ideas have to be expressed so that others can understand them. Self-expression is a unique manifestation of our individuality. It is not as natural as is thought to be. For accurate expression of oneself, one has to strive for it. Education could involve the improvement of self-expression. This applies to the conceptualization and language of the expression.

Some people express through writing, others through speech, still others through pictures and through body language. Self-expression is a vibrant form involving varying moments and moods. However, self-expression can be very undemonstrative at times; a mother comforting her child quietly, a lover signalling warmth and passion from a mere glance, an approving handshake from a colleague, etc. All these indicate some forms of connections between people. It is often only meant for the two people involved.

For business people, self-expression implies being an entrepreneur or creating profit; for a scholar it would involve writing an erudite piece after acquiring knowledge; for creative people self-expression involves writing a piece of poetry, creating music, singing, dancing, acting and other forms of artistic expressions. We need to recognize that some people find it easier to build a house, than paint a picture. Still others wish to have an audience for expressing their thoughts.

Sports people express themselves through their chosen activity. Excellence involves going to the top in their sport. Their body and its movements are the means of self-expression. The stamina, determination and skills represent their own self and its manifestation.

Self-expression is also seen in how people live their lives. The principles that are integral to their very existence are showcased in their lifestyle. For some it is service to humanity (Mother Theresa), for others it is peace for many (Dalai Lama), for Mahatma Gandhi it was liberation of the country, it is equal distribution of wealth for the communists, it is liberty for the Americans, for many in Europe

NOTES

NOTES

the self is expressed in terms of social tolerance, for the ordinary householder it may be the satisfaction of leading a good life and raising a happy family.

In management, some people are problem solvers, while others are people leaders. Scientists express themselves through discoveries and innovations. Adventurers find self-expression in explorations. Environmentalists express themselves through acts of conservation and preservation. Those with wanderlust, express themselves through travelling. The chef finds joy in culinary expressions, children express themselves through make-believe play and free body movements. All these are self-expression of one's values

The ultimate in self-expression is flexibility and newness. Such a message would be well delivered, easily understood and be very appealing; such expressions are eternal.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define self-concept.
2. What is self?
3. Define self-presentation according to Schlenker.
4. What is situated identity?
5. What are the five well-utilized strategies identified by Jones and Pittman?

2.3 PERCEIVING OTHERS

We do not often stop to ask ourselves about the opinions we form about other people, about how and why we form them, nor about their correctness. We choose our friends without knowing why, trust some people and not others, but cannot say why. Paradoxically, the opposite happens too. We form opinions about others, assert them dogmatically, and allow them to determine our whole attitude towards another. How often do we form an instant dislike? Or insist, in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, that someone is entirely trustworthy? Forming opinions about other people can be a profession; in as short a span of time as five minutes, an interviewer decides on a person's suitability for employment, promotion or admission to higher education, and thereby affects that person's life.

2.3.1 Attribution: Understanding the Causes of Other's Behaviour

Knowing other people's moods and thoughts has many advantages. This is only the first step in the process of knowing others. The process by which we seek information to know others is called attribution. It helps us to understand the causes behind others' behaviour as well as our own, at times. Attribution has been extensively studied in social psychology by many researchers.

NOTES

Attribution is a concept in social psychology referring to how we as individuals explain causes of events, other's behaviour, and our own behaviour. Fritz Heider argued that, as an active perceiver of the events, an average person continuously or spontaneously makes casual inferences on why the events occur. Eventually, these inferences become beliefs or expectations that allow the person to predict and understand the events that they observe and experience. As such, attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how these interpretations relate to their subsequent behaviour.

The two main types of attributions are internal and external attributions. When an internal attribution is made, the cause of the given behaviour is assigned to the individual's personality, attitudes, character or disposition. When an external attribution is made, the cause of the given behaviour is assigned to the situation in which the behaviour was seen (that the individual producing the behaviour did so because of the surrounding environment or the social situation). These two types of attribution lead to very different perceptions of the individual engaging in a behaviour (personal is internal and situational is external).

Attributions are critical to management because perceived causes of behaviour may influence managers' and employees' judgements and actions. For instance, managers must often observe employee performance and make related judgements. If a manager attributes an employee's poor performance to a lack of effort, then the outcome is likely to be negative for that employee; he or she may receive a poor performance appraisal rating or even be terminated from the job. Conversely, if a manager perceives that an employee's poor performance is due to a lack of skill, the manager may assign the employee to further training or provide more instruction or coaching. Making an inaccurate judgement about the causes of poor performance can have negative repercussions for the organization.

Attributions also may influence employee motivation. Employees who perceive the cause of their success to be outside of their control may be reluctant to attempt new tasks and may lose motivation to perform well in the workplace. Conversely, employees who attribute their success to themselves are more likely to have high motivation for work. Thus, understanding attributions that people make can have a strong effect on both employee performance and managerial effectiveness.

Attribution process and the causes of behaviour

Attribution is considered to be a three-stage process. First, the behaviour of an individual must be observed. Second, the perceiver must determine that the behaviour they have observed is deliberate. That is, the person being observed is believed to have behaved intentionally. Finally, the observer attributes the observed behaviour to either internal or external causes. Internal causes are attributed to the person being observed, while external causes are attributed to outside factors. The two internal attributions one can make are that a person's ability or a person's effort determined the outcome. Task difficulty and luck are the external causes of behaviour. When perceiving behaviour, an observer will make a judgement as to

NOTES

which of these factors is the cause of behaviour. However, when making a determination between internal and external causes of behaviour, the perceiver must examine the elements of consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus.

Consistency describes whether the person being observed behaves the same way when faced with the same set of circumstances. If the person being observed acts the same way in the same type of situation, consistency is high; if he act differently each time, then consistency is low. Distinctiveness is whether the observed person acts the same way in different types of situations. If the person being observed exhibits the same behaviour in a variety of contexts, then distinctiveness is low; if they have different behaviour depending on the context, then distinctiveness is high. Finally, consensus is the degree to which other people, if in the same situation, would behave similarly to the person being observed. If the observer sees others acting the same way that the person being perceived acts, then consensus is high. However, if others behave differently in the type of situation, then consensus is low. Consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus are evaluated when observing behaviour, and then a judgement about an internal versus external cause of behaviour is made. When consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus are all high, the perceiver concludes that there is an external cause of behaviour. When consistency is high, distinctiveness is low, and consensus is low, the perceiver will attribute the cause of behaviour to internal factors.

2.3.2 Theories of Attribution

Attribution theory is intended to help us understand the causes of human behaviour, be it our own or someone else's. The basis of attribution theory is that we want to know the reasons for the actions that we and others take; we want to attribute causes to behaviours we see rather than assuming that these behaviours are random. This allows us to assume some feeling of control over our own behaviours and over situations. Psychologist Fritz Heider (1896–1988) first developed attribution theory in his 1958 book *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. Heider proposed that what people perceived and believed about what they saw dictated how they would act, even if their beliefs about what they perceived were invalid.

Knowing others is useful in several ways. It helps us determine our interactions towards others. Knowing about the causes behind other person's behaviour is the key to regulate our behaviour in relation to others; and attribution is one such process that relates information about others.

The importance of other people in our lives makes us want to create the best possible impression in others' minds. This has led to research in the field of how impressions are formed and then the attempts are made to know how impressions can be managed to obtain the most favourable outcomes.

Attribution is our attempt to understand the causes behind others' behaviour on specific occasions. The mechanism underlying attribution as has been studied by E.E. Jones and K.E. Davis (1965) and H H. Kelley (1972).

NOTES

Jones and Davis (1965) called their theory 'The Theory of Correspondent Inference'. This theory examines how we use information about others' behaviour as a basis for inferring that they possess various characteristics or traits. This theory seeks to determine an individual's lasting disposition from his/her overt actions.

Overt actions to determine specific traits

Not every action is a valid predictor of a person's stable traits. There are conditions that provide a valuable link to a person's long-lasting disposition. According to the theorists, behaviours that reflect a person's inherent traits are those that occur by one's free choice, that yield distinct outcomes (not produced by others) and that are low in social desirability.

This theory provides a useful framework for knowing how we utilize the behaviour of others, to understand some key traits processed by them. When attributions about stable traits existing in a person are made from overt behaviours; Jones and Davis argue that our conscious attentional resources get focussed on certain behaviours leaving us with limited cognitive resources to observe other details of the behaviour. This brings up the usefulness of the attributions.

Gilbert, Pelham and Krull (1988) studied how we infer other's traits from overt behaviours. They identified three parts—categorization, characterization, and correction.

- **Categorization:** It deals in what the behaviour is about.
- **Characterization:** It decides what traits a person possesses.
- **Correction:** It inferences about the situation in which the behaviour has taken place.

The researchers conclude that when we are busy; we tend to make mistakes about our attributions. However, with practice corrections are made and the attributions improve. Kelley's theory of causal attributions proposes that in order to understand the 'why' about other person's behaviour, three major dimensions are focussed upon that are as follows:

- (i) **Consensus:** The extent to which other people react similarly to the same event.
- (ii) **Consistency:** The extent to which the person being observed reacts to the same event in a nearly similar manner, on most occasions.
- (iii) **Distinctiveness:** The extent to which a person reacts in the same manner to other stimuli and events.

Kelley's theory suggests that attributions are made on the basis of internal and external causes. When behaviour is determined by internal causes, consensus and distinctiveness are low, but consistency is high. In contrast when external causes determine the overt behaviour, consensus, consistency and distinctiveness, are all high. Behaviour is attributed to a combination of these factors when consensus is low, but consistency and distinctiveness are high (refer Figure 2.1).

NOTES

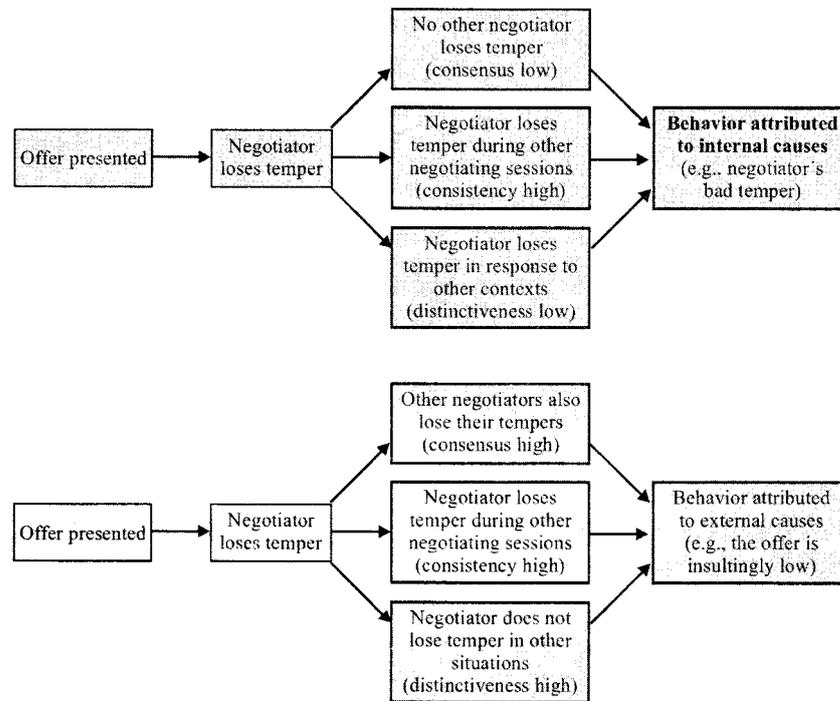


Fig. 2.1 Kelley's Theory of Casual Attributions: Some Concrete Examples

Kelley's theory in use with a concrete example shows how internal and external causes are attributed to the behaviour of losing one's temper during a business negotiation. This appears to be a reasonably good description of the success of the attribution process. Another attribution principle is the augmenting and discounting principle. For example, a mother shouts angrily at a child.

One possible attribution is that the mother has a bad temper and is a poor parent. Then, we learnt that the child was screamed at because he ran out onto a heavy traffic street. So, we realize there are two possible causes for the mother's behaviour and temper, because the child's action is dangerous. This is known as the discounting principle. There is a reduction in the attribution made about the mother, because another potential danger as a cause also exists.

A second scene is when the mother yells at the child when a grandparent is present. The presence of the grandparent is expected to soften the screaming at the child. It is expected that the child would be spoken to calmly and reasonably. Here, the attribution of scolding is attributed to the augmenting principle which states that when the inhibition factor (grandmother) and the facilitating factor (angry outburst from the mother) are both present, the facilitating factor gets to dominate. So, the attribution is made about the foul temper of the mother.

These two principles need to be taken into account while carrying out attributions, especially in situations where information about consistency and distinctiveness is found wanting.

Attribution biases

Attribution is not to be viewed as a very rational process following orderly cognitive steps. Several types of biases can creep into this process. Types of errors that can harm the attribution processes are as follows:

- (i) Overestimating the role of dispositional factors
- (ii) Actor–observer effect
- (iii) Self-serving bias

NOTES

(i) Overestimating the role of dispositional factors: This was suggested by Gilbert and Jones (1986). Let us take an example; a person comes late to a meeting. His hair is in a mess and he drops some important papers and as he is rushing, he knocks over a table and later spills coffee on his clothes, while drinking. The ready attribution made would be of a clumsy, disorganized person. However, it is possible that he was late because of some traffic holdup, dropped his papers because the floor was slippery and dropped the tray because the cup was wobbly. These missing potential causes can be regarded as a fundamental attribution error caused by a strong tendency to overestimate dispositional factors. Therefore in the mentioned example, the internal factors got more attention than the external ones, leading to the attribution error. Thus, the neglect of situational factors and greater importance that was given to internal/dispositional factors in trying to understand a given behaviour has to be watched out for.

(ii) Actor–observer effect: This is another type of attribution error (Jones and Nisbett, 1971). We generally tend to attribute our own behaviour to external factors, but we tend to see the behaviour of other people as caused by internal factors. This occurs because we are aware of the situational factors affecting our reactions, but as observers we are less aware of these factors when we see the actions of others. This means our role as an actor is different from our role as an observer. Both these positions lead to attribution errors.

(iii) Self-serving bias: This is the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to internal causes and negative outcomes to external causes, leading to errors in attribution. For example, if a student does well in the exam, means that he/she is bright. However, when a student does poorly in an exam, the teacher was no good, the questions were out of syllabus, or the marking was strict.

Reasons for attribution biases

Two explanations are given for the occurrence of such tilts—cognitive and motivational.

Cognitive model indicates that self-serving bias stems from the way we process social information (L. Ross, 1977). There is a need to protect our ego, so when we succeed, outcomes are attributed to internal causes and when we fail they are attributed to external causes. The need to look good in the eyes of others

NOTES

and manage our self-esteem is the motivational explanation for the presence of self-serving bias. Failure is attributed to external causes in those conditions which are beyond our control. Luck is an external factor used in attributions of failure by most people. Self-serving bias protects and preserves the self-esteem. Attributions help in understanding, but they have to be carried out with care.

2.3.3 Impression Formation and Impression Management

It is generally believed that first impressions are very important. In many situations (like an interview) one does not get to change the impression at all. Therefore, a lot of importance is given to creating a good impression. Many researches have been carried out to analyse the accuracy of first impressions. S.E. Asch (1946) in a classic study got his subjects to write down their impressions of a hypothetical person with the following description:

- Person A: Intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn and envious
- Person B: Envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious and intelligent

These two lists are identical in content, but the order is reversed. In the first list, positive traits are followed by negative ones; while in the second it is negative followed by the positive ones. The impressions formed of the first person will be positive, while that of the second will be negative. Asch called this the effect of primacy.

The first adjective presented sets the tone for the impression in either case. So, the first data, available makes us pay less attention to details that follow. This tendency to minimize cognitive work and form impressions is a powerful one in the way we process social information.

N.H. Anderson (1981) suggests that we combine information and then come up with a weighted average to form an impression. The weightage is placed on the following:

- (i) The source of the information (from a trustworthy source or otherwise).
- (ii) The information being positive or negative (there is a tendency to give more weight to negative information, because it is distinctive).
- (iii) The extent to which the description is unusual or atypical (the more unusual, the greater the weight).
- (iv) We assign greater weight to information received first as compared to later information (Asch effect of primacy).

Impression formation does not take place in a cognitive vacuum. Our previous experiences provide a template for our current impression formation. We also tend to focus on person types because it is an easy cognitive process at work. So we categorize people very early and well before we have had the necessary inputs. Hence, we combine information to arrive at our judgement of people. Impression formation occurs long before all the information is available. This has to be recognized by the presenter as well as the evaluator.

Impression management

Impression management is the art of creating a good impression; it is a very strong desire. We all try to manage how one appears before others. This effort is called impression management. A good impression has several advantages in social life. Impression management tactics can be used for enhancing our image.

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What are the two main types of attributions?
7. What does it indicate when consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus are all high?
8. What are the three dimensions that Kelley's theory of causal attributions propose?
9. What is impression management?

2.4 SOCIAL COGNITION

All our lives we are interested in knowing about people and the world around us. We use social information available to judge others and evaluate situations. There are feelings that develop as a result of these experiences. The use of such information to understand others and the social world that exists around us is social cognition.

People use mental shortcuts to quickly understand people and situations. Like all shortcuts, they have their benefits as well as limitations. Other forms of biases may also enter and influence our judgements. Emotions too play a role in our understanding. All these constitute the study of social cognition.

2.4.1 Heuristics

Just like in attribution, in social cognition also people use the least amount of cognitive effort in arriving at conclusions about people and situations (S.T. Fiske and S.E. Taylor, 1991). Only on rare occasions are people willing to spend extra time and effort in coming to an understanding of the social world.

Heuristics refers to experience-based techniques for problem solving, learning and discovery. Heuristics methods are used to speed up the process of finding a good enough solution, where an exhaustive search is impractical. Examples of this method include using a 'rule of thumb', an educated guess, an intuitive judgement, or common sense.

Heuristics are simple, efficient rules, hard-coded by evolutionary processes or learned, which have been proposed to explain how people make decisions, come to judgements, and solve problems, typically when facing complex problems or incomplete information. These rules work well under most circumstances, but in certain cases lead to systematic errors or cognitive biases.

2.4.2 Mental Shortcuts in Social Cognition and Basic Aspects of Social Thoughts

NOTES

Strategies are used to reduce effort and decrease the extent of information overload, yet there exists a fair degree of accuracy in the judgements. Heuristics is one such well researched and understood mental shortcuts. It is aimed at providing single decision-making rules and drawing easy and fast conclusions. Two mechanisms that are at work in everyday living are representativeness and availability.

- (i) **Representativeness:** Let us take an example of a neighbour who has a house full of books, is orderly and neat, is reserved and wears conservative clothes. From this limited available information we want to guess her profession. Here, we determine the profession by using the heuristics of representativeness. We compare her to people we know who are similar in terms of these characteristics and then try to fit her into their category. For example, she could be a school librarian or a college professor. In making such a judgement, we are using the simple rule that the more typically she resembles a member of a given group; the more likely it is that she belongs to that group.

The accuracy of such a judgement is not always reliable, because there are people who display traits, but do not belong to the group, that is typical. Relying completely on the representativeness heuristics has the danger of people overlooking other types of information. The error arising from this tendency is known as base-rate fallacy. Here, we tend to ignore useful base-rate information; this refers to the frequency with which some events or characteristics occur in the general population.

- (ii) **Availability:** Availability means what comes to mind first. Here, judgements are made on the basis of easy-to-remember rule. The easier ones are recalled more readily and are used for knowing the social world. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1973) studied this heuristics process and concluded that the availability heuristics does operate through our subjective feelings that come to mind when dealing with social information. The ease of recall is the basis of judging. The availability shortcut for understanding people and things around us has other implications that is discussed in the following sections.

- **False-consensus effect:** We all have certain details that readily come to our mind; we have a tendency to believe that others also must be thinking the same. For example, if we believe that abortion is wrong as it involves terminating a life; the moral factor would come readily to mind when the issue of abortion is raised. The availability heuristics believes that others also have similar views. This tendency is known as the false-consensus effect. Here, more people than perhaps exist are seen as agreeing with one's point of view.

NOTES

This false consensus arises because we wish to believe that others are also in agreement and it is easier to notice and remember those people who have a similar position as our own. This is facilitated by the availability shortcut. Further, we also associate with those people who share our views. Thus, we are more exposed to people who think like us, as we tend to befriend those people who are somewhat like us. This also results in a higher degree of availability for agreement and further contributes to the false consensus effect.

The effect is prevalent most of the time, but it does fail when some people are motivated to perceive themselves as unique and therefore wish to stand out, disregarding the consensus factor.

- **Priming:** Often, when we read about description of diseases, we start to identify some of the symptoms in us as well. Reading a horror story at night when alone could make us believe and see certain frightening things around us. These are instances of the effect of priming. Certain stimuli heighten the availability of certain information that is readily brought to mind. Similarly, traits that are used for describing a person are used as primes for generating impressions about them, even if they are fictitious characters. Priming is a social fact and is based on the availability heuristics.

2.4.2.1 Basic aspects of social thoughts

Our social thinking is far from accurate. There are tilts, tendencies and potential errors, inherent in it.

- **Tilts, tendencies and potential errors**

In trying to understand the people and situations around us, we tend to pay greater attention to the unexpected or inconsistent information that is available. Since we pay more attention to unusual information, the chances are that such information would enter long-term memory and thereafter influence our social judgements later (S.T. Fiske and S.L. Neuberg, 1990). Studies by J.L. Hilton, J.G. Klein and W. Von Hippel (1991) showed that subjects recall inconsistent information more accurately than consistent information. However, there are occasion when inconsistent information is perceived and recalled more readily; but does not always influence judgements. For example, Ravana in Hindu mythology is personified as evil, but is also portrayed as a scholar and a caring brother. The latter information fails to alter the judgement of Ravana as a demon.

- **Noticing the negative**

This is viewed as an automatic vigilance phenomenon. This has survival orientation. By paying attention to the negative events around us, we become alerted to the potential dangers surrounding us. Since the attention is focussed on the negative, overlooking their positive information is a real possibility. This is indeed unfortunate. This tendency comes into play in our social evaluations also; for example, when a

NOTES

person who is generally appreciative and positive utters one critical remark, his criticism is disproportionately remembered, while the other several positives are largely forgotten.

Since we are extra-sensitive to negative inputs, any such information does influence social judgements. This compels us to make good first impressions, as a way of ensuring a favourable evaluation.

- **Motivated scepticism**

This is the tendency to be sceptical about information that is inconsistent with our preferences or views. Since we have to decide; we tend to believe data that agrees with our positions and quietly reject those that are in disagreement. For example, belief in astrological predictions, teacher evaluations, populist ideologies, etc., are all living examples of this phenomenon at work.

P.H. Ditto and D.F. Lopez (1992) carried out a study to show that when information that is required to conclude about a hitherto disliked person is inconclusive, the inconsistent evidence is ignored and a negative evaluation is made. Cognitive filters work to shut out inconsistent information.

Several of our social judgements based on caste, region, language, religion and other demagogic and ethnic factors clearly show the operation of this bias. So, inconsistent information is discarded and the cognition made consistent, by enabling one to fit it with one's preferences and orientations. Thus it can be concluded that heuristics, automatic vigilance and motivated scepticism are all attempts of social cognition with the minimum cognitive effort, to gain understanding of the social world, around us.

2.4.3 Affect and Cognition: How Thoughts Shape Feelings and Feelings Shape Thoughts

It is interesting to study how thoughts shape feeling and how feelings shape thinking. If we had a bad day at work, we tend to be irritated and annoyed with even small things at home like a child refusing to eat food, etc. This is because we feel angry all over again at the thought of what happened earlier. These thoughts influence our current emotional states.

What we have experienced and what others have said or done seem to trigger emotional reactions that are fairly intense in nature. The reverse also holds true.

2.4.3.1 The impact of emotions on different aspects of our social thoughts

The nature of emotions

Feelings are a part of living. There are three theories of emotions known to psychology. These three theories are discussed as follows:

- (i) **Cannon-Bard Theory:** In Cannon-Bard Theory, the view is that when emotions are aroused, we experience both the physiological arousals that accompany it as well the subjective experiences associated with the emotion.

These emotions we label as joy, anger, sorrow, etc. This is the common-sense as well as concurrent notion of emotions.

(ii) James-Lange Theory: This theory proposes that our subjective emotional experiences are the outcome of our almost automatic physiological reactions to various happenings. For example, we experience anger or fear because our heart races, our head pounds, we break into a sweat and the face colour changes to red. Another example could be the feeling of sadness. when a loved one departs, we start crying and then we notice our experience that we are feeling sad. This is the sequence, according to this theory.

(iii) Schachter's Two-Factor Theory: According to this theory, when there is a physiological arousal we search for the causes of these feelings. This leads us to identify the label that we put on our emotional experiences. So, if we are excited by the presence of a person we are interested in, we label it as attraction or love. Then there is the label 'fear' attached to something that is dreadful, and so on.

So, we perceive an emotion and then look for external cues to understand the feelings. Here, both cognitive and situational factors play a role in our subjective emotional experiences.

There is the facial-feedback hypothesis that suggests we can produce or suppress our experiences of emotion. When we smile, we feel happy; if we are grouchy, we feel sad and so on even while imagining positive or negative events. Controlling the facial muscles can enhance or curb the accompanying emotions. Actors frequently change their emotions by controlling their facial muscles. This is why people in mourning are told to go out, take a holiday, be with friends, etc., as a change of scene can cause different physical and physiological activities and these in turn can alter the feelings.

Robert Zajonc and his colleagues (1989) found evidence to show that the face and brain are linked. Facial expressions do change the blood supply to the brain and thereby alter the temperature and thereafter the neurochemical events in the brain. This also explains the universality of facial expressions and emotions.

Affect and cognition

When we are happy, things around us seem good; while in a state of unhappiness, everything seems difficult and bad. When the stimuli are vague, then the emotional states have a clear bearing on our evaluations. R.A. Baron (1987) A.M. Isen (1987) found that the existing mood makes it easier to remember information that is consistent with it, rather than information that is inconsistent with it.

Positive and negative events also influence the way any information is organized in our memory. Positive events include a wider range of information within the memory categories and also provide unusual associations to words and objects as compared to negative events. For instance, when we get our results of the board examination, we remember what we were doing, what clothes we wore,

NOTES

2.5 SUMMARY

- The self is one of the oldest and the most enduring concepts in psychology. Philosophers have always been interested in knowing the self. The self is a social construction formed on the basis of interaction with others.
- ‘Self-concept’, also referred to as self-perspective or self-construction, is a multidimensional construct that refers to an individual’s perception of ‘self’ in relation to any number of characteristics, such as academics (and non-academics), gender roles and sexuality, racial identity, and many others.
- Markus and Nurius suggest that each person’s self-concept is a working self-concept at any time.
- Self-esteem refers to one’s attitudes about oneself. It is the evaluation we make of ourselves. It can be negative or positive.
- Self-esteem is to be viewed largely as a factor determined by one’s experiences.
- Self-focus refers to the centrality of a person’s sense of self. This has significance in the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of oneself.
- As the existence of multiple selves have already been recognized, it is likely that people may choose to present themselves differently on different occasions.
- Jones and Pittman have identified five clear, well-utilized strategies; they are (i) ingratiation, (ii) intimidation, (iii) self-promotion, (iv) exemplification, and (v) supplication.
- Self-expression is the expression of our personality through the medium of speech or art.
- The process by which we seek information to know others is called attribution. It helps us to understand the causes behind other’s behaviour as well as our own, at times.
- Consistency describes whether the person being observed behaves the same way when faced with the same set of circumstances.
- Attribution theory is intended to help us understand the causes of human behaviour, be it our own or someone else’s.
- Attribution is not to be viewed as a very rational process following orderly cognitive steps.
- Cognitive model indicates that self-serving bias stems from the way we process social information.
- The need to look good in the eyes of others and manage our self-esteem is the motivational explanation for the presence of self-serving bias.
- N.H. Anderson suggests that we combine information and then come up with a weighted average to form an impression.

NOTES

NOTES

- Impression formation does not take place in a cognitive vacuum. Our previous experiences provide a template for our current impression formation.
- The use of social information available to understand others and the social world that exists around us is social cognition.
- Like in attribution, in social cognition also people use the least amount of cognitive effort in arriving at conclusions about people and situations.
- Heuristics refers to experience-based techniques for problem solving, learning and discovery.
- In trying to understand the people and situations around us, we tend to pay greater attention to the unexpected or inconsistent information that is available.
- Motivated scepticism is the tendency to be sceptical about information that is inconsistent with our preferences or views.
- It is important to study how thoughts shape feeling and how feelings shape thinking.
- The facial-feedback hypothesis suggests we can produce or suppress our experiences of emotion by controlling our facial muscles.
- Positive and negative events also influence the way any information is organized in our memory.
- The theory of Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer suggests that our bodily reactions are often unclear to us. So, we look for external cues to identify our emotional states and recognize them, appropriately.

2.6 KEY TERMS

- **Attribution:** Our attempt to understand the causes behind others' behaviour on specific occasions
- **Self-esteem:** Refers to one's attitudes about oneself, can also be called as self-evaluation
- **Self-focus:** Refers to the centrality of a person's sense of self
- **Self-expression:** Refers to the expression of our personality through the medium of speech or art
- **Heuristics:** Refers to experience-based techniques for problem solving, learning, and discovery

2.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. 'Self-concept' is a multidimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of 'self' in relation to any number of characteristics, such as academics (and non-academics), gender roles and sexuality, racial identity, and many others.

2. Self is a highly complex, but unified image of an individual.
3. Barry R. Schlenker (1980) explained self-presentation as a process when one projects some aspects of the self to the exclusion of others.
4. Alexander and Knightopine that self-presentation is a fundamental fact of social interaction. They suggest that for every social setting there is a pattern of social behaviour that conveys a particular identity that is best suited to that setting. This behavioural pattern is described as situated identity.
5. The five well-utilized strategies identified by Jones and Pittman are (i) ingratiation, (ii) intimidation, (iii) self-promotion, (iv) exemplification, and (v) supplication.
6. Internal and external attributions are the two main types of attributions.
7. When consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus are all high, the perceiver concludes that there is an external cause of behaviour.
8. Kelley's theory of causal attributions proposes that in order to understand the 'why' about other person's behaviour, three major dimensions are focussed upon that are consensus, consistency and distinctiveness.
9. Impression management is the art of creating a good impression.
10. Heuristics is a mental shortcut to quickly understand people. It requires least effort.
11. Representativeness and availability are the mechanisms that are at work in everyday living in heuristics.
12. The three theories of emotions known to psychology are Cannon-Bard Theory, James-Lange Theory and Schachter's Two-Factor Theory.
13. The facial-feedback hypothesis suggests we can produce or suppress our experiences of emotion.

NOTES

2.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define self-reference effect.
2. How do newer selves emerge?
3. How do high and low self-esteem affect a person?
4. What is self-monitoring behaviour?
5. What is the difference between a situated identity and a role?
6. List the various reasons behind self-presentation.
7. What is attribution? What affects can it have on an organization?
8. What do you understand by primacy?

9. According to Asch, how are impressions formed? Also, mention the process of impression formation as suggested by N.H. Anderson.
10. What is base-rate fallacy?
11. How does cognition influence affect?

NOTES

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the ways in which alternative selves can affect an individual.
2. Describe the theories of self-presentation.
3. Explain the various tactics of self-presentation.
4. Give a detailed explanation of self-expression.
5. Discuss the three types of errors that can harm the attribution processes.
6. Explain the false-consensus effect.
7. Describe the basic aspects of social thoughts.
8. Thoughts shape feeling and feelings shape thoughts. Analyse the statement with respect to the theories of emotions in psychology.
9. Examine the process of social cognition involving the major heuristics used.

2.9 FURTHER READING

Baron, R.A. and D. Byrne. 1999. *Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Lindgren, H.C. 1973. *An Introduction to Social Psychology*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited.

UNIT 3 ATTITUDES: EVALUATING THE SOCIAL WORLD

NOTES

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Nature and Functions of Attitudes
- 3.3 Forming Attitudes
 - 3.3.1 Social Learning; 3.3.2 Genetic Factors; 3.3.3 Direct Experience
- 3.4 Attitudes and Behaviour
 - 3.4.1 The Essential Link: Specificity, Component, Vested Interest, Attitude, Strength and Accessibility
 - 3.4.2 Self-Awareness and the Attitude-Behaviour Link
- 3.5 Persuasion: Traditional and Cognitive Approaches
- 3.6 Resistance to Persuasion
- 3.7 Cognitive Dissonance
- 3.8 Prejudice and Discrimination: Nature and Components
 - 3.8.1 Nature of Prejudice and Discrimination; 3.8.2 Acquisition of Prejudice
 - 3.8.3 Direct Intergroup Contact and Recategorization: The Motivational Perspective
 - 3.8.4 Cognitive Intervention Prejudice
 - 3.8.5 Competing Prejudice and Prejudice Based on Gender
- 3.9 Gender Stereotypes: Discrimination against Females
 - 3.9.1 Gender Stereotypes and Communication
 - 3.9.2 Discrimination against Females; 3.9.3 Sexual Harassment
- 3.10 Interpersonal Attraction: Getting Acquainted and Becoming Friends
 - 3.10.1 Proximity and Emotions: Explaining the Proximity Effects
- 3.11 The Need to Affiliate and Reactions to Observable Characteristics
- 3.12 Close Relationships: Friendship and Love
 - 3.12.1 Relationship among Relatives, Friends and Lovers
 - 3.12.2 Romantic Relationships
 - 3.12.3 Loneliness
 - 3.12.4 Moving Beyond Casual Friendship: Interdependent Relationships
- 3.13 Summary
- 3.14 Key Terms
- 3.15 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.16 Questions and Exercises
- 3.17 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Attitudes are the means by which we evaluate the social world. It can be positive, negative or neutral. Attitudes have three elements—*affect*, *cognitions* and *behaviour*. A small almond shaped part of the brain called the *amygdala* is the key to the initial affective evaluation. It has been found that the evaluation of being positive or

NOTES

negative occurs even before the mind has categorized it. This means that even before we know what an object is, we have a gut feeling about it. It has also been found that negative evaluations are stronger than our positive evaluations. This has an evolutionary significance as our being more sensitive to pain and danger as it enhances the possibility of survival than being aware of pleasure and safety.

In this unit, you will be familiarized with the nature and function of attitude, and its formation. You will learn about persuasion and the resistance to persuasion. The unit will discuss prejudice and discrimination, along with gender stereotypes and sexual harassment in detail. Interpersonal attraction will also be discussed, as well as close relationships, like friendship and love.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine the nature and function of attitudes
- Study how attitudes are acquired and the rule of social learning
- Learn about the attitudes–behaviour link
- Discuss persuasion and attitude change, resistance to persuasion, cognitive dissonance
- Learn about prejudice and discrimination
- Learn about stereotypes—in-group similarity, out-group difference and out-group homogeneity
- Discuss gender stereotypes
- Describe the theories of interpersonal attraction
- Understand close relationships

3.2 NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF ATTITUDES

An attitude is an evaluation of an object or a person(s). It shapes our social perceptions and behaviour and it can be positive negative or neutral. Attitudes are made up of several dimensions, which are bipolar in nature; for example, specific or general, strong or weak, simple or complex like religion, known or unknown, linked to action or unlinked to action, etc. Attitudes have the following three components:

- (i) **Affect:** The core involves affect, this is the emotional reaction to the object concerned. This can be described as the extent to which we like or dislike an object, for example, politicians, certain type of food, shoes, etc. In fact, all objects do trigger some kind of a positive or negative emotion. This is the feeling component of an attitude.
- (ii) **Cognition:** Attitudes also involve cognitions. These include the knowledge about the object, as well as beliefs, ideas, memories and images. For

example, if we are positive about a particular player or team, we would gather a variety of knowledge about him/her or them and will remember a lot about them or their performances.

- (iii) **Behaviour:** The last component is behaviour. As a rule, when our attitudes are brought to mind, we are more likely to behave in accordance with the attitudes that we hold, rather than act inconsistently.

Current studies by Preston and Wall (2002) suggest that our attitudes activate regions in the brain that support specific actions. For example, when we see or smell a delicious food item, we prepare ourselves for action. Understanding all these is important to know attitudes and tackling the issue of attitude change.

Functions of Attitudes

Every attitude serves some purpose or the other. Simply, they motivate and guide behaviour. Besides this A.H. Eagly and S. Chaiken (1998) have identified four functions of an attitude that are as follows:

- (i) **Knowledge function:** This helps us to organize our understanding of the social world. This is the basis of how we attend to store, remember and retrieve information pertaining to a given object. This leads to better speed and efficiency in processing social information. This function also leads us to seek and selectively attend to information that supports our pre-existing attitudes. Self-evaluation also follows this function of attitudes. Prejudice also follows the same principle. Once attitudes have been acquired, they influence how information is gathered and processed.
- (ii) **Value expressive function:** Attitudes help us to express our cherished values. This is usually carried out in groups made up of people who reinforce and support the attitudes. For example, groups who play or watch cricket, fans of Michael Jackson, groups of particular political leanings, etc. Value expression occurs in the context of reference groups. Such groups are those whose opinions matter and affect our attitudes significantly. This function is inherently satisfying to the holder of a particular attitude. By expressing a value that is in agreement with the attitude held, people find a sense of joy and commitment to the opinions held. One is inclined to view people and groups holding similar attitudes more favourably. The type of college one joins, the subject of study one chooses, etc., also reflect the operation of the value expressive function of an attitude.
- (iii) **Ego-defensive function of attitudes:** This function protects us from awareness of our own negative attributes and impulses, for example, our tendencies for aggression and sexuality. We do this by developing certain attitudes that help us view ourselves in accordance with our cherished view of ourselves. Deep down inside lurk our tendencies toward sexuality. We do not wish to acknowledge this to ourselves, because it is both frightening as well as socially unacceptable. This innate impulse is deflected on to socially

NOTES

NOTES

less powerful groups, which perceives them to be immoral. So a prejudice attitude is developed towards the marginalized group. This leads to the phenomenon of stereotyping; for example, homosexuals are criminals.

The holding of a particular attitude help us save ourselves the acknowledgment of certain unpleasant truths about ourselves. The unpleasant truths are then perceived as typical of people belonging to a particular group in society. They are then seen as an undesirable section of society. By viewing this as the scum of society, we are able to spare ourselves the view of harbouring undesirable impulses within us. This is the ego-defensive function of an attitude; for example, we all know that accidents happen and that we or our dear ones could also suffer from it, but this is a frightening thought. Thus, our ego tries to spare us from this fear by developing an attitude which believes that road accident victims are careless road users. This attitude makes us feel relatively safe when we step on to the road. By this belief, our ego is protected from the fear of accidents and possible death on the roads.

- (iv) **The utilitarian function of attitudes:** Attitudes sensitize and alert us to objects that are rewarding to us. These objects are then sought after. Other objects that are undesirable and to be avoided also figure in our attitudes. These are survival related, to begin with. For example, when there is a toxic atmosphere, we try to avoid it. But when there is clean fresh air, we wish to stay longer. Similarly, after eating sweet foods; one is naturally drawn to something that is salty to taste. These are beneficial to survival. Stimuli that are initially neutral, can be modified by pairing with objects that generate a positive or negative reaction. Example: consumer products are sold by pairing emotionally arousing pleasant sights, sounds, smells etc. with certain products. Also using animals, children, alluring women etc., have been found to be useful strategies for selling goods and services as compared to the use of neutral objects. Our attitudes are vital for daily living. They help us identify rewarding and threatening objects. Attitudes are the reason why we choose to belong to certain groups. They protects from unpleasant realities. Attitudes act as powerful guides to our understanding of the social world.

3.3 FORMING ATTITUDES

Attitude is considered to be the central theme in social psychology. Generally, it refers to an individual's evaluation about the social world; the extent to which people have favourable or unfavourable reactions to any issues, ideas, persons, social groups or objects. Attitude is one of the seriously researched topics in social psychology. The reason is that attitudes strongly influence human thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The evaluation an individual makes about his or her world is very important. It forms the basis of social cognition. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) suggest that social thoughts are slowly and steadily build by attitudes. Attitudes are

learned. Some evidence suggests that attitudes may be influenced by genetic factors too.

For example, one individual may like vegetarianism another may like non-vegetarianism. One may have a positive approach to one political party, another may have a total negative approach to that party. Certain social psychologists notice that at times people take neither positive nor negative stand instead they take a middle stand, otherwise called ambivalent (J.R. Priester and R.E. Petty, 2001; M.M. Thompson, M.P. Zanna and D.W. Griffin, 1995). It is also an important point that people find it very difficult to change any attitude.

NOTES

3.3.1 Social Learning

Attitudes are learned from society and this is why children do not show social discrimination. Social learning theory or SLT is the theory that suggests that people learn new behaviour through observational learning of the social factors in their environment. If people observe positive, desired outcomes in the observed behaviour, then they are more likely to model, imitate, and adopt the behaviour themselves.

Mechanisms for learning attitudes

By and large, socialization is the process by which attitudes are learned. This is the process by which a child becomes an adult member of a given society. Children learn attitudes from all those significant people around them. First, it is from parents (home), then from the school (teachers), then from friends, media and others.

Attitudes acquired from other persons

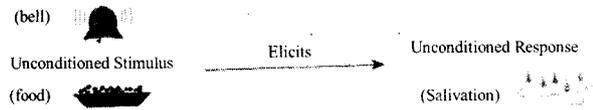
The processes underlying the learning of attitudes have been identified by psychologists and are as follows:

- (i) Classical conditioning
- (ii) Instrumental conditioning
- (iii) Modelling

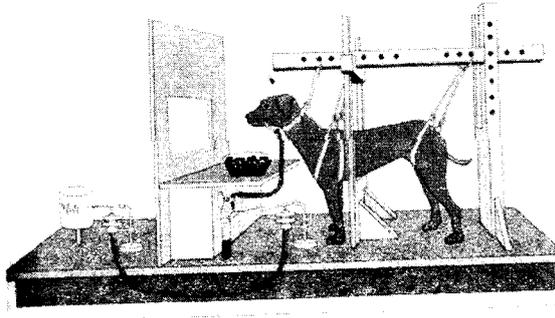
(i) Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning is learning by association. The principle involved here is that when one stimulus occurs first and this is then consecutively followed by another, then the appearance of the first becomes the signal that the second would also occur. Soon, the same reactions that have been occurring to the first stimulus would also occur to the second stimulus. This would be more so if the second stimulus by itself is capable of evoking strong reactions (refer Figure 3.1).

NOTES



DURING CONDITIONING
 Conditioned stimulus (bell) is followed by presentation of Unconditioned Stimulus (food), which elicits Unconditioned Response (salivation).



The acquisition and extinction of a classically conditioned response. When the CS (bell) and US (food) are paired, the power of the CS to elicit the CR (salivation) increases. The CS, however, rapidly loses its power to elicit the CR each time that it is presented without the reinforcement of the US. This decrease in eliciting power shows the process of extinction. (Source: After Pavlov, 1927)

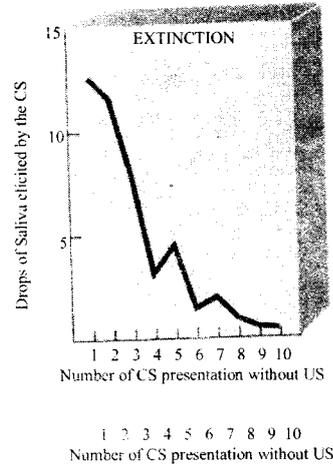
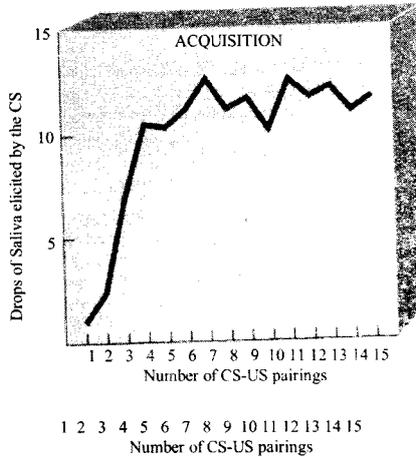


Fig. 3.1 Classical Conditioning Model

In Figure 3.1:

- CS = Conditioned stimulus
- UCS = Unconditioned Stimulus
- UCR = Unconditioned Response
- CR = Conditioned Response

This process of classical conditioning can be seen as the basis for acquiring attitudes as well. Staats et al (1962) found that initially neutral words when paired with words or stimuli that tend to elicit strong negative reactions (like electric shocks or harsh words, etc.) acquire the capacity to elicit strong negative or unfavourable reactions.

Evaluations form the core of attitudes

Judgements or evaluations occur all the time during social interactions. In real-life conditions, the classical conditioning model can be seen to apply directly to the process of acquiring attitudes. For example, a child repeatedly sees the mother's frowning or avoiding members of a particular social group, each time she meets them. There are other signs of displeasure also that are displayed in this context. At first, the child is indifferent to the members of this group and shows no reactions. The child does not identify characteristics associated with this group (hair, clothing, language, etc.). However, as a result of the repeated pairing of this group and its members with the mother's negative reactions; the child now starts associating certain obvious characteristics with the members belonging to this group. Gradually, the child also comes to react negatively to these identifiable characteristics and thereafter to the group members, associated with these traits. This is the process by which attitudes are learned.

If members of a particular group are often isolated, despised and talked about negatively and the behaviour towards them are one of displeasure/avoidance, etc., and these are repeated then children and others would come to associate these negative thoughts and behaviour with the group in question. Soon the group and its members would be evaluated negatively. The child and the others have learnt to associate a specific group with certain characteristics, with negative or distinct responses. The group and its members are evaluated negatively. This completes the process of social learning of attitudes.

Since language is also part of the evaluation process and negative statements accompany negative reactions involving specific group members, the verbal responses are also acquired for description. Thus, both language and behaviour besides thoughts and feelings are also learned. So, all the three components of an attitude, thought, feeling and behaviour are learned through classical conditioning processes, involving association.

There is also evidence to suggest that this form of attitude learning occurs, even when people are not fully aware of the stimulus. Here, the explanation of acquiring negative attitudes is based on the unconscious association that occurs as a result of repeated pairing. When affect arousing stimuli are presented only for a very short duration, the recognition may not occur. The emotions, specially the negative ones, associated with the stimuli are aroused. So conditioning occurs even outside of conscious awareness. This has implications for the association between affect and cognition. That emotions are experienced even before the stimuli are properly recognized indicates that learning of the association between emotion and thought can be readily triggered by the affect, well ahead of the understanding of the stimuli or object that is creating the response.

Attitudes are aroused by emotions, even when the object of affect is not well recognized.

In terms of attitude learning, this means even before our object is recognized, the negative emotions associated with it are aroused; for example, the names of

NOTES

NOTES

people belonging to a particular group could arouse negative emotions long before the members of the group are even encountered. This is known as subliminal conditioning. J.A. Krosnick (1992) and his colleagues indicate that even if subjects cannot identify or recognize certain stimuli adequately, yet the stimuli shape our attitudes. This is indeed a powerful process at work.

(ii) Instrumental conditioning

Studies on instrumental conditioning have been derived from the work of Bekhterev and Thorndike. Here, the subject's or person's behaviour is instrumental to the gaining of a reward or avoidance of punishment, therefore the name, instrumental conditioning. Since there is an operation involved it is also known as operant conditioning.

Consider an example, where a child hears the ice cream vendor and the child goes and buys the ice cream. Here, it is important to recognize that both types of learning get incorporated (classical and instrumental types of conditioning). In the first part, the child salivates to the sound of the ice-cream vendor's bell. This is the classical conditioning part of the learning. In the second half of the sequence, the child knows that reward would occur if certain responses are made, like going with the money and buying the ice-cream and then eating it. The first part is involuntary (salivation) the second part is voluntary. The first part is learned by classical conditioning and the second part by operant conditioning. This is known as the Two-factor theory of learning.

Procedural variations have been tried to establish different forms of control over a person's behaviour. E.L. Thorndike (1911) distinguished between satisfiers and annoyers or positive and negative reinforcers. A satisfying state of affair is one wherein a person does something to gain a reward or benefit. A negative or dissatisfying state is one wherein a person is motivated to avoid some situation.

Four instrumental conditioning procedures have been proposed by Krosnick (1948), which are as follows:

- (i) Reward training:** It is a type of box apparatus used for training. Here, a pigeon is presented with a light source and a key for pecking. The bird is rewarded with food for pecking the key as soon as the light appears.
- (ii) Avoidance training:** Here, the subject can avoid any noxious stimulus by responding to a signal in a given manner. Bekheterev (1932) used conditioned withdrawal responses of hand or foot after being delivered an electric shock, by pressing on a bar or lifting a hand or foot, from a pedal or grid. Sometimes, turning off a noxious stimulus by operating a switch also constituted a form of avoidance training.
- (iii) Omission training:** In this type of learning, a positive reinforcement occurs when a particular response fails to appear. In daily life the best known example would be one where food is given only when the dog does not jump on to the sofa or bed in a house. The training is to omit the dog's behaviour of jumping on to the bed/sofa.

(iv) **Punishment training:** In this type of training a shock or any other form of punishment follows the occurrence of a specified response; for example, a child is rebuked or whacked for disobeying the adult command. This type of training is generally used for extinction of a given, undesirable response.

Shaping behaviour

Animals can be trained to perform tricks in a circus, dogs can be trained to sniff for drugs, children can be made to do complicated dance steps, etc. All these involve gradually molding the responses into a desired pattern. These are carried out by a process known as successive approximations. This means engaging in a series of steps of ever closely matched responses to the ultimate pattern of behaviour desired. For example, teaching a child to tie shoe-laces would involve the following steps:

- Step 1: Allow the child to slip into the shoes.
- Step 2: Then teach the simple knot to the child.
- Step 3: Let the child put on the shoes and tie the knot.
- Step 4: Get the child to perfect the knot.

Reward each step and get the desired behaviour. It may take time, but it can be achieved. Behavioural effects of various types of consequences is tabulated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Behavioural Effects of Various Types of Consequences

	Consequence of making a response	Example	Effect on response probability
Positive reinforcement	Positive event begins	Food given	Increase
Negative reinforcement	Negative event ends	Pain stops	Increase
Punishment	Negative event begins	Pain begins	Decrease
Punishment (response cost)	Positive event ends	Food removed	Decrease
Non reinforcement	Nothing	—	Decrease

NOTES

Table 3.2 illustrates the comparison of classical and operant conditioning.

Table 3.2 Comparison of Classical and Operant Conditioning

NOTES

	Classical conditioning	Operant conditioning
Nature of Responses	Involuntary, reflex	Spontaneous, voluntary
Reinforcement	Occurs before response (Conditioned stimulus paired with unconditioned stimulus)	Occurs after response (Response is followed by reinforcing stimulus or event)
Role of learner	Passive (Response is elicited by US)	Active (Response is emitted)
Nature of learning	Neutral stimulus becomes a CS through association with a US	Probability of making a response is altered by consequences that follow it.

(iii) Modelling

The third type of learning is modelling. A class watches the teacher draw a particular figure. Later, when the children are given paper and crayon they also try to draw a similar figure. Here, both observation and modelling are involved. In observational learning, watching and initiating the actions of others is the key to obtain the desired responses. Modelling is a process, in which information or behaviour is imparted by example, even before direct practice is allowed. So, the viewer merely gets to see and notice a particular action, with no practice involved.

A model is a person who serves as an example in observational learning. A. Bandura (1971). By observing a model a person may do the following:

- (i) Learn new responses.
- (ii) Learn to carry out or avoid previously learned responses (depending on what happens to the model for doing or not doing the same thing).
- (iii) Learn a general rule that can be applied to various situations.

Certain conditions that must be present for observational learning to occur are as follows:

- (i) The learner must pay attention to the model and remember what was done; for example, a child watches Tendulkar hit the ball to all parts of the ground. He would attentively watch a few movements and strokes, but he cannot remember, all of them. So the learning is not complete.
- (ii) The learner must be able to reproduce the modelled response; for example, we may watch world class gymnasts, but may never be able to reproduce their movements.
- (iii) If the model displays a response and is rewarded for it, the learner is more likely to imitate that response/behaviour; for example, a hero's behaviour.

In other words, a model who is attractive, rewarded, admired, high in status, is likely to be imitated more than others, who are low in these features, Bandura and Walters (1963).

Finally, when a new response is tried, normal reinforcement determines whether the responses would be repeated thereafter.

Imitating models

Modelling has a powerful effect on behaviour. In a classic experiment, children saw a clip where an adult was shown attacking a blown up doll called BoBo—The Clown. All types of attacking acts were viewed. Later, the children who had viewed these clips were frustrated by having their favourite toys taken away from them. They were then presented with the BoBo doll. Most imitated the attacks that the clip showed to the doll. The children also punched, kicked and threw the doll, to express their anger. This showed that the children imitated the model in the film clip and displayed similar behaviours. Children do not blindly imitate models. Only those models who are rewarded provide them with an incentive for initiating.

Children imitate what parents do, more than what they say. Thus through modelling, children learn attitudes, gestures, behaviours and even fears and anxieties. Bad habits are also possibly learned through modelling. For example, use of foul language, beating, yelling, screaming, not getting up early, etc., are also learned from models in the home, school, peers and then the media. TV also acts as a model. Televised violence has been found to have a significant impact on aggressive outbursts in children and adults. Parents and other sources serve as guides for passive formation of attitudes. Forming attitudes takes place through the following:

- (i) **Association:** Classical conditioning.
- (ii) **Reinforcement/punishment:** Instrumental conditioning; children and others are rewarded for holding and expressing certain attitudes and punished for wrong unacceptable ones.
- (iii) **Modelling:** We learn and base our behaviour and attitudes only by seeing and hearing others who are significant in our lives.

3.3.2 Genetic Factors

Genetic factors can influence our height, eye colour, and physical characteristics, the idea that they might also play a role in our thinking seems strange, to say the least. In fact, a small but growing body of empirical evidence indicates that genetic factors may play some small role in attitudes (Arvey et al, 1989; Keller et al, 1992).

Most of this evidence involves comparisons between identical and non-identical twins. Because identical twins share the same genetic inheritance while non-identical twins do not, higher correlations between the attitudes of the identical twins would suggest that genetic factors play a role in shaping such attitudes. This is precisely what has been found; the attitudes of identical twins do correlate more highly than those of non-identical twins (Waller et al., 1990).

NOTES

NOTES

Attitude's influence on behaviour

Social psychologists came with lot of research evidences that attitudes influence human behaviour. For example, if one believes that a person is threatening, he may feel dislike and therefore act unfriendly with that person. It seems several factors determine the extent to which attitudes influence human behaviour. To say a few, the situation, features of the attitude and strength of the attitude decides the effect of influence on behaviour.

Attitudes, reasoned thought and behaviour

The first of these mechanisms seems to operate in situations where to give careful, deliberate thought to our attitudes and their implications for our behaviour. For example, in their theory of planned behaviour, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) suggest that the best predictor of how to act in a given situations is the strength of our intentions with respect to that situation (Ajzen, 1987).

Perhaps, a specific example will help illustrate the eminently reasonable nature of this assertion. Suppose a student is considering body piercing, for instance, wearing a nose ornament. According to Ajzen and Fishbein, these are strongly influenced by three key factors.

The first factor is the person's attitude toward the behaviour in question. If the student really dislikes pain and resist the idea of someone sticking a needle through his nose, his intention to engage in such behaviour may be weak.

The second factor relates to the person's beliefs about how others will evaluate this behaviour (this factor is known as subjective norms). If the students think that others will approve of body piercing, his intention to perform it may be strengthened. If he believes that others will disapprove of it, his intention may be weakened.

Finally, intentions are also affected by perceived behavioural control—the extent to which a person perceives a behaviour as hard or easy to accomplish. If it is viewed as difficult, intentions are weaker than if it is viewed as easy to perform. Together, these factors influence intentions; and these, in turn, are the predictor of the individual's behaviour.

3.3.3 Direct Experience

Some attitudes are also learned and formed as a result of one's own experiences; for example, liking for a particular type of food, dislike for a group in society, fondness for a special type of music, etc., are all acquired on the basis of direct experiences with these situations. Attitudes formed by direct experience are generally stronger and are very resistant to change.

Attitudes formed through direct behavioural experience with an attitude object have been found to better predict later behaviour than attitudes formed through indirect experience. An experiment was conducted to test the hypothesis if an information processing difference exists between direct and indirect experience.

Subjects watched a videotape of an individual who was working on a puzzle. The subjects were asked whether to empathize with that person or not. Taking the perspective of the person having the direct experience led 'empathy subjects' to behave more consistently with their own reported attitudes toward those puzzles than 'control subjects'. The results suggest that direct experience affects the attitude formation process by altering the way in which the available information is processed.

Attitude as heuristics

Attitudes act as heuristics. This shortcut helps us to reduce the information overload that we experience and facilitates decision-making. Attitudes help us simplify living; for example, by having a particular food preference, the choice of restaurants becomes very much easier, when planning to eat out.

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the three components of attitude?
2. What is the social learning theory?
3. What are the processes underlying the learning of attitudes identified by psychologists?
4. How does language affect attitude?

3.4 ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

One would expect a strong relationship to exist between attitude and behaviour. However, the link is at best a weak one. This explains why many of us hold certain attitudes, but do not always convert them into suitable behaviour. For example, we all believe that water is to be conserved but we do not engage in behaviour that support this attitude at home or outside. We waste and pollute water sources without a care for this precious resource.

Often, attitudes do not predict behaviour well. Factors that determine the strength between attitudes and behaviour are several. Let us first learn about attitude specificity and then learn about the other factors.

- 1. Attitude specificity:** It is easy to recognize that certain attitudes are very specific, while others are general, or vague, for example: Fondness for chutney or cruelty to animals. The chutney preference is a highly specific one and can be seen in almost every situation, but the second attitude may not always elicit behaviour that is aimed at preventing cruelty to animals. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) are of the view that general attitudes have a weak link to behaviour.

Specific attitudes can predict behaviour, more favourably.

3.4.1 The Essential Link: Specificity, Component, Vested Interest, Attitude, Strength and Accessibility

NOTES

It is obvious to expect a clear link between strong attitudes and behaviour. Strong attitudes tend to develop from direct experience, as compared to those passively learned from observation or narrations by others.

Vested interest

A second factor is vested interest in a given issue. Anything that is concerned with one's own life has a lot of significance. So, attitudes that are related to one's life have a lot of valence. For example, young people would be more interested in employment opportunities than older people. So the youth would have vested interests in job-related matters. This attitude would be more closely linked to behaviour from this group, as compared to the older group; many student activism behaviour is based on this need in their group.

Availability

Availability refers to the ease with which attitudes can be accessed, Fazio (1986). Anything that comes to mind readily has a greater influence over behaviour than those that are not easily recallable.

Increased vested interests could lead to more availability and therefore exert greater influence on behaviour. This gets further strengthened if direct experience is involved in learning a particular attitude. Thus, the attitude-behaviour link is related to the following:

- The type of learning (direct or indirect)
- The extent of vested interests involved
- The extent of availability

Each of these is interrelated and one increases the strength of the other. All these jointly enhance the attitude-behaviour link.

3.4.2 Self-Awareness and the Attitude-Behaviour Link

Gibbons (1978) found that heightened self-awareness increases the likelihood of the attitude-behaviour model. This increases the experiences, creates more vested interests and thereafter increases the availability of an attitude (refer Figure 3.2).

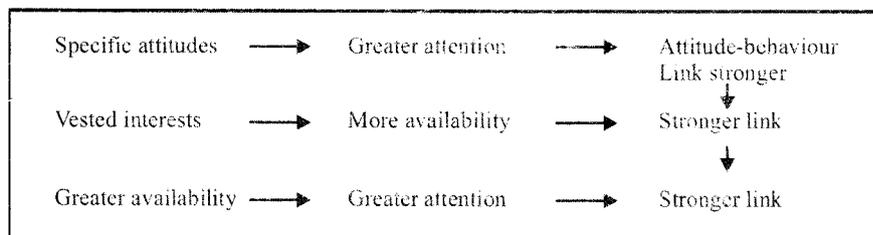
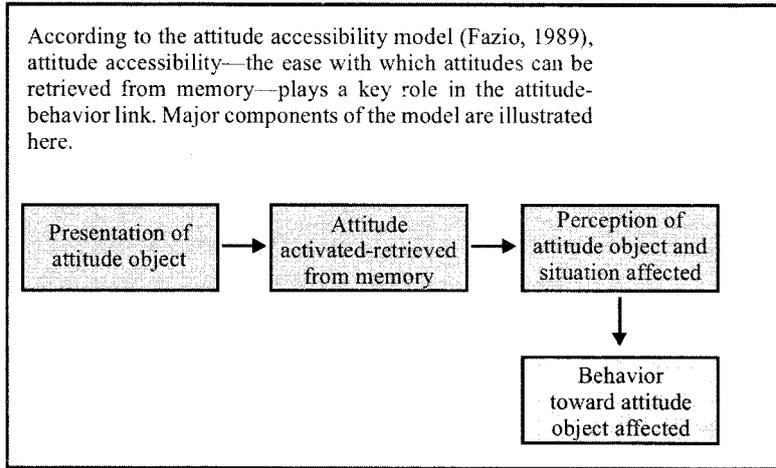


Fig. 3.2 Self-Awareness and the Attitude-Behaviour Link

Exhibit 3.1 illustrates the ABC model, which stands for the Affect-Behaviour-Cognition model. Each attitude is made up of affect, behaviour and cognition. It is also called the attitude accessibility model.

Exhibit 3.1 Attitude Accessibility Model



Source: Based on suggestions by Fazio, 1989.

This model is based on associative strength. The strength of the association between an attitude object and its memory is crucial for the evaluation of the object. The stronger the association, the more readily the attitude is activated and the larger the influence on behaviour. Some attitudes may be activated in an automatic manner. This is called the Automatic Attitude Activation Effect, Bargh et al (1996). Once activated, attitudes come into consciousness and guide overt actions.

Strong attitudes, specific attitudes and personally relevant attitudes are generally more accessible. Therefore some attitudes have a direct link to behaviour while others do not.

Attitudes and behaviour link is also subject to the influence of subjective norms (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). This is known as the Theory of Reasoned Action which suggests that people quite consciously and deliberately choose one form of action, as opposed to another. These subjective norms are made up of what others will (or will not) accept or approve as a course of action. Certain types of clothes, behaviour, etc. will not be acceptable to others in certain situations. Another example is attitudes of mothers towards breast-feeding. Ajzen (1996) also proposed the theory of planned behaviour which involves people's beliefs about whether they can successfully engage in a particular behaviour. For example, the use of contraception; it is not only attitude towards this topic, but also the feasibility of carrying out this thought into action, that determines the outcome in terms of behaviour. This is perceived control over a given behaviour. This theory predicts well, whether students would engage in studies with greater effort for higher academic achievements, dieting, exercising, undergo medical testing and a host of other related actions.

NOTES

NOTES

Attitudes are sometimes inconsistent. This also creates problems for the smooth link between attitudes and behaviour; for example, we may like certain traits in a person, but dislike certain habits in them. This sometimes makes it hard to develop friendship with such a person.

Attitudes are also influenced by the inconsistency between feelings (affect) and cognitive (knowledge) components, in terms of the behavioural outcomes. For example, many people like a job with the government, but not the salaries. So one is not able to predict which of these components would dominate, while predicting behaviour—choose a government job or go to the private sector for employment.

Another problem in the attitude-behaviour link is the mismatch between attitudes and actual behavioural targets; for example, save the tiger from extinction is a correct attitude. How would it convert into behaviour other than making a donation to the cause? Specific instances of real behaviour are often far away from the attitudinal concerns.

3.5 PERSUASION: TRADITIONAL AND COGNITIVE APPROACHES

Everyday, we encounter numerous attempts to persuade us to change our attitudes; parents, teachers, peers, religious leaders, salespersons, politicians, media and several other agents engage in acts of persuasion. Persuasion is needed in a variety of matters; for example, responsible driving, meaningful parenting, honest businesses, trusting relationships, etc. Persuasion is one of the most challenging of tasks.

Traditional Approach

The traditional approach to attitude change began with the Yale social psychologists in the 1950s. They used the pre-post design to study the existing attitudes. They attempted to change attitudes by applying different conditions. Their findings can be presented as follows:

- (i) Experts are more persuasive than non-experts, Hovland and Weiss (1952).
- (ii) Persuasion is higher if the message is perceived as not deliberately intended to manipulate the receiver, Walster and Festinger (1962). This is why not every commercial succeed.
- (iii) People with low self-esteem are persuaded more easily as compared to those with higher self-esteem, J.L. Janis (1954).
- (iv) Popular and attractive communicators are more successful in bringing about attitude change, than unpopular and unattractive communicators, Kiesler and Kiesler (1969). This is why attractive sports and movie stars are used in advertisements.

- (v) People are more susceptible to persuasion when they are distracted, than when paying full attention to the messages when the persuasive messages are simple in nature, Allyn and Festinger (1961).
- (vi) When the audience holds a position that is contrary to what the persuasive message is suggesting, it is more effective to use two-sided arguments, than the one-sided argument, Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield (1949). For example, this tooth paste has several features, despite the cost being a little higher than other brands.
- (vii) People who speak rapidly are more persuasive than those who speak slowly, Miller et al. (1976). This is because the fast talkers are perceived to be more knowledgeable about what they are talking about.
- (viii) Persuasive effectiveness can be enhanced by messages that arouse fear among the listeners/viewers, Leventhal, Singer and Jones (1965). Anti-smoking campaigns are accompanied by gory pictures of cancerous mouths. These are known as the 'Who says what to whom' form of persuasion.

Some of these techniques work, while others do not. The type of audience, the type of messages, and the existing attitude in the group are all important in determining the success of attitude change.

Cognitive Approach

In cognitive approach to attitude change, the role of cognitions in bringing about change is central. Here, the following two processes are involved, according to the theorists who proposed it:

- (i) **Heuristic-systematic model:** It was proposed by Chaiken (1980). These models are similar in essence though their language is different. In the heuristic model, the peripheral route of persuasion is dominant. Because the heuristics of least effort in processing information is the key, persuasion occurs when people attend to the more superficial aspects of a given message. So, attitude change may occur because of factors like the expertise of the communicator, attractiveness of the speaker. This theory suggests that shortcuts are used to justify attitudinal change. This model though based on common sense and is insufficient in explaining the process of attitudinal change.
- (ii) **Elaboration likelihood (ELM) model:** It was proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1979). ELM works on the assumption that there are two routes to persuasion. The central route and the systematic route, which makes people think carefully and deliberately about the message. Here, attention is paid to the logic and cogency of the arguments presented. The evidence presented to persuade are also evaluated with care. So, there is a lot of thinking and sifting besides understanding the message and its contents. All these indicate an elaborate cognitive process at work when persuasive messages aimed at attitude change are received.

NOTES

NOTES

The amount of time people are willing to devote to processing a persuasive message depends on the motivations of the listener. Motivations tend to be higher when the message has personal consequences for the audience (e.g., buying a new car, a new job, etc.). Another factor that would bring the central mechanism into play would be the ability of an individual to be able to clearly process in understanding the message in depth. When the message is clear and time is available, then in-depth processing is likely to occur.

When motivation is low and the ability and times to process the information is short, then attention is paid to the peripheral cues associated with the message, these are the attractiveness, credentials of the communicator, etc. Here, the central route is ignored and the peripheral route involving heuristics takes over. The following three factors are significant for the central route to come into play:

- (i) **Personal relevance:** The bearing that the message has on one's goals.
- (ii) **One's knowledge about the issue:** The more informed one is, the greater the care and thoughtfulness with which the message is going to be processed.
- (iii) **The extent to which the message propels some action on the part of the receiver:** Example, the doctor suggests to the patient that he should quit smoking. How much of responsibility he/she is willing to assume for his/her health. Also, one has to explain the action to others, like family, friends, office, doctor, etc.).

The peripheral route comes into play when motivation is low and ability to attend is poor. People also tend to use the peripheral route, when they are distracted by other tasks, like eating while viewing TV ads, or are tired, like a long hard day at work, or are uncomfortably placed, like travelling in a bus train, standing, or when the messages are hard or incomplete.

The Heuristic and Elaboration Likelihood models have similar explanations (refer Figure 3.3), but their language and expressions are different.

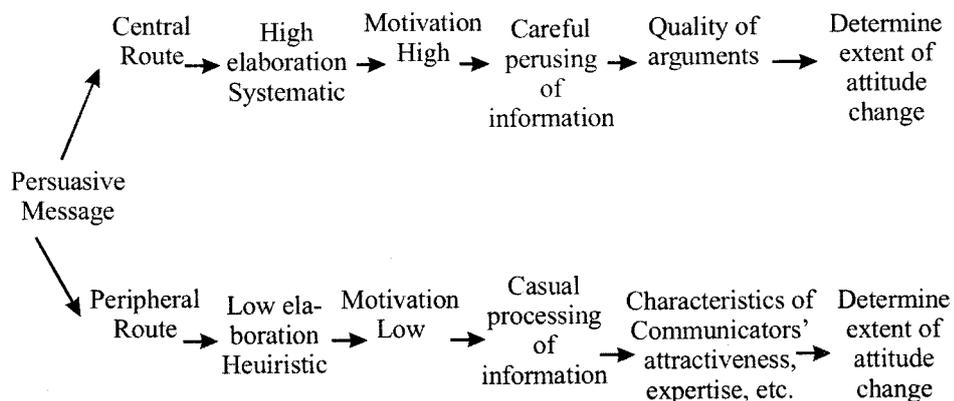


Fig. 3.3 Heuristic and Elaboration Likelihood Models

The extent of attitude change is based on the motivation to process information carefully or be taken in by external factors.

3.6 RESISTANCE TO PERSUASION

It is seen that even health-related persuasive messages in which most people have vested interests, does not result in shift in attitudes in the desired direction. Why do people maintain their original attitudes even if it needs change? Several reasons have been identified to explain this phenomenon. Some of them are as follows:

NOTES

- **Selective attention to information:** Attending to details that conform or support the existing attitudes, Eagly and Chaiken (1998). This means that we are tuned to focus on information that is in agreement with our attitudes and we tune out information that contradicts it. In short, tune into supportive information and tune out inconsistent information while attending to information. For example, we read in keeping with our own attitudes, vote in terms of our ideologies, see programmes in keeping with our preferences, etc.
- **Selective evaluation of information:** Not only do we selectively attend to or seek out information on the basis of our existing attitudes; but we also tend to selectively evaluate information, that we take in. Accepting of supportive information and critical of non-supportive data; for example, those who believe in astrology are noticeably engaging in this type of evaluation. If a reasonable prediction is to be made, one would expect that people, when faced with contradictory evidence would adopt a more balanced or moderate attitude. The opposite point of view is known as the Belief polarization hypothesis. This states that people would dismiss evidence that is contrary to their existing attitudinal position and obtain support from evidence that is consistent with their views. Studies done by several researchers support this phenomenon. Mixed evidence of importance to people makes them become even more strongly entrenched in their attitudes. Religion is an illustration of this process in daily living.

Extending this Ditto and Lopez (1992) found that patients who receive reports diagnosing that they are unhealthy, tend to downplay the seriousness of the diagnosis, the validity of the tests, etc.

- **Previous commitments:** These also lead to resistance to persuasion; for example, political allegiances are often passed from parents to children. Because of the family background, many youngsters are deeply enmeshed in their attitudes. One of the ways to change attitudes in such a situation is to get people to make and accept public commitments on an attitudinal matter. Kiesler (1971) found support for this attitudinal change variable. Public commitments increase resistance to persuasion. This is explained using the thought polarization hypothesis. Tesser et al. (1975) analysed people's attitudes towards social issues like legalizing prostitution. They made participants to think about the issue for a little while. Then they requested the participants to give a second rating on the subject. As a routine, it was

NOTES

found that they got stronger ratings towards the issue the second time. This happened with both the opponents and proponents of the chosen attitude.

- **Extended thoughts and attitudes:** More extended thoughts tend to produce more extreme and entrenched attitudes. However, if there was no pre-existing knowledge or motivation to think about an attitude, increased thinking could yield a more altitude, about a given issue.
- **Knowledge and resistance:** The ELM approach discussed earlier stated that prior knowledge makes us scrutinize messages more closely. So people with greater knowledge do resist persuasive messages, as compared to those who have less knowledge on a given topic. Wendy and Wood (1982) found that the less informed shifted their position more following persuasive messages, than those who were well informed.
- **Attitude inoculation:** This analogy has been borrowed from biology. It implies that small doses of attacks on one's belief system, prior commitments and knowledge structures, provide us with immunity against larger, later attacks. This becomes the basis of resistance. This was proposed and studied by McGuive and Papageorgis (1961) and found to hold. Resistance occurs due to the pre-existing attitudes, knowledge, commitment and attitudinal inoculation.

3.7 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

When we are faced with a choice and we opt for one, we still have some regrets about what we did not choose. There are times we do or say things against our own convictions. Both these are examples of conditions that create feelings of discomfort caused by conflicts between various beliefs/attitudes that we hold. Sometimes the conflict arises due to the inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour; for example, some people love animals, but still are non-vegetarians.

Dissonance is the struggle a person experiences when inconsistencies occur between attitudes that we hold, or between our attitudes and actions. Dissonance can be seen as a motivational state. Individuals experiencing dissonance are motivated to reduce it, also, it produces a feeling of discomfort. There are three ways in which dissonance can be reduced and they are as follows:

- (i) Change your attitudes and/or behaviour, so as to make them consistent; for example, being married to a person, one does not like. Change the attitude towards the partner and start believing that she/he is not unlikable or walk out of the marriage. Both these processes would lead to reduction in the conflict.
- (ii) Obtain or recruit new information that supports one's attitude or behaviour; for example, thinking, 'Compared to my friends' married life, my partnership

is indeed tolerable,' or so many of my friends have divorced and ended a bad marriage. So there is nothing wrong about divorce.'

- (iii) Minimize the importance of the conflict. For example, 'I have lived for twenty-five years with someone whom I do not like. For the rest of my life, these conflicts do not matter. I will manage, somehow.'

One of these three ways would reduce the dissonance and bring in a sense of balance. The theory of cognitive dissonance was proposed by Leon Festinger in 1957.

Change of one or both attitudes is needed for reducing dissonance. Change follows the path of least effort, as in other situations. Aronson, Fried and Stone (1991) carried out a series of studies involving forced compliance. This involved getting people to do or say something they did not believe in. They used health related issues for inducing hypocrisy or lying, like safe sex. A group of participants had to encourage others to practice these responsible sexual behaviour. Simultaneously, they were reminded that they themselves have not always practised what they are now advocating. This would generate dissonance. This can be reduced by changing their attitudes about safe sex. This was revealed when 85 per cent of these participants actually bought contraceptive devices the next time they engaged in sex. This reduced their lying hypocritical attitude besides their actions.

Aronson and Mills gave subjects in two conditions, large and small rewards for engaging in behaviour that was counter to their held attitudes. The experiment consisted of two sets of female college students. One group had to undergo a severe embarrassment test to join the group. The other set of women were put through a milder test of embarrassment. Finally, the members of both the groups were told that they cleared the test and were allowed to join. The severely embarrassed group seemed to enjoy the task for which they enrolled with difficulty. The other group that went through milder difficulties to enter the group did not find the task that they were ultimately to perform much to their liking. The tasks that both the groups had to perform were dull and uninteresting.

The severely initiated group had a lot of dissonance because of the following two inconsistent attitudes that they held:

- (i) Underwent a severe initiation
- (ii) Had to perform a dull task, at the end

The severely embarrassed group changed their attitude towards the task, and perceived it as not so boring after all. In this way, the dissonance was reduced. The mildly initiated group had less dissonance because the intensity of the two attitudes (mentioned earlier) that they held was low.

In this condition, the dissonance was less, so they did not have any motivation to change their attitude towards the task, they were required to perform. Hence, they were able to view the task as dull because they put less into the situation. So

NOTES

NOTES

people, who suffer more, justify it by thinking that they like what they have. In real life also one gets to see knowledge rewards lead people to believe that they like what they are doing. People working in corporate offices, that are demanding and leave little or no time for personal life, justify their lives (as the incentives are good) on the ground that they enjoy their work hours, lifestyle, etc. Here, the attitude is changed, so as to reduce the conflict that could arise by not having time or leisure for self or family.

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) carried out a study in which they gave one group of subjects a small reward (\$1) and another group (\$20) for telling other participants—who were to come to participate in the study—that the tasks to do were interesting. In reality the task was a boring routine one like putting spools in a tray, taking them out and putting them back. This had to be done for half an hour.

Later, both sets of participants were asked to indicate their own liking for the tasks. This involved outright lying. The group that received \$1 to lie, reported liking the task more than the group that was paid \$20. This was because the former group had more dissonance as they had to lie for a small amount, while the group that was paid more justified their lying in terms of their larger reward. The less paid group had experienced more dissonance. So they had to change their attitude towards the dull task and perceive it as not so uninteresting in order overcome their dissonance.

Less leads to more effect was demonstrated by this study. More attitudinal change comes when one has received a small reward. The smaller the inducements, the greater the change in attitude. However, these predictions are valid only when a free choice condition exists. People, who have to accept smaller salaries because of limited opportunities, are not going to change their attitudes towards the work they have to engage in.

Does inconsistency really cause dissonance? Cooper and Schier (1992) are of the opinion that dissonance and the motivation to reduce it, primarily comes from feelings of responsibility for negative outcomes. So when people are told that their attitude-discrepant behaviour does not lead to harmful effects, lesser attitude change occurs, like lying helps someone, but does not harm others.

If there is no dissonance, there is no possibility of attitude change. We still believe that lying is bad, but not when we do it under special circumstances (with a view to helping someone). When people recognize that their different attitudes or attitudes and behaviour do not fit together neatly, some discomfort or pressure to change arises. This is reduced in several ways to obtain a reduction in the feelings of unpleasantness.

3.8 PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION: NATURE AND COMPONENTS

NOTES

Prejudice and discrimination are often used interchangeably in daily speech. Yet, they are different. Prejudice involves a negative attitude towards the members of some social group, merely because of their membership in that group; for example, old people, mentally challenged people, widows, etc. There is also an affective response involved in these negative attitudes. Discrimination is the unfair treatment of members of a given groups, because of their membership.

3.8.1 Nature of Prejudice and Discrimination

The following are the nature of prejudice and discrimination:

- Prejudice is a negative attitude while discrimination is prejudice in action. When there is a possibility of punishment, then the prejudice does not always lead to discrimination; for example, caste based discrimination in public life is punishable and therefore held under control, but it operates in personal/ social life.
- Some of our attitudes are ambivalent; they contain negative and positive elements; for example, attitudes towards working women.
- Prejudice being a special type of attitude (generally negative) it operates as a schema. This is a cognitive framework for organizing, interpreting, storing and recalling information, Fiske and Taylor (1984). So, prejudiced individuals tend to notice, encode, store and remember certain kinds of information towards members of a particular group, that is consistent with their prejudiced orientation (Bodentausen and Wyer 1985).

Components of prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice as an attitude has three components. The cognitive component includes the beliefs and expectations about members of a given group, as well as the way in which information is processed. The affective component refers to the negative feelings experienced by prejudiced persons when they are in the presence of members of the despised group. Even the thought of this is sometimes enough to arouse negative emotions. The behavioural component involves the tendencies to act in negative ways against the members of this group. This constitutes discrimination.

As prejudice and discrimination are frowned upon in modern, civilized life, it has driven both these inclinations underground. Thus, subtle ways in which they manifest are noticeable. Prejudiced people wish to harm the targets of their prejudice without any cost or difficulties for themselves. So, they discriminate in subtle ways, while concealing their negative attitudes. Three of these common forms of subtle discrimination are as follows:

NOTES

- (i) **Withholding aid from people:** Withholding aid from people who need it. For example, diverting development funds from the poor needy.
- (ii) **Engaging in tokenism:** This involves engaging in trivial acts of favour giving to members of a prejudiced group, so as to deny any major affirmative actions towards this group. For example, hire a person who is physically challenged for an innocuous job, so that others need not be considered for major employment. Promoting one woman to a managerial position, to silence critics about sexual gender discrimination, is a good example of tokenism.
- (iii) **Reverse discrimination:** People, who fit into a particular category, are given favours; for example, teachers grade students of a special category, more favourably in school not only as a way of encouraging them, but also because the expectations from such categories of students are low. So, average students of a given category are rated more favourably as compared to average students of the general category, Fayardo (1985).

3.8.2 Acquisition of Prejudice

Prejudice is seen to exist in all societies since time immemorial. It is an ever present danger and a threat to any society as it is anti-development. Three perspectives can be used for understanding the origins of prejudice. They are as follows:

- (i) **The economic perspective:** According to this view, groups develop prejudices about one another and discriminate against each other, when they compete for material resources. Religious groups, caste groups, regional groups, language groups, gender groups, elite groups, etc., all carry out activities to protect their own interests by attacking those who are seen as threats to their existence.
- (ii) **Realistic-groups-conflict theory:** Levine and Campbell (1972) proposed that groups confront each other over real economic reasons. Resources of the earth are limited; for example, oil, gold, water, etc. People have to compete to access these valuable limited resources. When there is less to go around, people are afraid of losing what they have or wish to gain more, the competition intensifies. This theory also predicts that prejudice and discrimination are likely to be most among groups that stand to lose from another person's economic advancement. For example, working class Americans feeling most threatened by Indian techies. China showing territorial aggression in the Asian region. Ethnocentricity, religions intolerance, sexism are all manifestations of such realistic conflicts.
- (iii) **The robbers and cave study:** An example of inter-group conflict in a summer camp for young children, 7–11 years of age. Sheriff et al. (1961) carried out an ingenious field study to understand the phenomenon and the process involved in group conflict in a real-life situation. The study consisted of two groups of boys who were to participate in a summer camp. They

were screened for being typical of middle class America. They were taken to a distant place and no contact with family, friends, etc. was allowed. They were parked in the wilderness, and had no electricity and other basic amenities. They lived in tents. In the first phase of the experiment, all the boys engaged in camp activities like pitching tents, cooking and cleaning, besides playing games like basketball, swimming enacting skits and singing. The boys were divided into two groups. Soon each group developed cohesiveness, gave themselves the names Eagles and Rattlers and were all happy together.

In the second phase of the experiment, the two groups participated in a tournament. The winning team would receive medals and a prized camp possession—a pocket knife. The losing team would get nothing. The tournament involved baseball, tug-of-war, treasure hunt and such games. The groups were encouraged to compete as hard as they could.

As the tournament proceeded and the competition grew, the two groups were seen hurling names and abuses at each other. The beginnings of hostility were clear. From words, the hostilities descended to physical means. Fights in the dining areas were seen, raids into each other's cabins were frequent, etc. The internal dynamics of the groups changed as the competitive struggle intensified. The members of their own group and their activities were perceived favourably, while those of the other group were perceived, negatively. In-group-out-group categorization had developed. The 'us-them' notions were clearly perceptible. In the two weeks of the camp, conflict arose and the group members showed strong prejudice towards the other because they were competing for coveted prizes.

In the final phase of the experiment, the researchers (Sherif et al) attempted to reduce the negative feelings and reactions. Merely increasing the amount of contact between the groups, failed to improve the negativity between the groups. So, a new condition was created. They were told that their only source of drinking water was poisoned by some forest animal. They all had to pitch in and work together to clean up the water source. Hectic joint activities followed for the next two days. Both the groups worked closely to reach the goal. Here, the attempt was to attain their common super ordinate goal of cleaning the water source. Soon, the hostilities that had developed over the two weeks due competition gave place to cooperation to achieve their common goal. Once the water supply was cleaned, the boys of the two groups found themselves feeling and behaving like comrades, all over again. The tensions between the groups disappeared and friendships were seen to develop across the groups. Many were seen watching games played by others, in a sporting manner. The hostilities were absent and fun and togetherness reappeared. The atmosphere was a happy and a non-conflict one.

This study demonstrated how competition for scarce resources can quickly lead to conflict and feelings of prejudice and thereafter give way to discrimination. Superordinate goals are those goals that transcend the interests of any single group

NOTES

NOTES

and that which can be attained only, if the groups work together. This leads to focus on the common goal and the melting away of sub-group distinctions.

This economic perspective can be applied to see how intergroup relations in the world function. Teaching, research environmental causes, sports, culture, movies, etc., could be used for creating greater commonalities as a way of reducing hostilities. Mahatma Gandhi's need-based life is one of the alternative, for reducing competition.

3.8.3 Direct Intergroup Contact and Recategorization: The Motivational Perspective

People very readily divide the world into 'us' and 'them' categories; the group that one belongs to is the 'in-group'; while those who belong to the other group are called 'out-group'. Even in fairly homogeneous groups, seemingly arbitrary and meaningless criteria are used for creating such distinctions. The categories may be as minimal as place of residence, school, occupation, etc. Further, the 'us' group are viewed in favourable terms, while the 'them' group is seen in negative terms. So, they are disliked as they are seen as possessing undesirable traits.

Tayfel and Turner (1979) demonstrated this in their studies. Some of the members of the 'in-group' did not even agree to meet the others, even through the categorization appeared purely arbitrary. This suggests that prejudice may stem from our inherent tendency to categorize people into 'us' and 'them'. Why does this occur? Tayfel and others (1971) call this mentality an attempt to be a part of a group on the basis of bare-minimum characteristics; for example, those who work in the fourth floor, those who drive a car, as opposed to a bike and so on. Even when people do not know who the other members of one's group are, there is a distinct favouring of those who are of one's group, as compared to those outside the group.

This distinction once formed and the basis is a substantial one, then the consequences can be enormous and often disastrous. Religious intolerance is the best example based on such a distinction. The 'us-them' categorization is a cognitive one. This helps us to organize the world around us in a quick and easy way. How does this distinction lead to favouring one's group and being negative to the other? For this motivational explanation is offered. Tayfel and Turner propose the social identity theory to explain this phenomenon. According to them, people desire their sense of identity not only from their own accomplishments, but also from those of the groups to which they belong; for example, people who studied in an Ivy League School in the US, people who belong to this political party, people who believe in democracy, etc. Individuals seek to enhance their self-esteem by identifying with specific social groups. This strategy would work only if their own group is seen as being better than the other group(s). Since all groups carry out the same process, the final result is one in which every group sees itself as superior to their rivals. Prejudice arises out of the conflict of social perceptions. To distinguish it from realistic-resource based completion, Tayfel calls this social completion. So, by boosting the status of one's group, one stands to elevate one's own self-identity.

NOTES

Our group identity is raised by perceiving other groups as being lesser. Several studies have supported these suggestions. Meindl and Turner (1985) observed that the need to enhance our self-esteem would be greater, after recent failure experiences. This led to situations where the out-groups were perceived in extremely negative ways. For example, internationally weak countries perceive and evaluate the more strong and prosperous ones with a lot of contempt and disdain and speak about themselves in morally, religiously and culturally superior. These are the origins of racial, ethnic, religious and sexist prejudices.

Caldini et al. (1976) saw the tendency to identify with winning teams in sporting events, as a support for boosting the self. This is seen as basking in reflected glory. This is why the victorious describe themselves as 'we are the best', 'unbeatable' and so on. People buy T-shirts, mugs, caps, and other memorabilia, to identify with a group and feel good about themselves. While they rejoice in their group's achievements; they find denigration of the other group also satisfying. This is the prejudicial outcome of identification with one's group and their successes.

Frustration-aggression theory

One of the most common outcomes of frustration could be lashing out at objects of people in the vicinity. A frustrated motorist would honk more at other drivers on the road. Similarly, this principle suggests that when hardships exist in society, people are more prepared to display their prejudice and discrimination, than at moderate times. However, often it is not permissible to lash out at the real source of our frustrations. Here, we choose to displace our aggression on to suitable soft targets. For example, if we have a bad day at work we are likely to get angry at the smallest of things when we are back home. Kids, who are scolded by their teacher, take it out on their weaker siblings and so on. This claim is clearly visible. The frustration-aggression theory predicts that hardships in society could generate ill-will towards minority or less privileged groups in society; who by virtue of their weaker position, are perceived as safe and vulnerable targets. Lynching, rioting, sexual abuse of children, women, etc., are examples of activities carried out by the more powerful, but frustrated groups in society, against the weak. This is called scapegoating. Ethnic, religious and other barriers erected against foreigners in a country, is indicative of this phenomenon caused by frustration in one's own society. Many western countries find their workforce jobless due to outsourcing. India and China are viewed as job-stealers, by the developed countries.

The economic and motivational approaches give some explanations about the origins and unequal evaluations of the in-group and out-group as the basis for the development of prejudice and discrimination.

3.8.4 Cognitive Intervention Prejudice

We categorize everything. This serves the purpose of simplifying the world around us. Stereotypes help us in the categorization process.

NOTES

Stereotypes conserve cognitive resources

Since the real world is far too big, unbelievably complex and also very transitory, it is not possible to know anything at all in sufficient detail to deal with things in any meaningful way. Hence, the human mind reconstructs it into a simpler model so that it is more manageable, Liffman (1922). Stereotypes enable us to engage with these small scale models. Macrae and Bodenhausen (2000) state that stereotypes are useful categories that help us process information efficiently. It is particularly useful when there is information overload, fatigue or distraction. Then the stereotype, shortcut come in very handy.

The downside of the use of stereotypes involves occasional inaccuracies and errors. It can lead to unfair and biased judgements as all people may not fit into a stereotype. The information that is processed on the basis of stereotypes, leads to enduring attitudes, even in the absence of validity for holding them. This results in prejudicial evaluations. Also, stereotypes can distort perceptions.

Biased information processing

It is important to examine the processing that occurs leading to inaccurate convictions about people belonging to different groups. Dovidio, Evans and Tyler (1986) found that data relevant to a particular stereotype are processed more quickly as compared to irrelevant information. This also implies that a person holding a stereotype pays attention to specific information, ignoring other information. These may be consistent with the stereotypes held. If inconsistent information occurs, the attempt would be to reduce the discrepancy by recalling facts that are consistent with the existing stereotypes.

Stereotypes also determine that we remember and recall information that is consistent. Stereotypes support prejudicial evaluations by noticing information that is consistent with it. This result is the self-confirming of the stereotype. So exceptions make a person readily choose supporting information. Thus, the cognitive processing itself strengthens the presence and operation of stereotypes. They get confirmed by the selectivity of attention, storing, remembering and recalling. This firmly entrenches the prejudice.

Illusory correlation

This implies perceiving connections of relationship where none exist. This is an unfortunate cognitive process at work. When two distinct stimuli or events co-occur; they are perceived as correlated. For example, violent crimes and certain types of groups (migrant labourers) both these stimuli are distinct. These two categories are perceived as related to the crime. This is an instance of illusory correlation. Illusory correlation is an erroneous belief about a connection between events, characteristics or categories that are not related at all. It is the paired distinctiveness that stands out, because they co-occur, Hamilton Gifford (1976).

Negative events have distinct impact on our attention. If they are committed by certain distinct group members, like migrant labour, then the distinctiveness

NOTES

maintain relationships that do not exist, in an erroneous manner, leading to the prevalence of stereotypical views.

Finally, we have the self-fulfilling prophecy that regulates many behaviours that almost validating the belief held by the perceiver. These are the cognitive processes that explain how prejudices come about and are maintained, even in the face of contrary information. Prejudice also enhances the self in terms of a member, because they see their group as superior to the other group. Economic, motivational and cognitive processes give rise to prejudices and their continued maintenance in people.

3.8.5 Competing Prejudice and Prejudice Based on Gender

Prejudice is a deadly poison that affects society. It drains the resources of any group. It is negative and unhealthy. Several plans of action have been studied and suggested, some of them are as follows:

- **Learning not to hate or have a prejudice:** Since bigotry has been learned from parents, teachers, friends, media and other such significant sources, (classical, instrumental conditioning and modelling), it is possible to unlearn the prejudices through these techniques. Parents and teachers can be sensitized about their role in the development of prejudices and discrimination. This awareness could lead to discouraging their wards from learning prejudiced attitudes.

Teachers can provide opportunities for students to experience the unfair discriminations that can be faced if prejudice and discriminations are mounted on them, in role play situations.

Through these procedures, the chain of hate can be broken. The result could be an understanding of the evils of prejudice and discrimination and thereby a reduction in such behaviour and thinking.

- **Direct inter-group contact:** The presence of prejudice leads to segregation of people of both sides. The victims as well as the perpetrators. This separation could result in increasing the negative attitudes about each other. Since no social interactions exist between the two groups who are hostile to each other, neither gets to see the other in fair and non-prejudicial terms. Stephan (1985) proposed the contact hypothesis wherein the two group members could get better acquainted with the other and realize that they are similar to each other than was thought to be. People who are perceived to be similar are more likely to view each other favourably. Contact would also throw up inconsistent information on a regular basis. This could challenge the negative schema and change could arise. Direct contact would also lead to the destruction of the perception of out-group homogeneity. All these raise hope for attacking prejudices.

However, a few conditions of contact have to exist for prejudices to be lowered. They are as follows:

NOTES

- o Contact must be between groups who are equal in terms of social, economic and task-related status. For example, similar vocations, incomes, education and other standing in society. Contact between owners of an industry and the employees are not on equal relationship. Here, contact would not help in prejudice reduction. If there is unequal status, the contact could lead to strengthening of the existing prejudicial attitudes.
- o Contact should involve cooperation and interdependence. These conditions would lead to the pursuit of shared goods. Hence, competition would ease and each group might be more favourably disposed to the other. This can foster change.
- o The contact should occur on an informed note. This would make people shed their roles and expectations associated with it. This one-on-one interaction is ideal for breaking stereotypes and initiating changes.
- o The contact must happen in a setting where the group norm would favour equality and closer associations between the groups. For example, a sporting event, or a cultural meet.
- o The groups must consciously act in ways that disconfirm the stereotypes that are held by each other; for example, teachers can wear casual clothes and dance and display less rigidity, show more openness and friendliness besides engaging in activities that students, prefer (games, jokes, watching movies, going for picnics, etc. are suitable activities, for disconfirming prejudices).
- o Each person must view the member of the other group as typical representative of their respective groups. This would help in generalizing these pleasant contacts to other person and situations, also.

Cook (1985) found that prejudice between groups does get reduced if contact occurs in some or most of these conditions. In real life the cases of integrated schooling is an example of attempts at prejudice reduction, through direct contact. The concept of inclusive education also has this as the basis.

- **Mindfulness in thinking:** Since people are 'cognitive misers' in terms of processing information, we quickly categorize and allow the stereotypes to operate in thoughtless manner. This results in the maintaining of the existing prejudiced attitude. Since the group membership is the most important basis of the categorization, one fails to notice the other characteristics of the individual in question. So to combat this, people are trained to see and behave more mindfully toward others.

Longer, Bashner and Chanowitz (1985) taught children to think and act towards children with challengers in a thoughtful way. They found that those who were coached to adopt a mindful set demonstrated less prejudice towards this group of persons. This entire process aims at getting people to think of challenged persons in terms of their skills and abilities and not in

terms of the social category to which they belonged.

Becoming aware of individuals and their particulars is a sure way to lessen prejudice that occurs due to mindless categorization.

NOTES

Prejudice based on gender

The division of men and women is biological. However, the stereotypes involving the female gender, is highly culturally dependent. Because men are physically muscular and stronger, and women gentler and delicate, the traits associated with men and women are different. Men are seen as assertive, confident, decisive, ambitious, etc., while women are perceived as passive, dependent, indecisive, etc. These are stereotypes and in keeping with these cognitive make up, positive traits are associated with men and negative traits with women. Once the stereotype is in place, the male group perceives himself as being superior to women. Differences in the stereotypes between men and women may be partly true, but the extent to which they exist are more a myth than in reality, Eagly and Carli (1981).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What factors does the attitude-behaviour link relate to?
6. How is the strength of association between an attitude object and its memory helps in object evaluation?
7. Define belief polarization hypothesis.
8. Define discrimination.
9. What are the three components of prejudice?

3.9 GENDER STEREOTYPES: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FEMALES

Many societies have accorded legal rights to women, but this does not imply equal or comparable treatment with men. This means that women, like many other groups, face insidious forms of prejudice and discrimination in living. Various forms of gender discrimination in society are known collectively as sexism. Women are excluded from certain types of jobs, training and social organizations. In most societies, women are prevented from holding social and political power. Prejudice against women exists and this leads to negative outcomes for both men and women in daily living. India, which is a highly son-obsessed society, the preference for the male child has led to selective determination. Even after birth, the female infant is often neglected, malnourished and at the mercy of others all the time, without any attempt at empowering her. Therefore, she grows up to be an emaciated, impoverished and less productive adult.

3.9.1 Gender Stereotypes and Communication

Communication theory, by Mulvaney, proposes two assumptions related to gender notions, in women. They are as follows:

- (i) **Communication is epistemic:** This means that communication is the medium by which we come to know things that exist. Gender is socially constructed through caricatures and others symbols, like the way women and girls are referred to, talked about, picturized, the symbols like dress, jewellery, etc. associated with them. Pictures, movies, caricatures and other sources like music, dolls, stories, mythologies, etc., all add to these ways of knowing about women. Notions of being male and female are also learnt through other concepts; for example, 'Boys don't cry;', 'Women are emotional creatures', etc.
- (ii) **All communication is axiological:** This suggests that all communication is value-laden. No language is neutral in the true sense. All communication, exhibits an attitude. An attitude is a forerunner of action. All actions have consequences. Communication is also the process by which we learn to be male or female and to behave sex-appropriately. From very early in life, girls and boys are exposed to different linguistic practices, like as follows:
 - a. How women are to be talked to and how women are expected to talk.
 - b. Men and women also learn the way in which language is used. For example, women are scatter brained, men are courageous. These are value laden communications that also teach men and women how to use language and also recognize how language usage is different for the genders.

NOTES

Women are told to speak softly and also soften their messages. Women are identified by their association with men. For example, daughter of, wife of, which signifies maleness is a general norm. A woman physician is still referred to as lady Doctor. We are taught about gender through the use of language. This is manipulated in favour of men and against women. This is one of the ways by which negative stereotype about women emerge.

Religion, mythology, philosophy, science, etc., also create gender related concepts that are unfavourable to women. These are then embedded in societal values. Religion also legitimises certain myth through the potency of their narratives. We can take Adam and Eve as an apt example. Eve was created later, and is personified as a 'temptress'. Also, the suffering, devoted, obedient, dutiful Sita, wife of Rama, the prophet having many wives, etc., are other examples. In fact, the concept of God is male in all religious, exception Hinduism. All these add up to the creation of the web of meaning in terms of maleness and femaleness, even while describing men and women, men are described as assertive man, swinging bachelor, etc., and a woman is described as 'frustrated spinster', etc. Homes and schools also contribute to sexist attitudes by the way language is used and behaviours

NOTES

are seen. Girls are generally put to do household work, while boys are allowed to play and be outdoors. School textbooks portray girls sweeping the floor, while boys are shown flying kites, etc.

In modern times media generated messages are powerful means of conveying male and female representations; for example, women as objects of sexual pleasure or physical appeal. The advertising industry fully exploits this. Language is a medium to develop a worldview. Through language, the world view about women is created and sustained.

Language is a medium of communication and a guide to social reality. Through language, social roles are another basis for the gender stereotypes coming into play. Men have been the traditional hunters while the women have been the home and hearth keepers. So, this 'outside the home-inside the home' distinction in terms of social roles have become invested with traits that are suitable for each of the roles. Masculine traits were aggression outgoing, etc., while feminine traits were caring, selfless, etc. Gradually, the outgoing masculine traits were viewed positively and the feminine traits negatively. Women who work outside the home are perceived to be possessing masculine traits. So, the roles played by individuals, regardless of their true sex, determined how they are perceived.

The roles women are engaged in does contribute to gender stereotype. This position has an optimistic note in that as women enter newer fields and take on newer roles, changes in the existing gender stereotypes are bound to occur. Women as fighter pilots, executives of companies, police personnel, etc., are sure to make several stereotypes, weak.

3.9.2 Discrimination against Females

The India Parliament is unable to pass the legislation, reserving 33 per cent of seats for women, in the last three decades. Men are its biggest opponents. This is because no group that is enjoying power or privileges wishes to erode its base. So, men do not wish to lose control over their monopolistic situation. Such a move could change the face of India and the way the country is governed. However, it is not allowed to happen, this is blatant discrimination. In the unorganized sector, women still do not get equal pay for equal work. In other respects women hold low-paying, low status jobs. In households, the work done by women is treated with disdain. Their work does not actually count. These are subtle forms of discrimination at work.

The girl child, if allowed to be born, is not sent to school in many parts of the world. This is because of the perceptions about the value of educating the girl. Maths is seen as more important for boys as compared to girls, based on career needs at the adult stage. This leads to a weeding out of women from the high paying jobs in science, engineering, etc. This discrimination has cyclical implications.

Attributions made about male and female achievements

Deaux (1982) found that successful performance by males and females were assigned different attributions. Male success was generally seen to be the result of internal factors, such as ability and intelligence, while female success at similar task was attributed to external factors like and easy task, a piece of luck, and so on. Evaluations such as these are important for rewards like promotions, pay raises, and greater responsibilities. The kind of attributions one makes to achievements has important outcomes in the working world. Another damaging aspect of such attributions is that often evaluators expect less from female employees. This also colours their ratings of female workers in a negative way. They are rated lesser than their male counterparts irrespective of their performance levels.

NOTES

Attributional bias in successful performance

In attributional bias, men and women are equal in terms of their levels of success, but the rewards and recognitions are not equal because the perceptions differ. Major and Kumar (1984) found that business graduates (men and women) had different pay expectations from the recruiters. So these expectations played out in the differentials in salaries received. However, newer studies show that there is a shift in ratings, employment opportunities, salaries, etc., from a biased one against females to a more equitable one. Women still face and suffer serious problems at home and in the workplace.

Masked sexism

Masked sexism can also be called benevolent sexism. All sexism has negative and positive components. However, some attitudes like sexism are ambivalent. In a study by Glick and Fiske (2001), where 15,000 men and women were interviewed in nineteen nations, they found that benevolent sexism often coexists with hostile sexism. This means that negative perceptions, where women were believed to be neglecting the home, usurping men's jobs, etc., were prevalent alongside attitudes that women used protection, used to be treated with chivalry, etc. (positive attributions). They argued that such partly positive stereotypes are far from being benign. Also, they could be especially resistant to change. One of the outcomes is that the holder of such a stereotype can easily deny any prejudice existing in a person; for example, those who worship Goddesses or adorn cars, walls, etc. with paintings of movie actresses, etc., do so because they have a romantic notion of these female idols. All these are the positive orientations towards females. However, when ordinary women in one's life do not fulfil these expectations, then it is easy to denigrate them as undesirable. This in effect means that women who conform to the patriarchal notions and ideals are rewarded and viewed positively.

Benevolent sexism is a true inhibitor of equality

Those with ambivalent attitudes act positively towards the members of the group only if they fulfil the idealized images of what the group members should be. Anyone who deviates from this is found to be treated with hostility, like some men, wish to

NOTES

marry educated but non-working women. Education of women is seen positively, but working is viewed negatively. This generally implies independence, financial control, outdoor freedom, etc. Many men find this to be threatening and are incapable of handling it.

3.9.3 Sexual Harassment

Sexual abuse that operates in the world of work and outside the home is generally referred to as sexual harassment. This is the use of one's position to force unwanted sexual demands on someone. It generally happens in situations of unequal power, like master and servant, teacher/coach and student, male and female, adult and child, lender and receiver, etc. Women in informal labour force, who are paid daily wages and others who lack job alternatives, are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse/harassment at work.

Sexual harassment cannot be treated as a personal matter as it happens within the occupational sphere. If it is viewed as a structural factor, it is easy to understand why sexual abuse is workplace related. To begin with, the employer-employee power relationship is at work. Here, women are encouraged to be viewed as sexual objects. Often, females are hired for their sexual attributes, like young and attractive, besides their job qualifications.

Sexual harassment is generally a no-name social problem

Sexual harassment is unspeakable as a rule. So, most women suffer it silently. None relate it to their disadvantaged position in the market place. Gradually, with women's emancipation and awareness, this has become recognized as a social problem, specifically at the workplace.

Sexual harassment may constitute a single encounter at work or several incidents. It can be a condition for being hired, retained, promoted, etc. Sexual harassment can be viewed as existing on a continuum of severity and unwanted advances. It can be verbal, or physical like being ogled at, brushed against the body, friendly pats, squeezing, pinching, grabbing the arm, catching one alone, any indecent proposition and threats of losing a job and forced sexual relations.

Verbal sexual harassment may take the form of persistent comments on a woman's body, or parts of the body or talk of intimate details of sexual experiences, etc. Pornography is used at times. Touching inappropriately is often described as being affectionate, and so on. There is often more than one type of harassing behaviour present, so a single harasser may fit more than one category. Following are brief summations of each type:

- **Power-player:** Legally termed 'quid pro quo' harassment, these harassers insist on sexual favours in exchange for benefits they can dispense because of their positions in hierarchies; getting or keeping a job, favourable grades, recommendations, credentials, projects, promotion, orders, and other types of opportunities.

- **Mother/father figure or the counsellor-helper:** These harassers will try to create mentor-like relationships with their targets, all the while masking their sexual intentions with pretences towards personal, professional, or academic attention.
- **One-of-the-gang:** Harassment occurs when groups of men or women embarrass others with lewd comments, physical evaluations, or other unwanted sexual attention. Harassers may act individually in order to belong or impress the others, or groups may gang up on a particular target.
- **Serial harasser:** Harassers of this type carefully build up an image, so that people would find it hard to believe they would do anyone any harm. They plan their approaches carefully and strike in private so that it is their word against that of their victims.
- **Groper:** Whenever the opportunity presents itself, these harassers' eyes and hands begin to wander, engaging in unwanted physical contact that may start innocuously but lead to worse.
- **Opportunist:** Opportunists use physical settings and circumstances, or infrequently occurring opportunities, to mask premeditated or intentional sexual behaviour towards targets. This will often involve changing the environment in order to minimize inhibitory effects of the workplace or school or taking advantage of physical tasks to 'accidentally' grope a target.
- **Bully:** In this case, a harasser uses physical threats to frighten and separate two would be lovers who wilfully are engaging with each other. The intent of the harasser can be due to a range of reasons such as jealousy, or their own hidden sexual agendas. Normally, the harasser attempts to physically separate the two using their size or threats of physical violence until they are satisfied by the separation or can pursue their own sexual agenda against one of the victims.
- **Confidante:** Harassers of this type approach subordinates, or students, as equals or friends, sharing their own life experiences and difficulties, sharing stories to win admiration and sympathy, and inviting subordinates to share theirs so as to make them feel valued and trusted. Soon these relationships move into an intimate domain.
- **Situational harasser:** Harassing behaviour begins when the perpetrator endures a traumatic event (psychological), or begins to experience very stressful life situations, such as psychological or medical problems, marital problems, or divorce. The harassment will usually stop if the situation changes or the pressures are removed.
- **Pest:** This is the stereotypical 'won't take "no" for an answer' harasser who persists in hounding a target for attention and dates even after persistent rejections. This behaviour is usually misguided, with no malicious intent.
- **Great gallant:** This mostly verbal harassment involves excessive compliments and personal comments that focus on appearance and gender,

NOTES

NOTES

and are out of place or embarrassing to the recipient. Such comments are sometimes accompanied by leering looks.

- **Intellectual seducer:** Most often found in educational settings, these harassers will try to use their knowledge and skills as an avenue to gain access to students, or information about students, for sexual purposes. They may require students participate in exercises or 'studies' that reveal information about their sexual experiences, preferences, and habits.
- **Incompetent:** These are socially inept individuals who desire the attentions of their targets, who do not reciprocate these feelings. They may display a sense of entitlement, believing their targets should feel flattered by their attentions. When rejected, this type of harasser may use bullying methods as a form of revenge.
- **Stalking:** Persistent watching, following, contacting or observing of an individual, sometimes motivated by what the stalker believes to be love, or by sexual obsession, or by anger and hostility.
- **Unintentional:** Acts or comments of a sexual nature, not intended to harass, can constitute sexual harassment if another person feels uncomfortable with such subjects.

Effects of sexual harassment and the (often) accompanying retaliation

Effects of sexual harassment can vary depending on the individual, and the severity and duration of the harassment. Often, sexual harassment incidents fall into the category of the 'merely annoying'. However, many situations can, and do, have life-altering effects particularly when they involve severe/chronic abuses, and/or retaliation against a victim who does not submit to the harassment, or who complains about it openly. Indeed, psychologists and social workers report that severe/chronic sexual harassment can have the same psychological effects as rape or sexual assault. Backlash and victim-blaming can further aggravate the effects. Moreover, every year, sexual harassment costs hundreds of millions of Rupees in lost educational and professional opportunities, mostly for girls and women.

Common effects on the victims

Common professional, academic, financial, and social effects of sexual harassment are as follows:

- Decreased work or school performance and increased absenteeism.
- Loss of job or career, loss of income.
- Having to drop courses, change academic plans, or leave school/college.
- Having one's personal life exposed to public scrutiny—the victim becomes the 'accused' and his or her dress, lifestyle, and private life will often come under attack.
- Being objectified and humiliated by scrutiny and gossip.

- Becoming publicly sexualized (i.e. groups of people “evaluate” the victim to establish if he or she is ‘worth’ the sexual attention or the risk to the harasser’s career).
- Defamation of character and reputation.
- Loss of trust in environments similar to where the harassment occurred.
- Loss of trust in the types of people that occupy similar positions as the harasser or his or her colleagues.
- Extreme stress upon relationships with significant others, sometimes resulting in extreme stress on peer relationships, or relationships with colleagues and even marriage.
- Weakening of support network, or being ostracized from professional or academic circles. Friends, colleagues, or family may distance themselves from the victim, or shun him or her altogether.
- Having to relocate to another city, another job, or another school/college.
- Loss of references/recommendations.

Some of the psychological and health effects that can occur in someone who has been sexually harassed are depression, anxiety and/or panic attacks, sleeplessness and/or nightmares, shame and guilt, difficulty in concentrating, headaches, fatigue or loss of motivation, stomach problems, eating disorders (weight loss or gain), alcoholism, feeling betrayed and/or violated, feeling angry or violent towards the perpetrator, feeling powerless or out of control, increased blood pressure, loss of confidence and self esteem, withdrawal and isolation, overall loss of trust in people, traumatic stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), complex post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and suicide.

Combating sexual harassment

Some legislative methods which are strictly enforced are needed. The socialization practises for the girl and boy in individual homes where respect and equality to both are shown, should be developed. The partnership of men and women and boys and girls should be encouraged in all walks of life.

3.10 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION: GETTING ACQUAINTED AND BECOMING FRIENDS

Attraction can exist between equitableness, friends, co-workers, mentors, lovers, and several others. It can be based on several factors that are as follows:

- (i) Intellectual stimulation
- (ii) Respect for each other’s opinions (beliefs)
- (iii) Sexual arousal

Attraction can be conscious or unconscious, based on thoughts, or simply gut-feelings.

NOTES

exposure is propinquity, which means physical proximity. It is common sense that it is possible to become friends, only if one meets another often enough, develops positive feelings and then extends it into friendship. The most known examples are school students who live in the neighbourhood, or travel by the same bus, or part of an athletic team, becoming friends. Or if the parents are friends and visit each other, the children develop friendships. College mates in a similar discipline, hostel, clubs, society, etc., too become friends easily and some even get married. Similarly colleagues in a department or on a similar assignment are likely to develop friendship, readily, as also those who share bus or car pool for travel. A professor and student could become friends, because of their constant interaction and other intellectual similarities. This principle is behind arranged marriages as well. If you live and interact with or person constantly, and there are some commonalities like background, food, language, religion, etc., the chances of liking each other are indeed, high.

Proximity leads to friendship as it enhances possible encounters. There is also the notion of functional distance, a distance which encourages contact between certain people and discourages contact between others. The positioning of houses, room windows, staircases, hallways, corridors, all form one part of the functional distance. Some of these facilitate, while others inhibit contacts. Friendships in an academy seemed to follow this propinquity principle, based on functional distance. This factor can be seen to work across age, occupations, etc., in streets, housing societies, colonies, etc.

3.10.1 Proximity and Emotions: Explaining the Propinquity Effects

There are three main factors which make propinquity lead to friendships. They are as follows:

- (i) Availability or simple contact
- (ii) The tendency to be nice to people, whom we often encounter
- (iii) The comfort created by repeated exposure

Availability due to proximity is induced higher. However, it is also possible that people we dislike, also live nearby, like an unfriendly or noisy neighbour. Proximity not only makes friendship likely, but it also encourages it. This makes the liking stronger. Initially, proximity leads to casual contacts from which friendships could grow. Without causal meetings, greetings, etc. in proximity, friendships would rarely develop.

The effect of anticipating interaction makes people expect and thereafter like the person better. Darley and Berscheid (1967), in a study told half the participants that they would meet student A; the other half were told that they would meet student B. The two students were similar on both the counts. Yet each group liked that student whom they expected to meet more than the other. Favourable expectations lead to favourable/positive behaviour. However, there are instances when familiarity does lead to dislike. Yet, the positive relationship to familiarity is a compelling one. Thus, it can be concluded that we are nice to people whom we expect to meet.

NOTES

NOTES

P.A. Nutting (1987) studied and found support for that third reason of propinquity leading of friendship based on the idea that with repeated exposure, the anxiety and doubts about the unknown is absent. This is indeed comforting and therefore naturally perceived to be appealing. F.C. Bernstein (1992, 1993) found that for stimuli which are subliminal (below the threshold of awareness), repeated exposure is more effective than supraliminal ones (above the awareness threshold). This technique is used to manipulate consumer behaviour through advertising.

Propinquity does not claim 100 per cent effectiveness in bringing about attraction, but it certainly increases the possibility. One needs to be in the proximity to increase the chances of becoming friends. Proximity is a potent determinant of friendship.

Similarity, people tend to like others, who are similar to themselves, E. Berscheid and H.T. Reis (1998).

Studies show that couples have more similar interests and likings than a random pair. The factors of similarity included social class, religion and physical characteristics. Some of the factors are as follows:

- **Complementarity:** This is the tendency for people to seek out others with characteristics that are different from and that complement their own. This is the counter theory to similarity as the basis of attraction. Heterosexuality is the best biological example of complementarity. A dependent person can benefit from someone who is dominant, or a quiet person may get along well with one who likes to talk and so on. The yin and yang or notions of the trinity in Hinduism—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—are supreme examples of complementarity. However, complementarity is best only when limited to personality characteristics and their resultant functions. Complementarity of attitudes or beliefs could lead to disharmony. People from different ethnic lack grounds, religions, beliefs, etc. have to overcome these differences to relate to each other in a healthy manner.
- **Similarity:** A hard worker may not want to be with one, who is lazy. Similarity promotes attraction by validating one's beliefs and orientations; for example, religion, fan of adventure sport, etc. Similarity also facilitates smooth interaction. This makes it easier to carry the friendship forward; for example, being a vegetarian, an environmentalist, etc. It is also expected that similar others like us, this tendency makes for further smoothness in interactions.

We also believe that similar others have qualities that we like. The values, tastes, habits, etc. of people similar to us, would be both right and acceptable to us. This is a great facilitator of interaction leading to close friendships.

- **Physical attractiveness:** This is one of the most powerful determinants of interpersonal attraction. Attractive people have a distinct advantage in most situations. Attractiveness draws attention immediately. This is more important

in the initial stages of a relationship than later on in a relationship. Empirical research also supports this formulation. Attractiveness has the advantage of 'halo effect'—the view that attractive people possess other positive qualities. Needless to say that attractive people have winning personalities. In conversations also, attractive persons are listened to better, others respond more energetically, etc., giving them real advantages in interaction. Attractive infants receive more playful attention from doctors, nurses, mothers, etc., than the less attractive ones. This advantage continues through school, college and even into adult life.

Attractiveness is more important in determining outcomes in a woman's life, than in a man's life. So beauty can translate into power for women. Cleopatra is a historical legend of beauty and appeal. Physical attractiveness is important for the following three reasons:

- o **Immediately visible:** It groups intelligence, competence, character, etc. easily. It is a demonstrable virtue.
- o **Prestige:** Having an attractive partner indicates your capacity to be able to draw an appealing and desirable person. Being seen in the company of attractive women boosts a man's image. It even has a beneficial impact on a man's income, status, etc.; for example, Aishwarya Rai-Bacchan, adding to her husband's and family's prestige by her stunning looks.
- o **Biological reason:** Physical attractiveness is based on evolution. Physical attractiveness is associated with reproductive fitness. So by mating with physically fit people, the genes can be passed on. This is a far-fetched link, yet it has some merit and many takers. This is more valid in the case of women, as compared to men. This is a form of investment in the offspring.

Typically, women look for mates whose bodily characteristics are powerful (Muscles, height, etc.). All these are related to the providing role.

Theoretical citations on attraction

Interpersonal attraction is chiefly based on proximity, similarity and physical attractiveness. The conceptual framework for interacting these notions of attraction have to be examined. They are as follows:

- (i) **The reward framework:** We tend to like those who provide rewards; at least those who make us feel good, win our affection. The rewards can come in the form of physical attractiveness, proximity and similarity (comfort level).
- (ii) **Social-exchange framework:** According to this view, people tend to maximize their own utility (feelings of satisfaction, well-being) from their interactions with others. So the three bases— proximity, similarity and physical attractiveness all add to the utility of an interaction.

NOTES

NOTES

(iii) **Equity theory framework:** People are motivated to desire fairness and equity in which rewards and costs are equal for individuals involved in the interaction. So, one looks around for the most favourable of interactions.

This explains why some pretty girls settle for a man with ordinary looks, because of the wealth he commands. Herein lays the equity between beauty and health.

Emotions and attraction

Human experiences of daily living are full of emotions. Affect or feelings are described in terms of being positive or negative. Specific emotions are also recognizable; for example, fear, sadness, joy, etc. Several studies have known that these emotions do influence our overt behaviours. Music is an example. Shopping malls and stores play soft, piped music to induce people to buy more. Lighting is another condition that could alter the mood and therefore the behaviour. Sometimes, the affect can be created by the mood of the other person. We all feel happy and good in a fun atmosphere. Depressed people and their thoughts make us feel sad. Smiling at a stranger could lead to the return of a smile. Women have been shown to return smiles more than men; but a woman's smile is more likely to be returned by men than a man's smile. People in a positive mood have been found to communicate more than those in a negative mood. These suggest that moods influence attraction.

Social interaction in itself is sure to arouse emotions. The affect is generally a positive one. A compliment always results in a positive emotion, while an insult is bound to create negative feelings. When a male and female meet for the first time and the beginning of the conversation have been traced, it has been found that those using a direct opening line like a 'Hello', 'How are you?', 'Do you like this sport?', etc., were rated as more desirable than those using smart lines, like, 'Do you like junk food?', etc. (refer Exhibit 3.2).

Exhibit 3.2 Making a Good First Impression

Making a good first impression: Say something cute, innocuous, or direct?		
Setting	Most-Preferred Opening Lines	Least-Preferred Opening Lines
General	Hi.	Your place or mine?
Bar	Do you want to dance?	Bet I can outdrink you.
Restaurant	I haven't been here before. What's good on the menu?	I bet the cherry pie jubilee isn't as sweet as you are.
Supermarket	Can I help you to the car with those things?	Do you really eat that junk?
Laundromat	Want to go have a beer or cup of coffee while we're waiting?	Those are some nice undies you have there.
Beach	Want to play frisbee?	Let me see your strap marks.

Source: Based on data from Kleinke, Meeker and Staneski, 1986.

NOTES

Sometimes, when we are in a pleasant mood, we like not just others more, but almost everyone who are there or the conditions that exist at that time. The friend of a friend is also liked, a particular place or type of food is liked; all this because of the positive emotions that were aroused during the encounter. Certain sounds, colours, etc. gets associated with feelings. Moods affect positive feelings and in turn determine the extent of attractiveness.

3.11 THE NEED TO AFFILIATE AND REACTIONS TO OBSERVABLE CHARACTERISTICS

All humans have the innate desire to associate with other people. Affiliation meets the words for approval, support, friendship and information. We also seek company to allay fear or anxiety; for example, visiting a person who is unwell is a form of reassurance, people who are scared, seek more company. Leon Festinger (1954) proposed that people need others to be able to evaluate themselves by comparison with others in a group, who are similar to us. People differ in their need to affiliate. This need determines the desire to connect to and be with other; for example, Facebook, e-mail, etc., apart from the ordinary telephone. There are varieties of motivations that rest on the affiliation need. Friendship motivation is based on the need to establish warm interpersonal relationships. Those who are high on this motivation tend to be rated as happy, popular, cooperative, etc. There are other types of motivations also identified by Hill (1987).

Social skills can enhance or inhibits affiliation. Those whose interpersonal interactional skills are good have an advantage in carrying the need for affiliation to a fruition. Children learn these skills from siblings and other children. Hence, it is important to encourage children to have play companions, early in life, Langston and Countor, 1987 (refer Figure 3.5).

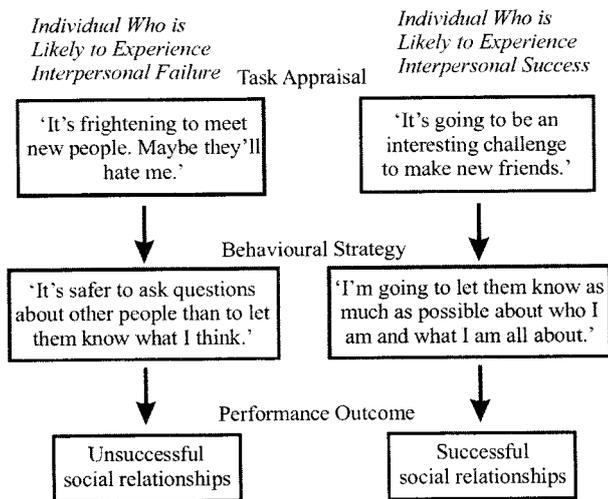


Fig. 3.5 Social Skills: Patterns of Success and Failure

NOTES

Often, superficial characteristics also come into play in determining the extent of attractiveness. Certain negative and positive stereotypes that are associated with the observable characteristics also affect the desire to affiliate, or not. Some of these are age, body type, colour of the skin, smartness of attire, speech, etc. Physical attractiveness tops the list in terms of the desire of others to want to affiliate with the more attractive people.

In the matching hypothesis proposed by Bernstein (1983) it is seen that people seek others who are similar to themselves in physical attractiveness for fear of being rejected by someone more attractive than themselves.

People tend to choose friends, spouses, etc. who are similar to themselves. When we are forced to be with someone who is either more or less attractive than ourselves, the one who is less attractive is more dissatisfied. The less attractive person also wishes to be more like the attractive companion. The more attractive partner may find the less attractive one a drag on his/her social life. Being mismatched in physical attractiveness is not always a happy partnership.

3.12 CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

Interpersonal relationships are attachments in which bonds of family, or friendship, or love, or respect, or hierarchy tie together two or more individuals over an extended period of time. Children who grew up in isolated environments without other human contact or with no contact with other children do show interpersonal deficit. In a classic study on monkeys, Harlow (1959) raised rhesus monkeys without contact with other monkeys. He used 'mother surrogates'—a wire mother who dispensed food and a terry cloth mother who provided contact comfort. When the monkey kids got frightened, they went to the terry cloth mother. Later, these monkeys showed difficulties in interacting with other monkeys. There was fear and inappropriate social behaviour. Animals kept in zoos do have problems in reproductive behaviour.

Every species needs others of the same species to develop in a healthy/happy way

The need to belong—just as the need for food, oxygen, warmth and safety—exists; so is the need to bond. The need to belong is an evolutionary one. Baumeister and Leary (1995) propose the following five criteria on the basis of which relationship can be understood:

- (i) **Evolutionary basis:** Relationships help individuals and offspring survive. This ensures the continuation of the species.
- (ii) **The need to belong:** This is universal. Similar patterns would be seen across all cultures, across the world.
- (iii) **It guides social cognition:** This results in how we construe people, situations and events. So forming close relationships is essential for evaluating ourselves, suitably.

- (iv) **The need to affiliate is satiable:** Once close, warm, stable relationships have been made, we no longer seek it in other contacts. Only if this need to affiliate is left unsatisfied is there a motivation to seek it elsewhere.
- (v) **Consequences if the needs are not met:** If the need to belong is unmet profound negative consequences are bound to arise.

NOTES

3.12.1 Relationship among Relatives, Friends and Lovers

From the Harlow monkey experiment, it can be concluded that humans, just like animals, have a strong need to belong, connect, and develop a rich network of relationships. All relationships are based on our experiences of interacting with someone who reminds us of a friend, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, etc. Anderson and Chen (2002) proposed the relationship self theory to explain how prior relationships shape our current feelings and interactions. The relational self is the beliefs, feelings and expectations about ourselves that derive from our relationships with significant others in our lives. We could desire different relational selves from our partners, parents, peers, authority figures, etc.

When we encounter someone who reminds us of one person or the other, there is a reactivation of a specific relational self. These then arouse certain feelings and beliefs in us. These thereafter shape our interactions with the new person. So, if a teacher reminds us of our mother, some of the earlier beliefs, feelings with our parent would now be transferred to the teacher. This would determine the content and nature of this new relationship.

Interacting with someone who resembles a significant other alters the working self-concept in each person. This determines, how we think about ourselves in the present situation or time. So, if a person describes herself/himself as irresponsible at home with the parents; this trait is likely to reappear when someone resembling a parent is encountered. This explains why many grown up adults display juvenile behaviours when the parents are around. This phenomenon also applies to our emotional lives. So, the presence of certain people reminds us of the good times one has had. This results in positive feelings being felt in the encounters with such persons. Since both beliefs and emotions are activated, it follows then that they would influence our current interactions as well. Research evidence in support of this phenomenon was established by Anderson et al. who proposed this theory.

Our relationships with significant others can determine our self-evolution, emotions and our behaviour in new relationship in the following manner:

- (i) Relationships also help us organize our social worlds.
- (ii) We construe close others, as we construe ourselves.
- (iii) We share our construes with close others.

For example, if a set of people are introduced as single or married, then this information is categorized as per the available information. We also tend to process information about close others, much the same way as we process information about ourselves. For example, we are optimistic about a bright future for our close

NOTES

friends, just as we are optimistic for ourselves. Aron and Aron (1997) call this as self-expansion of relationships. Here, we enter into and maintain close relationships with people whose resources, experiences and characteristics resemble our own self. For example, people in love tend to merge their identities. People are inclined to see each other very similarly.

Sharing social construes with close others

After years of togetherness and closeness people seem to know what their partners are likely to attend to and remember in a particular context. This is seen in the intriguingly similar details people recall about their experiences—honeymoon, meeting parents for the first time, etc. Wagoner et al. called this Transactive Memory (1991). People who are closely related, recall more than those who are unrelated.

Relationships have a powerful influence in our lives. They shape our thoughts and feelings. Our need to belong is satisfied in this context. If not satisfied, it has negative consequence for our well-being. Relationships help us view and think of our social world.

The origin of how we relate to others

John Bowlby (1969), a pioneer in the study of relationships and an evolutionary psychologist, advanced the notion that our early attachments with parents shape our relationships for the remainder of our lives.

Attachment theory

Our attachments, without parents acts as a template for all future relationships in our lives

Unlike other mammals, the human infant is born with finer survival skills. The infant cannot flee, feed or protect itself. The only traits available are smiles and vocalizations, besides charming features that are meant to evoke love and devotion from the adults, around.

Babies try at the heart-strings of parents to get attached, to ensure their survival. Baldwin et al. (1996) suggest that as children form attachments to parents, they develop working models of how relationships function. These models are determined by the child's experiences and how available their parents are, as well as the extent of security they provide/or do not provide.

A sense of security

The sense of security depends on mother's availability. Warmth and security shape our future relationships. Ainsworth (1993) classified the attachment patterns of infants according to how children reacted to separations and reunions with their care-givers. Studies were done in the lab and at home. Strange situations as the experimental condition to assess attachment to caregivers were used.

An infant is left alone in an unfamiliar room after the caregiver leaves with a stranger. The caregiver returns and the reunion is observed. Different attachment styles were identified that are as follows:

- (i) **Secure-attachment style:** Feel secure in relationships and are comfortable with intimacy and desire to be close to others during times of threat or uncertainty.
- (ii) **Avoidant attachment style:** Feel insecure in relationships, exhibit compulsive-self reliance, prefer distance from others and during threatening conditions are dismissive and detached.
- (iii) **Anxious attachment style:** Lacks security in relationships, but seeks closeness and worries about relationships, wishes to be excessively close to others.

NOTES

Attachment styles

Attachment styles are thought to be stable across life. According to Collins and Feeney (2000), attachment styles exert considerable influence upon people's behaviour within intimate relationships. Bowlby is of the opinion that a person tends to assimilate a new person, a spouse, child, employer, to an existing model and continue to engage with them, as per the earlier template, even if the model is inappropriate; for example, an authoritarian father who generated anxiety. So, a new loss is also perceived similarly and reacted to negatively even though the structure of the work environment is truly different from that of the home.

3.12.2 Romantic Relationships

People see certain others as potential sexual partners in a relationship. Then, it can easily move from acquaintance and friendship to another level, altogether; then arises the possibility of love. The following two different kinds of love has been described:

(i) Passionate love

This is that magical thing that poets sing about, artists venerate and people lose themselves over. It is an overwhelming, all encompassing emotional state where one is transported totally, thinks of the lover all the time, wants to spend all the time with the other, is lost to the world and is almost always, unrealistic about his/her judgements about the other person.

Along with being in love, contact with other friends, etc., is reduced and one is focussed and consumed with about that single individual. Generally, thoughts seem to be out of control. They are obsessive in nature and a person experiences heightened emotions. Some describe it as floating on cloud. It is an airy, light, heady, dizzy feeling, as many call it. Love is truly different from all other types of thoughts and feelings. It is unique, special and intoxicating.

Hatfield and Walster (1981) indicate that three conditions are necessary for passionate love to happen. They are as follows:

- a. A person raised in a culture that believes in the concept and teaches it to young people through stories, poetry, music, etc. In the state of Haryana, falling in love is seen as evil and strictures are passed to

NOTES

prevent its happening. In the Muslim world, the concept itself is seen as sinful. As a rule in India, only in recent times, is open to the idea of love and it is getting to be acknowledged, thanks to mass media influences. Otherwise arranged marriages were the rule. Even in Europe, in the Middle Ages, love was thought to be pure and holy and unrelated to sexual interests.

- b. For passionate love to occur there should be an appropriate love object. This, for most people would mean, an appearing member of the opposite sex. With other sexual orientations being acknowledged in recent times, the object of love, could be different.
- c. The emotional excitement in the presence of the object of love. This is generally interpreted, as love. Various types of arousal are described here. Romantic feelings, attraction, pleasantness, warmth, comfort, and indeed sad feelings, all exist in different proportions during the emotional state. The reinforcement model is used by Kenrick, Cialdini and Louder (1979) to explain the phenomenon of love. The presence of the opposite sex member is reinforcing to the individual; any sense of attraction is due to the positive feelings elicited by that reinforcement. The presence of a given person is inherently reinforcing; this is passionate love (refer Figure 3.6).

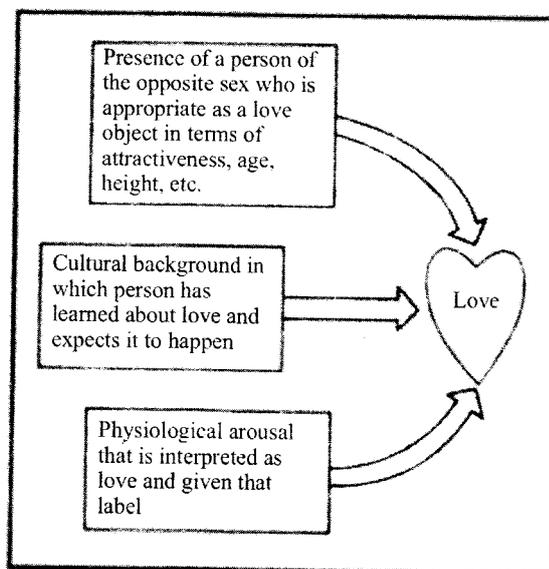


Fig. 3.6 The Three-Factor Theory of Passionate Love

(ii) Companionate love: A close caring friendship

It is possible for a relationship to begin in a fiery manner and nurture into companionate love. This is a form of friendship that involves positive emotions, similarity of beliefs, reciprocity in terms of liking and respect. It also includes caring and concern for the well-being of the person. This makes lasting relationships, possible. Here, two persons enjoy each other's warmth and affection. They value

and respect each other's friendship. The welfare of each and the happiness of the other are important (refer Figure 3.7).

Basic Love Styles	Sample Items Measuring Each Style
1. Passionate love	My lover and I were attracted to each other immediately after we first met. My lover and I became emotionally involved rather quickly.
2. Game-playing love	I have sometimes had to keep two of my lovers from finding out about each other. I can get over love affairs pretty easily and quickly.
3. Friendship love	The best kind of love grows out of a long friendship. Love is really a deep friendship, not a mysterious, mystical emotion.
4. Logical love	It is best to love someone with a similar background. An important factor in choosing a partner is whether or not he (she) will be a good parent.
5. Possessive love	When my lover doesn't pay attention to me, I feel sick all over. I cannot relax if I suspect that my lover is with someone else.
6. Selfless love	I would rather suffer myself than let my lover suffer. Whatever I own is my lover's to use as he (she) chooses.

NOTES

Fig. 3.7 Six Different Types of Love Proposed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986)

3.12.3 Loneliness

If one desires close interpersonal relationships, but is unable to establish them, then a person is said to be lonely. In the presence of a host of people one can feel isolated and friendless.

Everyone has experienced loneliness at one time or another. Certain events like moving from one place to another, illnesses, etc. cause loneliness. These are temporary and one expects to overcome, them, but seem to never get over it. If one's interpersonal skills are poor, this could also be a major cause of loneliness, later in life. Rubin (1982) indicates that those with poor interpersonal skills tend to display either aggression or withdrawal in social contexts.

There is a distinction between being alone and being lonely. Being alone is by choice, while loneliness is forced isolation. Brennan (1982) believes that adolescents are lonely because they have left home and have to seek relationships outside. If their social skills are poor, then loneliness and alienation could easily result. Older people also tend to be lonely because of physical constraints (mobility), financial problems (insufficient funds), and less energy and interest in life.

Lonely people generally have little interest in others. They are less skillful in dealing with others. Lonely people have no topics to talk about or valid questions to ask others. They are also afraid of social rejection. Due to their social ineptness, they also expect to be unwelcome by others. They also expect others not to like them. This makes them anxious in their interpersonal interactions.

Self-disclosure is one of the ways to relate to others. Those who are lonely are often seen to make inappropriate disclosures. They are either too personal or

to each other (Hays 1989). They can also readily understand and infer what the other person is thinking or feeling. They are also capable of describing each other's personality more accurately.

A close friend is valued for what he/she provides to the relationship and the unconditional acceptance of each other.

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. What is the downside of the use of stereotypes?
11. What is sexism?
12. What is sexual harassment?
13. What are the psychological effects of sexual harassment?
14. What is complementarity?
15. What is the difference between being alone and being lonely?

3.13 SUMMARY

- An attitude is an evaluation of an object of a person(s). It shapes our social perceptions and behaviour and it can be positive negative or neutral.
- Attitude is considered to be the central theme in social psychology. Generally, it refers to an individual's evaluation about the social world; the extent to which people have favourable or unfavourable reactions to any issues, ideas, persons, social groups or objects.
- Attitudes are aroused by emotions, even when the object of affect is not well recognized.
- One would expect a strong relationship to exist between attitude and behaviour. However, the link is at best a weak one. This explains why many of us hold certain attitudes, but do not always convert them into suitable behaviour.
- Persuasion is needed in a variety of matters; for example, responsible driving, meaningful parenting, honest businesses, trusting relationships, etc. Persuasion is one of the most challenging of tasks.
- In cognitive approach to attitude change, the role of cognitions in bringing about change is central.
- The peripheral route comes into play when motivation is low and ability to attend is poor. People also tend to use the peripheral route, when they are distracted by other tasks.
- Dissonance is the struggle a person experiences when inconsistencies occur between attitudes that we hold, or between our attitudes and actions. Dissonance can be seen as a motivational state.

NOTES

- Prejudice and discrimination are often used interchangeably in daily speech. Yet, they are different. Prejudice involves a negative attitude towards the members of some social group, merely because of their membership in that group.
- One of the most common outcomes of frustration could be lashing out at people in the vicinity.
- Prejudice is a deadly poison that affects society. It drains the resources of any group. It is negative and unhealthy.
- Many societies have accorded legal rights to women, but this does not imply equal or comparable treatment with men.
- Sexual harassment is unspeakable as a rule. So, most women suffer it silently.
- Effects of sexual harassment can vary depending on the individual, and the severity and duration of the harassment. Often, sexual harassment incidents fall into the category of the 'merely annoying'.
- Interpersonal attraction is chiefly based on proximity, similarity and physical attractiveness.
- Affiliation meets the words for approval, support, friendship and information. We also seek company to allay fear or anxiety.
- Interpersonal relationships are attachments in which bonds of family, or friendship, or love, or respect, or hierarchy tie together two or more individuals over an extended period of time.
- Closeness can develop among family members, special friends, between romantic partners, relatives, friends, lovers.
- Close friends spend time together, interact with each other in a variety of situations, have an exclusive relationship with each other and provide great emotional support to each other.

3.14 KEY TERMS

- **Attitude:** An evaluation of an object of a person
- **Subliminal conditioning:** Refers to attitudes aroused by emotions, even when the object of affect is not well recognized
- **Successive approximations:** Engaging in a series of steps of even closely matched responses to the ultimate pattern of behaviour desired
- **Modelling:** Process in which information or behaviour is imparted by example, even before direct practice is allowed
- **Prejudice:** Involves a negative attitude towards the members of some social group, merely because of their membership in that group

- **Superordinate goals:** Goals that transcend the interests of any single group and that which can be attained only if the groups work together
- **Illusory correlation:** An erroneous belief about a connection between events, characteristics or categories that are not related at all

NOTES

3.15 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The three components of attitude are affect, cognition and behaviour.
2. Social learning theory or SLT suggests that people learn new behaviour through observational learning of the social factors in their environment.
3. The processes underlying the learning of attitudes have been identified by psychologists and are classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning and modelling.
4. Since language is also part of the evaluation process and negative statements accompany negative reactions involving specific group members, the verbal responses are also acquired for description. Thus, both language and behaviour, besides thoughts and feelings, are also learned.
5. The attitude-behaviour link is related to the following:
 - (i) The type of learning (direct or indirect)
 - (ii) The extent of vested interests involved
 - (iii) The extent of availability
6. The strength of the association between an attitude object and its memory is crucial for the evaluation of the object. The stronger the association, the more readily the attitude is activated and the larger the influence on behaviour.
7. Belief polarization hypothesis states that people would dismiss evidence that is contrary to their existing attitudinal position and obtain support from evidence that is consistent with their views.
8. Discrimination is the unfair treatment of members of a given group because of their membership.
9. The three components of prejudice are cognitive component, affective component and behavioural component.
10. The downside of the use of stereotypes is that it occasionally involves inaccuracies and errors.
11. Various forms of gender discrimination in society are known collectively as sexism.
12. Sexual abuse that operates in the world of work and outside the home is generally referred to as sexual harassment.
13. Some of the psychological and health effects that can occur in someone who has been sexually harassed are depression, anxiety and/or panic attacks,

3. Explain the attitude–behaviour link describing the attitude accessibility model. Also, discuss the problems in attitude–behaviour link.
4. How can attitudes be changed? Compare the traditional and cognitive approaches to attitudinal change.
5. Explain the various phenomena behind resistance to change attitude.
6. Describe the process of attitudinal change that occurs due to dissonance.
7. How is prejudice acquired? Describe the ‘robbers and cave’ experiment and trace the origins of prejudice. Suggest ways to reduce the conflict.
8. Elaborate upon the various factors of similarity.
9. Describe the reasons for loneliness. What are some of the ways to reduce loneliness?

NOTES

3.17 FURTHER READING

Baron, R.A and D. Byrne. 1995. *Social Psychology*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Gilovich, T, D. Keltner and R.E. Nisbett. 2006. *Social Psychology*. New York: W.W. Norton.



UNIT 4 SOCIAL INFLUENCE: CHANGING OTHERS' BEHAVIOUR

NOTES

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Social Influence
 - 4.2.1 Conformity
 - 4.2.2 Factors Affecting Conformity and Bases of Conformity
 - 4.2.3 Need for Individuation and Control
- 4.3 Compliance
- 4.4 Obedience: Social Influence by Demand
 - 4.4.1 Personality and Obedience
- 4.5 Prosocial Behaviour: Providing Help to Others
 - 4.5.1 Bystander Behaviour: Responding to an Emergency
 - 4.5.2 Internal and External Factors that Influence Altruistic Behaviour and Role Models
- 4.6 Characteristics of the Victim
- 4.7 Explanations of Prosocial Behaviour
 - 4.7.1 Empathy-Altruism Theory: Unselfish Helping
 - 4.7.2 Empathic Joy and Genetic Selfishness
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Key Terms
- 4.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.11 Questions and Exercises
- 4.12 Further Reading

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be familiarized with the concept of social influence. It refers to the innumerable ways in which people impact one another. You will also learn about the factors affecting conformity and the bases of conformity. Conformity is the process by which an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour are influenced by what is conceived to be what other people might perceive. This influence occurs in both small groups and society as a whole, and it may be the result of subtle unconscious influences, or direct and overt social pressure.

Conformity also occurs by the 'implied presence' of others, or when other people are not actually present. For example, people tend to follow the norms of society when eating or watching television, even when they are at home by themselves.

In this unit, we will also learn why we need individuation and why we need to control minority influences along with compliance and obedience. The unit will

NOTES

introduce the prosocial behaviour providing help to others and will discuss the ways to respond to an emergency. Apart from the mentioned topics, the unit will explain the five necessary cognitive steps for help, internal and external factors that influence altruistic behaviour and role models.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Learn about social influence and conformity
- Know about the factors affecting conformity and bases of conformity
- Discuss the need for individuation and control
- Understand about compliance, obedience and personality
- Learn about destructive obedience
- Describe prosocial behaviour
- Describe the characteristics of the victim
- Give explanations of the prosocial behaviour
- Learn about empathy–altruism theory, empathic joy and genetic selfishness

4.2 SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social influence refers to the innumerable ways in which people impact one another. These include changes in attitudes, beliefs, feelings and behaviour. All these and those that result from the comments, actions or even the mere presence of others constitute social influence.

Social influence is something that everyone can relate to and has undergone. We are often targeted and are attempted to be socially influenced by politicians, friends, traders, advertisers, etc. At the same time we are the agents of social influence; for example, when we coax a friend to join a dance party or frown upon others, etc. This means that we need to know how others influence and how we can create changes in others. We also need to understand how to resist some of these influences.

In this process, conformity, compliance and obedience would be examined in detail. There are the three types of social influences that are most common.

4.2.1 Conformity

Conformity means change in one's beliefs or behaviour in response to some real or imagined pressure from others. Pressures can be implicit, like when we decide to have a new hair-style, or a dress, or an outfit; it can be explicit, as when members of our peer group encourage us to smoke cigarettes, or any other activity. Fashion is an example of conformity pressure in large-scale action.

NOTES

It is important to study the forces that create conformity. A group exerts a powerful influence on the individual members. So, there is pressure to conform if one member does not fall in line. Some of these are spoken, while there are others which are unspoken or tacit. These rules are known as social norms. Some of the rules are explicit, like respecting national symbols, norms of exam taking, etc., while others are implicit, such as speaking to strangers, telephone etiquettes, etc. Whatever be the source, usually these norms are obeyed.

Conformity is required as without it, social chaos may occur. S.E. Asch's (1957) in a classic study demonstrated group pressure leading to agreements. We do face situations when our judgements differ from those of the others in the group. Then the question arises how they are resolved. Subjects in Asch's study had to report their judgements in terms of which of the three comparison lines best matched the standard line.

There were accomplices of the experimenter present, unknown to the participants. On certain occasions, these accomplices offered answers that were wrong. These people also gave their answers before the subject responded. The participants then faced a dilemma; twelve out of eighteen problems were given wrong judgements.

A large number of the participants conformed to the judgement of the accomplices. When the accomplices were absent, only 5 per cent of the participants in the control groups made such errors. Some resistance was also noticed from the participants on some occasions.

Many people defy the evidence of their own senses when unanimous judgements of other persons are confronted. For example, when people do not announce their judgements aloud, sharply it shows the distinction between public compliance and private acceptance. Thus, we may conform to group pressure, without actually changing our personal views on a given matter.

4.2.2 Factors Affecting Conformity and Bases of Conformity

Asch's experiment demonstrates the powerful tendency to conform. However, it is heartening to know that this does not happen to the same extent all the time. Many variables operate to determine the extent of conformity, they are as follows:

- (i) **Cohesiveness:** It is the degree of attraction that exists among the group members. We are more likely to be influenced by people whom we like. When cohesiveness is high (strongly attached to the group and their expectance is important), pressures towards conformity are much higher; than when cohesiveness is low. We readily accept the influence of friends and those we admire, than from others.
- (ii) **Group size:** It refers to the number of people exerting the influence. An ideal group size of three to four members is sufficient to induce conformity. As the group size increases, the degree of conformity remains unaffected. This is because when large numbers appear to apply pressure, some form

NOTES

of conspiracy or collusion is suspected. Further, as the number of persons who are targeted increases; this also results in social influence.

- (iii) **Social support:** It broadly talks about either the presence or the absence of social support or support from others. This implies having an ally. When the person facing group pressure notices an ally who is defying conformity, there is marked reduction in the extent of influence. This is the phenomenon of breaking the influence. The earlier a support occurs; the later the resistance. Even knowing about a dissenting view existing can help in conformity lessening.

Bases of conformity

Resisting any opinion is possible if one speaks soon. It is however, interesting to study why do people conform. C.A. Insko (1985) identified several needs that make people conform to group norms. These needs are as follows:

- **Desire to be liked:** Being similar to others in a group is an easy way to be liked by the group. Parents, teachers, friends and others like those who are similar to them or agree with them. We conform with those whose approval and acceptance is important to us. For example, a child conforms with his parents' wishes. This is known as Normative Social Influence.
- **Desire to be right:** This called information social influence. In order to validate our opinions and judgements, we turn to others. We use their judgements and opinion as a social reality to verify our own positions. Since we depend on the information provided by others, we evaluate the social world according to their evaluations. People depend on others and view and hear mass-media to know about issues relevant to the group.

4.2.3 Need for Individuation and Control

Despite pressures to conform, some individuals do resist these tendencies. Two key factors leading to resistance have been identified, they are as follows:

- (i) The strong desire to be unique or individualistic. We want to be like others, yet not lose our identity as an individual. We all have a need to be distinct from others. This need helps in fighting the forces of conformity.
- (ii) Another factor is the desire to maintain control over our lives that emerges due to group pressure that takes away the personal freedom and control. This also leads to the reduction of conforming to group pressure minority influence. Historical evidences show that many revolutions have been led by a small group against the majority. Scientists, thinkers artists, activists are all example of a small minority influencing the majority.

Influence of the minority

Moscovici (1985) found that under certain conditions, minorities can exert influence over the majority. Some conditions are as follows:

- (i) Members must be consistent in their defiance to the majority.
- (ii) The minority must appear to be flexibly not rigid.
- (iii) The minority position must be consistent with the general prevailing trends in society; for example, in an open society, liberal views can prevail.
- (iv) Holding an emphatic minority position; for example, reservation of seats for women in the Parliament in India. One group cohesively wants the change. If women and other caste factors are also included, it would become a double minority and could weaken the cause.

Not all minorities can produce change; but at least the impact would be felt. This in itself can be the beginning to ultimately foster change; for example, Indian Freedom Struggle.

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the three most common types of influences?
2. What variables operate to determine the extent of conformity?
3. What needs make people conform to group norms?

4.3 COMPLIANCE

Compliance means acceding to requests from others. Advertisers, friends, teachers, parents, politicians and others request for some change in our behaviour, thoughts and feelings. They wish and hope for compliance. Different techniques are used for obtaining compliance and they are as follows:

- (i) **Ingratiation:** This is based on the notion that if others like us, they are more willing to agree to our requests, than otherwise. This strategy then involves efforts made by people to enhance their attractiveness to a target person. By creating positive feelings in those who are crucial, favours can be obtained; flattery is one such strategy. This can take various forms like agreeing with the other person's views (the target's views), showing interest in them, etc. This is shown through smiling, hanging around them, attending to everything that is said or done by them, etc.

Yet another tactic includes efforts at self-enhancement as a mean to increase one's appeal to the target person. These are managed by improving one's personal appearance, good grooming, clothing, etc. Enhancing can also include good presentation and communication skills, display of knowledge, etc. It is suggestive of intelligence competence and other desirable traits. Other methods of influencing others are as follows:

- a. **Association:** It refers to expressing contact with events and people whom the target person likes. For example, a religious belief or environmental concern, etc.

NOTES

b. Self-deprecation: It refers to the attempt of giving some negative information about oneself, with a view to promoting an image of modesty; for example, self-disclosure, volunteering information about oneself, etc. This is done for promoting a virtuous impression.

If these tactics are used with skill and care, they are likely to succeed.

(ii) Multiple requests: Everything that one asks for is not easily granted. So a useful tactic is to make more than one request. We must begin with a request that is really not required and then gradually move to the one that is of importance. This can work at times. Some types of multiple requests are as follows:

a. The foot in the door: In this type of request, a small request is made first and then a larger request is made. Often, this strategy is used by salespersons. They start by requesting for a small or trivial compliance. For example, sales people visit a house and say that they are distributing free samples, or would like to demonstrate the power of a cleaning soap, etc. Once, this is granted, they then move on to the request their main purpose. Thus, it is called a 'foot in the door' request.

This strategy does work under special conditions and with certain groups of people. The basis for its working is the target's self-perception. If we agree to a small request, then we may start viewing ourselves as a helpful person. It is this image of us that leads to greater compliance, for later larger request.

The success of this method depends if the target person is prepared to be consistent in terms of one's image.

b. The door in the face: In this type of request, the larger request is made first and then the smaller one. This tactic is the opposite of the foot-in-door method. Here, the person seeking compliance begins by asking for a big favour. When this is refused, they ask for a smaller favour. For example, initially people ask us for big donations, when they are refused, then smaller payments are also indicated, as welcome. This tactic works because of the following conditions:

- *The notion of reciprocal concession:* Since the larger favour was declined; agreeing to the lesser one is viewed as a concession. We as targets almost feel obliged to grant the second, smaller favour.
- *Self-presentation:* This is the second reason for agreeing. If we are the targets, we do not want to be seen in unfavourable light. So when the larger request was denied but the smaller one was accepted, the justification is that our image did not suffer much. Both these techniques are useful for obtaining compliance, but the foot-in-the-door has wider applicability.

NOTES

(iii) Sweetening the deal: It is also referred to as the 'that's not all' technique. We often hear consumer product dealers making offers that tempt the buyers.; for example, 'Buy one get one free', 'We would give free insurance with every car, you buy', 'Three years of free service'. Then, they may put an add-on and charge us for that, like a car stereo, etc.

This technique works on the basis of the norm of reciprocity. We feel obligated when the other person is offering increased benefits. We should be on guard when improved deals are offered as con men usually exploit this tendency.

(iv) Complaining: Constant complaining could gain some compliance. House wives who complain of not getting any help for tasks around the house know all too well that when a long list of complaints are made, at least a few them would get attended. This tactic has moderate success, but excessive complaining could turn counterproductive. Complaining to gain compliance is an integral part of social behaviour in close relationships, like family, friends, etc. This is also a means of communication in these situations. Paying heed to complaints is a valuable way to enhance the relationships.

In everyday life, several techniques are used for gaining compliance and the frequency with which they are used are discussed in Exhibit 4.1.

Exhibit 4.1 Techniques of Social Influence in Everyday Life

Tactic of Social Influence	Description
<i>Pressure Tactics</i>	Demands, threats, intimidation
<i>Upward Appeals</i>	Statements to the effect that persons with authority support the request
<i>Exchange Tactics</i>	Promises of reciprocal benefits for current compliance
<i>Coalition Tactics</i>	Statements indicating that others support the request
<i>Ingratiating Tactics</i>	Efforts to put target in a good mood or enhance the appeal of the requester
<i>Rational Persuasion</i>	Logical arguments and factual evidence
<i>Inspirational Appeals</i>	Emotional appeal based on values or ideals
<i>Consultation Tactics</i>	Involvement (by requester) of target person in decision or plan related to request

Source: Based on information in Yuki and Falbe, 1990.

4.4 OBEDIENCE: SOCIAL INFLUENCE BY DEMAND

Obedience refers to gaining compliance by order. Parents, coaches, police personnel and others use this method to obtain compliance from others. This form of compliance is generally enforced by people in authority positions.

S. Milgram, 1963, studies obedience in which the subjects were paid volunteers. They were told that it was a study to see how learning proceeds. The

NOTES

subjects were divided into teachers and learners, and the learners were subjected to shocks whenever the learning was poor. The shocks levels were graded on a visible knob in the apparatus used. The learners and teachers were put in separate rooms. Also, the learners were accomplices of the experimenter and had to act out the pain they were receiving from the shocks. (They received no shocks at all.) During the trials, when the learners committed errors; the experimenter urged the teachers to shock the participants by moving on to higher levels of shocks with every error. The teachers could see the learners suffering the pain and yelling on the other side.

When the authorities asked the volunteers to punish the learners, 65 per cent of subjects in the experimental condition complied with the commands and shocks as high as 450 volts were delivered. In the control condition, where no commands were given, only mild shocks were delivered.

Many subjects protested of the commands and wanted to leave. However, when ordered to proceed, the majority of the participants yielded to the social influence of the authorities and obeyed. This study established that obedience to authority is common and that inhuman acts can be conducted under certain conditions. Police, military, prison and other similar settings could see such happenings. However, there were some who protested and refused to obey.

4.4.1 Personality and Obedience

From Milgram's experiment, we learnt that some people obey and some resist. Personality of an individual determines if he will resist what has been asked to perform by the authorities or obey it.

The obeyers

Obeyers are people with a personality trait of submission to any authority. This is a tendency to adopt a submissive, uncritical attitude towards authority (Adorno et al, 1950). Persons with these traits tend to be more obedient, than others who are low on these traits. These people also obey commands of inflicting pain on themselves.

Rotter identified the external-internal locus of control as another personality factor, related to obedience to authority. Persons who are at the internal end of the continuum believe that they are in control of situations. By and large their actions determine their outcomes. Those at the external end believe that they have little control over their outcomes. The outside or the external forces controls the outcomes. Miller (1973) found that externals are more obedient to authority than the internals. Fritz Bock (1972) found that extremely religious people tend to be more obedient to authority figures than those who are less religious in their orientation. The proximity to the victim is another factor that could impact the extent of obedience. Another is the status of the authority involved.

Personality characteristics as well as situational factors influence obedience to authority.

Destructive obedience

Destructive obedience is the most disturbing part of Milgram's study. The reasons why people obey authority are as follows:

- (i) The obeyers see the authority figures with respect and as people responsible for removing the suffering of the victims.
- (ii) Persons in authority display signs/symbols of authority like stars, stripes, batons titles, etc. These insignia are reminders of status, power etc and are often perceived as difficult to resist.
- (iii) Initial suggestions for obedience are small. It is only gradually they become more severe and objectionable; for example, the police initially only locks protestors, then they use lathes or batons, then tear-gas and finally resort to shooting.

Together, these factors merge into a powerful force.

Resisting destructive obedience

Obedience that involves harming others must be fought back. Following steps need to be taken by the people resisting destructive obedience:

- (i) Sensitise those who obey authorities as ultimately they and not the authorities are the ones responsible for harming others.
- (ii) Individuals can be made to realize that obedience to authority beyond a point is inappropriate. Exposure to disobedient models is one of the means to achieve this.
- (iii) Individuals can be told that the power of authority figures is not unlimited and that it does not extend to unreasonable or harming actions. This could have a positive effect in facilitating resistance to destructive obedience.

The power of authority figures is high, but it is not irresistible. Gender differences involving the myth of female conformity being higher, has also been found to be illusory.

NOTES

4.5 PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: PROVIDING HELP TO OTHERS

Prosocial behaviour means that our actions benefit others, even though the person helping out has no obvious gains from the activity; for example, helping a stranded driver change tyres. An altruistic behaviour is described as an unselfish behaviour for the welfare of others; for example, saving a drowning person. However at times, both these behaviour could involve some risk for the people engaging in them. Let us examine the factors that facilitate or impede helping behaviour. Also,

let us seek to understand the motivations that lead people to undertake altruistic behaviour.

NOTES

4.5.1 Bystander Behaviour: Responding to an Emergency

There are good Samaritans who provide help and others who show apathy and ignore the situation, even when rendering help is warranted. D.A. Lang (1987) simulated an emergency situation in a hotel lobby where six people were sitting. He gave an example that a lady in a nearby seat is overheard saying that she is feeling dizzy. She becomes dizzy as the conversation proceeds. He asked his subjects what they would do under these conditions. Their responses fell into two categories—helpful and unhelpful. Four of them said that they would help the old lady and two said that they would not (refer Exhibit 4.2).

Exhibit 4.2 D.A. Lang's Analysis

Six levels of helpfulness-unhelpfulness	
Helpful Responses	
1. Direct Intervention with a Plan for Helping	"I'll give her my seat, and offer to get her a glass of water or wait with her."
2. General Help	"I'll go over and ask if she's okay."
3. Indirect Help or Reporting the Incident	"I'll tell someone at the hotel desk that the woman on the phone needs assistance."
4. Conditional Help	"If she walks around where I'm sitting and if she looks really sick and wants my help, then I guess I'll help her."
Unhelpful Responses	
5. No Help or Interaction	"I think I'll read this magazine."
6. Refusal to Help Along with an Attribution or Rationalization	"I'm not going to help her. The information probably isn't important anyway."

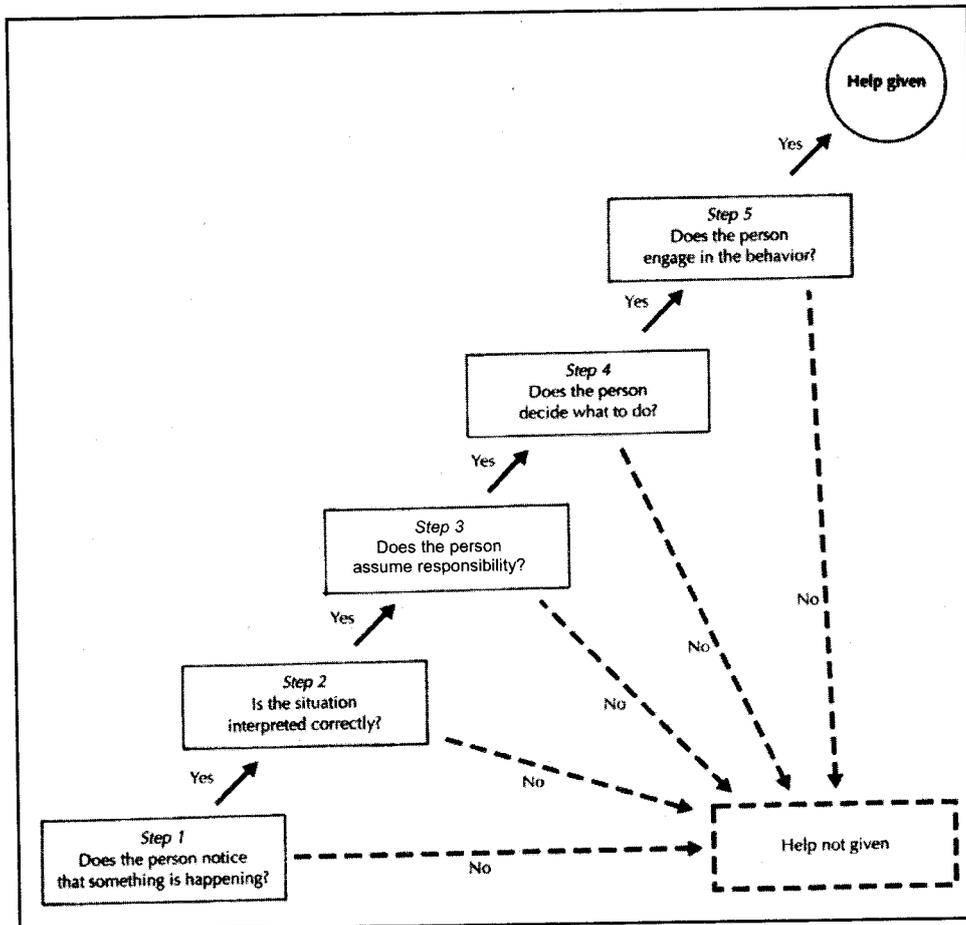
Source: Based on data in Lang, 1987.

4.5.1.1 Five necessary cognitive steps for help

A five-step process was described by Latane and Darby, which was given by Byrne and Kelley (1981). At each step, one decision leads to help while the other results in no-help. Attending to the emergency involves the following five steps:

- Step 1: Notice that there is an emergency
- Step 2: Interpret the situation correctly
- Step 3: Avoid feelings of embarrassment, if the judgement is incorrect
- Step 4: Riding on what others are doing or not doing—social comparison
- Step 5: Knowing what to do and having the skills for helping

All these decision, if positive, would result in helping behaviour. Exhibit 4.3 illustrates the five decisions that lead to prosocial behaviour or failure of help.



NOTES

Source: Adapted from Byrne and Kelley, 1981.

4.5.2 Internal and External Factors that Influence Altruistic Behaviour and Role Models

Study of helpers and non-helpers

The following factors influence altruistic behaviour:

- (i) Empathy
- (ii) Belief in a just world
- (iii) Social responsibility
- (iv) Internal locus of control
- (v) Lower levels of ego-centrism (self-absorbed, concern for others)

These five dimensions set the potential helpers apart from the non-helpers.

Role models

We all show helping behaviour, make contributions to charity when we see others doing the same, even the sight of paper money and coins in the box encourage

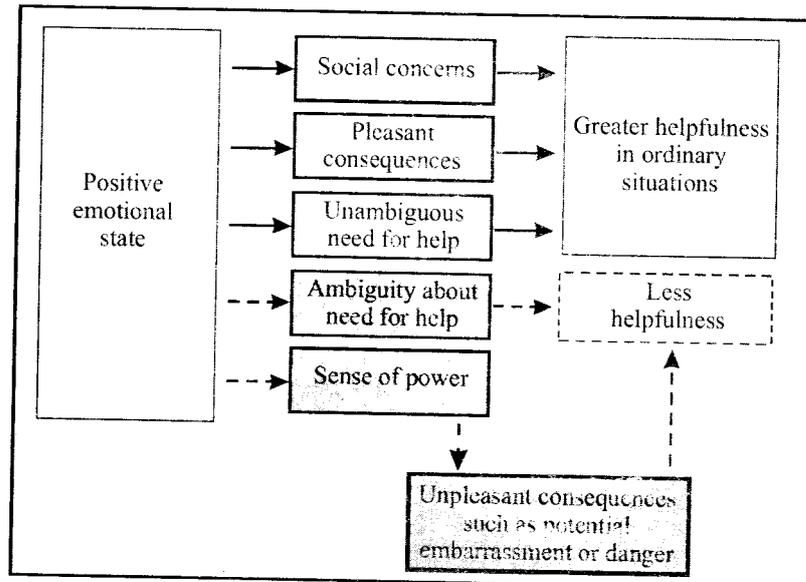
NOTES

donations. The presence of bystanders who are offering help also fosters helping behaviour in others. This is the modelling effect, blood donations is another example of it. TV shows can stimulate altruistic behaviour as well, for example, when we see a TV show that shows kindness to animals or older persons, even we get impacted. TV can exert positive prosocial responses.

Positive and negative emotions affecting altruistic behaviour

Effect of positive and negative emotions or moods and their effect on behaviour have been well established in studies. However, the research on moods and prosocial behaviour is complicated. People in a happy mood are not very willing to engage in prosocial behaviour in an emergency situation (a road accident) because they do not wish to spoil their present happy mood with unpleasant tasks (in this case, taking a wounded person to hospital, etc.). However, generally those in a good mood are willing to offer help more readily than those in a bad mood. This is the effect of the positive emotion they are experiencing. Positive emotions can help or hinder helping other people (refer Exhibit 4.4).

Exhibit 4.4 Positive Emotions can Help or Hinder Prosocial Behaviour



Negative emotions have a similar impact on helping behaviour. Sometimes, negative emotions increase helping behaviour because it provides relief from the poor emotional state we are in. Also, being good to others makes people feel good about themselves. People in mourning are often told to go out and help children with their school work or organize picnics for senior citizens, etc. However, if we are very angry or depressed then helping others is not going to help us feel better. Helping behaviour as a way of relieving negative emotions will occur in the following circumstances:

- (i) When the behaviour required is easy and effective.
- (ii) When helping would lead to more positive feelings.

- (iii) When negative feelings are not very intense.
- (iv) When the focus is less on oneself and more outward.

When attention is directed to others and their misfortune, empathy is aroused, this could motivate prosocial behaviour; for example, a strong motivation to donate money or clothes to natural calamity victims.

Short-term responses (accidents, flood-relief, etc.) are one set of the conditions for prosocial activities. Long-term ones have a different set of dynamics at work; for example, AIDS volunteer work, etc. Snyder and Omoto (1992) have listed five motivating factors that contribute to such helping behaviour. They are discussed in Exhibit 4.5.

*Exhibit 4.5 Snyder and Omoto Five Factors that
Contribute to Motivating Behaviours*

Motivation for Volunteering to Help in the AIDS Epidemic

1. Personal Values	"Because of my humanitarian obligation to help others"
2. Desire to Increase Understanding	"Because I want to learn how people cope with AIDS"
3. Community Concern	"Because of my concern and worry about the gay community"
4. Personal Development	"I want to challenge myself and test my skills"
5. Enhancement of Self-Esteem	"I want to feel better about myself"

Source: Based on data in Snyder and Omoto, 1992

The main difference between those who quit after starting volunteer work and those who continued is that people who continue to work were curiously motivated by the need to enhance their self-esteem. Thus, when it comes to long-term commitment, a selfish reason is required and it is this reason that makes us deal with difficult people. Another differential was that quitters felt the cost and effort involved in long-term helping behaviour to be very high. They also reported a stigma effect created by working with groups like AIDS victims, prostitutes, etc. from others in the society. This is termed country stigma.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. What is obedience?
5. What are the factors that influence the obedience to authority?
6. How is empathy aroused in people?
7. Why do some people continue doing volunteer work and most of them quit?

4.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VICTIM

If we see a man lying on the street with filthy clothes and a liquor bottle beside, we are not likely to help. However, if we see a smartly dressed person, lying with a wound and blood flowing from it, we are more likely to offer help. An important question here is why.

NOTES

NOTES

There is a human tendency to let those people handle their problems on their own who have run into difficulties because of their own irresponsibility or carelessness. A person who runs into debts, due to gambling is not going to find many helpers. There is anger and disgust at the thought of such people. So no help would be forthcoming.

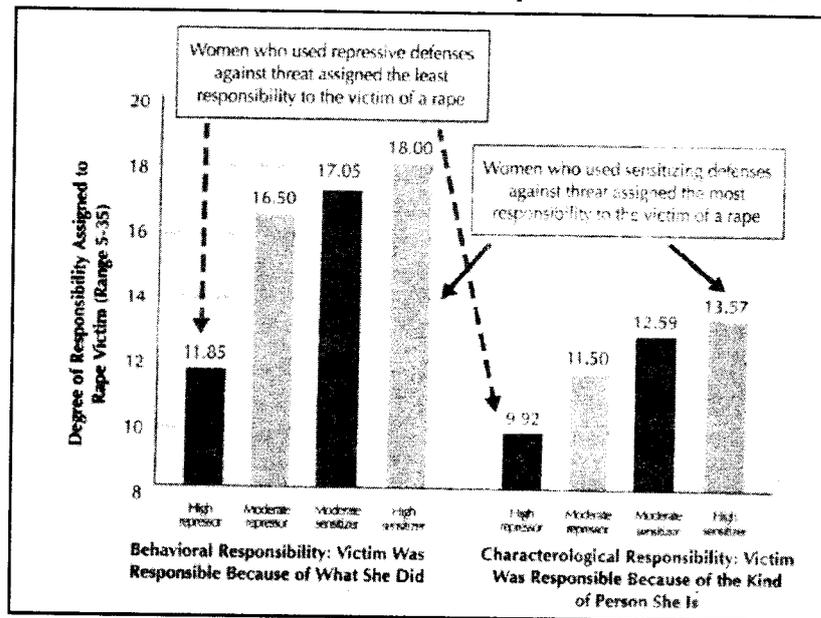
When we see a victim, our own vulnerabilities to such happenings, threaten us. Typically, two defence mechanisms are used for dealing with this threat, which are as follows:

- (i) Reprising, where one avoids or denies the threat
- (ii) Sensitization where one worries and intellectualizes the threat

Sensitizers are more likely to blame the victim, as compared to the repressors. Repressors deny the threat by playing down its reassurance and this results in the suppression of the uncomfortable feelings associated with the threat. Sensitizers do not deny or suppress, but frame the victim for what happened; for example, if a college student is robbed of all her money and another friend monetarily helps a her, a typical sensitizer would think, 'She should not have provided her friend. Why should a college student flaunt his wealth in an ugly way?'

B. Thornton (1992) made a distinction between behavioural responsibility and characterological responsibility assigned to rape victims. Victims suffer because of the kind of person they are, or because of what they have done. Sensitizers assigned responsibility to the rape victims, while repressors assigned less blame to the victim. Because the repressors deny, the threat is reduced. They do not feel the need to blame the victim (refer Exhibit 4.6).

Exhibit 4.6 B. Thorton's Study about Repressors and Sensitizers



Source: Based on data in Thornton, 1992.

NOTES

Attraction

The more attractive a person is, the stronger the possibility of receiving help as compared to a less attractive person. It will be interesting to know who asks for help. The victims also play a role in whether help is offered or not.

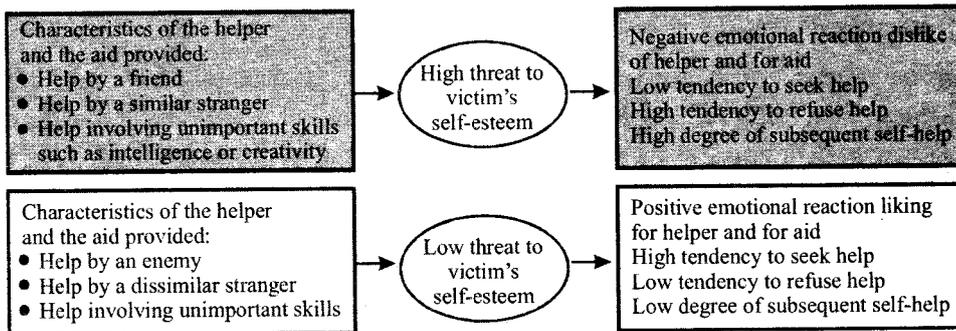
When help is sought, it is a clear and definite position. Shy, reserved people find it difficult to ask for help. They also receive less help. Some people are inhibited in seeking help from the opposite sex member. There are also demographic factors in the request for help that are as follows:

- (i) Women seek more help than men.
- (ii) The elderly seek more help than young adults.
- (iii) The higher socio-economic class seek more help than those in the lower socio-economic class.

Reluctance to ask for help

Some people believe that asking for help is a sign of incompetence. If the potential help seeker views the possible help giver as similar to him or her, there is reluctance to ask for help. Similarity increases incompetence; for example school students do not wish to get help from their classmates, others think that help seeking could result in stigmatizing. This is the conflict between dependence and independence. So, asking for help suggests inadequacy. This also explains why the low socio-economic class are hesitant to ask for help; because it fits in with the stereotype of this group being dependent, incompetent, lazy, etc. Help is not always sought; if not asked, help is sure to be not offered (refer Exhibit 4.7).

Exhibit 4.7 Victims' Response to Help Depending on Who Helps



Seeking help from others affects one's self-esteem as well, so not every helper is viewed positively, some are even disliked. Therefore, often when help is required, it is missing. This has implications when a young person sitting offers help to an older one, or women offer help to men. These are viewed as threatening to one's self-esteem and the helper is seen in negative terms. So the helper is effectively driven away.

4.7 EXPLANATIONS OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

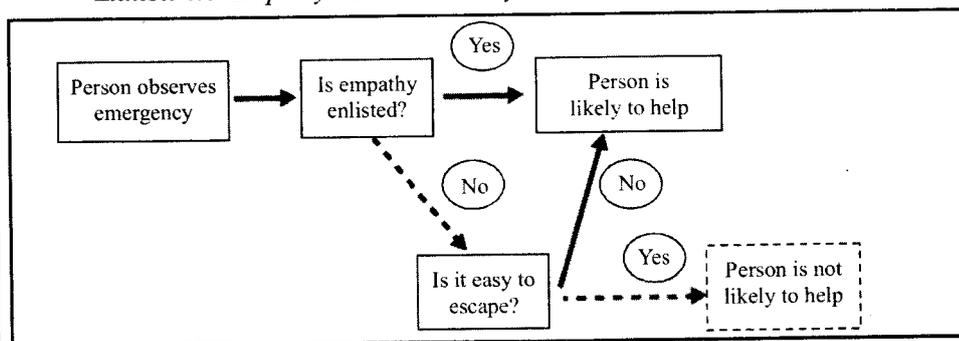
NOTES

The helper sees prosocial behaviour in positive terms. It is the right thing to help an accident victim. The observer views it critically and explains the helping behaviour as an attempt by the helper to create a good impression of himself/herself.

4.7.1 Empathy-Altruism Theory: Unselfish Helping

Empathy implies identifying and relating to the feelings of the other person. For example, distress is understood with empathy by most people. Batson (1981) proposed the empathy-altruism hypothesis to explain prosocial behaviour. Empathy is seen as the main motivator of altruistic behaviour. Empathy includes sympathy and compassion towards the victim. When empathy is around, people tend to help. In the absence of empathy, people escape from helping (refer Exhibit 4.8).

Exhibit 4.8 Empathy-Altruism Theory to Motivate Prosocial Behaviour

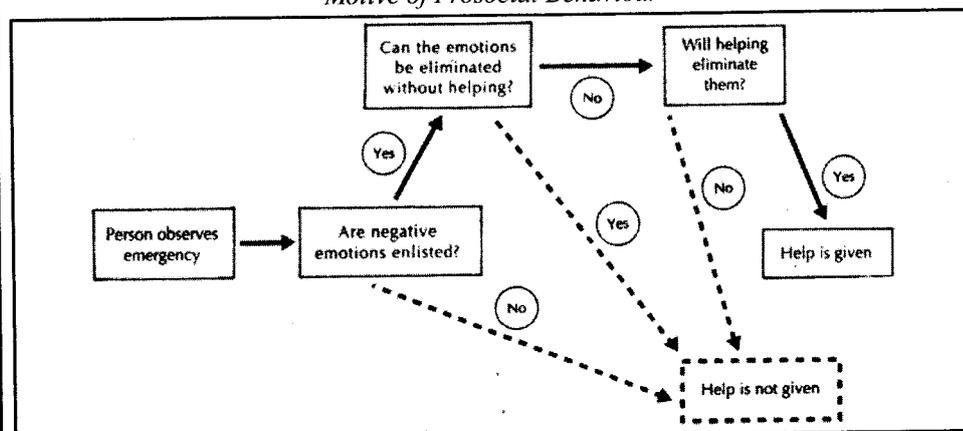


A high level of empathy results in prosocial behaviour and a low level of empathy results in escape behaviour.

Egoistic theory

Helping others reduces uncomfortable feelings and negative moods find relief in helping behaviour. This implies that it is not empathy, but selfishness that leads to prosocial behaviour as it provides relief from negative emotional states (refer Exhibit 4.9).

Exhibit 4.9 Cialdini Model—Negative State Relief as the Motive of Prosocial Behaviour



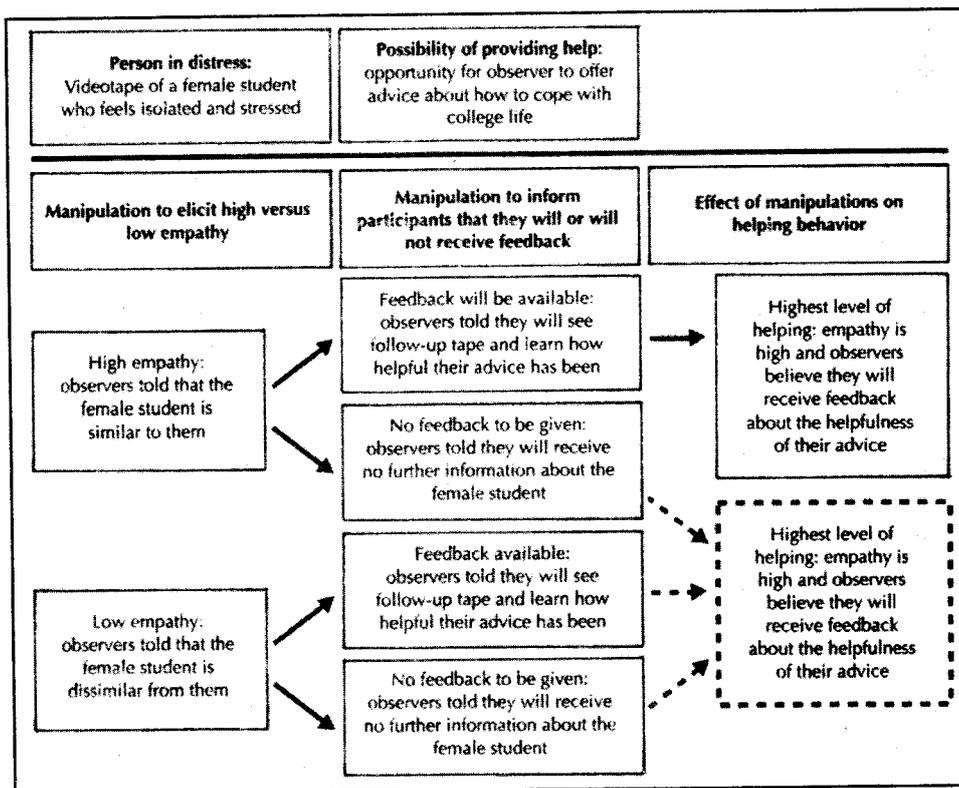
The researchers state that along with negative feelings, sadness is also aroused. It is proposed that with increase in sadness, helping was also found to increase.

4.7.2 Empathic Joy and Genetic Selfishness

Empathic joy is seen as an alternative to egoistic theory. Prosocial behaviour is motivated by the joy of helping someone and meeting some other persons' needs. Here, help comes only if the reward of joy is possible for the help giver. When help is given, positive emotions are aroused. This is known as a helper's high. This increases the sense of self-worth. Thus, prosocial activity makes one feel good and hence, experience of joy is crucial for prosocial behaviour. For example, teachers wish to know how their students did in a course, as the students were coached by them (refer Exhibit 4.10).

NOTES

Exhibit 4.10 Comparison of Empathic Altruism and Empathic Joy Explanations of Prosocial Behaviour



Genetic selfishness—helping similar others

Genetic selfishness is an evolutionary psychologists' explanation of helping. It is proposed that helping is genetically determined. Behaviour that increases reproductiveness, and fitness is favoured and that which is irrelevant is discarded. The greater the genetic similarity between two individuals, the more likely that one will provide help to the other. This is called the selfish-gene syndrome. This is motivated by the desire to pass on similar genes to future generations and ensure

their survival. Each person wants to live longer and also enhance the reproductive ability of those who are similar.

NOTES

This explains the phenomenon of scams involving relatives, nepotism in selections, favouritism in granting benefits, privileges, etc. to persons of our own kind. Matrimonial preferences can also be accounted for by the notion of a selfish-gene. Racial, ethnic, regional, linguistic, religious and other biases towards people of the same kind are easier to understand, if genetic factors are seen as the consideration for engaging in prosocial behaviour.

It is perhaps a farfetched explanation, but it is reasonable to assume that people who have been raised in similar environments, develop certain traits. These traits indicate formability and therefore comfort. So being with such people and wanting to help them/support them, etc., seem likely, as compared to people with other traits, who are unfamiliar. Help giving and help seeking behaviour is largely situationally determined. At times cultural values also influence help giving and seeking.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. What are the two defence mechanisms used for dealing with threat?
9. Why do some people not ask for help?
10. What is empathy?
11. What are the results of high and low levels of empathy?
12. What is helper's high?

4.8 SUMMARY

- Conformity is an attempt to influence an individual through group pressure. The pressure can be direct or indirect.
- The extent of conformity is determined by cohesiveness of the group, size of the group and the presence or absence of social support.
- At times, minorities can also influence the majority under certain conditions.
- Compliance refers to accepting requests from others. Techniques used for obtaining compliance are integration, self-enhancement and self-disclosure. All these are aimed at making the target person happy and thereby obtain compliance.
- Other techniques are market driven; for example, multiple requests, foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face, and sweetening the deal, etc. All these have some degree of success.

- Complaining is an attempt to win acceptance through cribbing. This has moderate success possibilities.
- Obedience is influence by demanding. This is gaining compliance by ordering. This is generally enforced by people in positions of authority.
- Obeyers are people with a personality trait of submission to any authority. This is a tendency to adopt a submissive, uncritical attitude towards authority.
- Destructive obedience is the most disturbing part of Milgram's study.
- Obedience that involves harming others must be fought back.
- Prosocial behaviour means that our actions benefit others, even though the person helping out has no obvious gains from the activity.
- Effect of positive and negative emotions or moods and their effect on behaviour have been well established in studies. However, the research on moods and prosocial behaviour is complicated.
- The main difference between those who quit after starting volunteer work and those who continued is that people who continue to work were curiously motivated by the need to enhance their self-esteem.
- There is a human tendency to let those people handle their problems on their own who have run into difficulties because of their own irresponsibility or carelessness.
- Some people believe that asking for help is a sign of incompetence. If the potential help seeker views the possible help giver as similar to him or her, there is reluctance to ask for help.
- Empathy implies identifying and relating to the feelings of the other person.
- Helping others reduces uncomfortable feelings and negative moods find relief in helping behaviour. This implies that it is not empathy, but selfishness that leads to prosocial behaviour as it provides relief from negative emotional states.
- Genetic selfishness is an evolutionary psychologists' explanation of helping. It is proposed that helping is genetically determined.

NOTES

4.9 KEY TERMS

- **Conformity:** Refers to change in one's beliefs or behaviour in response to some real or imagined pressure from others
- **Compliance:** Acceding to requests from others
- **Prosocial behaviour:** Refers to actions that benefit others even though the person helping out has no obvious gains from the activity

NOTES

4.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Conformity, compliance and obedience are the three most common types of influences.
2. Variables that operate to determine the extent of conformity are cohesiveness, group size and presence or absence of social support.
3. The desire to be liked and the desire to be right are the two needs that make people conform to group norms.
4. Obedience refers to social influence by demand.
5. Personality characteristics as well as situational factors influence obedience to authority.
6. When attention is directed to others and their misfortune, empathy is aroused and this could motivate prosocial behaviour.
7. The main difference between those who quit after starting volunteer work and those who continue is that people who continue to work were curiously motivated by the need to enhance their self-esteem.
8. The two defence mechanisms used for dealing with threat are as follows:
 - (i) Reprising, where one avoids or denies the threat
 - (ii) Sensitization where one worries and intellectualizes the threat
9. Some people believe that asking for help is a sign of incompetence. If the potential help seeker views the possible help giver as similar to him or her, there is reluctance to ask for help.
10. Empathy implies identifying and relating to the feelings of the other person. For example, distress is understood with empathy by most people.
11. A high level of empathy results in prosocial behaviour and a low level of empathy results in escape behaviour.
12. When help is given, positive emotions are aroused. This is known as a helper's high.

4.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is conformity? Also, mention the factors affecting conformity.
2. What are the conditions due to which the door-in-the-face tactic works?
3. How are personality and obedience related?
4. Who are the obeyers?

5. What factors lead to obedience?
6. What are the five steps for help?
7. How do emotions affect altruistic behaviour?
8. What is the difference between sensitizers and repressors?
9. How are attraction and offering help related?
10. What is genetic selfishness?

Long-Answer Questions

1. There is a constant desire to conform, yet we all have an innate need for individuation and control. Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons to support your answer.
2. Discuss the techniques for obtaining compliance.
3. What are the reasons that people obey authority? Also, mention how to resist destructive obedience.
4. Explain prosocial behaviour.
5. Describe the empathy–altruism theory.

4.12 FURTHER READING

Baron, R.A. and D. Byrne. 1995. *Social Psychology*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Gilovich, T., D. Keltner and R.E. Nisbett. 2006. *Social Psychology*. New York: W.W. Norton.

NOTES

UNIT 5 AGGRESSION

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Aggression
 - 5.2.1 Aggression: An Innate Tendency and an Elicited Drive
 - 5.2.2 Social Determinants of Aggression—Frustration, Direct Provocation and Exposure to Media Violence
- 5.3 Heightened Arousal
 - 5.3.1 Sexual Arousal and Aggression
- 5.4 Alcohol and Aggression
 - 5.4.1 Personal Causes of Aggression: Types of Behaviour Patterns
 - 5.4.2 Perceiving Evil Intent in Others and Shame Proneness
 - 5.4.3 Gender Differences in Aggression
- 5.5 Prevention and Control of Aggression
 - 5.5.1 Punishment
 - 5.5.2 Catharsis
 - 5.5.3 Other Techniques of Reducing Aggression
 - 5.5.4 Cognitive Intervention and Other Techniques
- 5.6 Groups and Individuals
 - 5.6.1 The Consequences of Belonging
 - 5.6.2 Nature, Function and Formation of a Group
- 5.7 Groups and Task Performance
 - 5.7.1 Benefits and Costs of Working with Others, and Social Facilitation
 - 5.7.2 Social Facilitation and Social Loafing
- 5.8 Decision-Making by Groups
 - 5.8.1 Decision-Making by Groups and Decision-Making Processes
 - 5.8.2 Nature of Group Decisions
 - 5.8.3 Group Decision-Making: Some Pitfalls
- 5.9 Summary
- 5.10 Key Terms
- 5.11 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 5.12 Questions and Exercises
- 5.13 Further Reading

NOTES

5.0 INTRODUCTION

We live in a world full of violence. Chilling accounts of murder, rape, armed conflict, child abuse, and killings in the name of religion are reported all the time. There is a lot of domestic violence and abuse. These are all manifestations of aggression. Simply stated, aggression is the intentional infliction of some form of harm on others and is far too common and disturbing to ignore.

Psychologists have sought to understand it from the historical perspective—how we learn to be aggressive, some of the determinants of aggression, personal factors involved in aggression and the ways to control or at least manage aggression.

NOTES

It is sad to recognize that human beings are the only ones to aggress and kill needlessly. All the other species only attack or aggress when their food source or mating rights are threatened. Both these are survival oriented and to a large extent, understandable. It is indeed puzzling to see the most evolved of the species displaying one of the most primitive of behaviour against their own members.

Scientists have been trying to find explanations for this inhuman conduct, for centuries. Even today, the explanations are partial and the ability to present aggression is fairly dismal.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the theoretical perspective on aggression
- Understand the social determinants of aggression
- Learn about heightened arousal and the link between emotion, cognition and aggression
- Analyse the link between sexual arousal and aggression
- Discuss the issue of alcohol and aggression
- Learn about gender differences in aggression
- Learn how to prevent and control aggression
- Describe groups and individuals and group task performance

5.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGGRESSION

What do we mean when we say that Charley is an aggressive person? Aggression and aggressiveness have several different meanings in everyday speech—the actions of a brutal slayer or a successful salesperson—are we talking about the same thing?

5.2.1 Aggression: An Innate Tendency and an Elicited Drive

According to the psychological definition, aggression is any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such harm.

(i) Aggression as an innate tendency

According to this explanation—which is the oldest—human beings are ‘programmed’ for violence.

Violence/aggression is biological

This explanation is also known as the instinct theory of aggression, so it is part of human nature to be aggressive. Sigmund Freud held the view that aggression arises

from a powerful 'death-wish' that exists in every person. He called this as Thanatos. The desire of self-destruct is strong, but it is often directed against others. He also suggested that this instinct needs to be released periodically, failing which it could lead to violent outbursts. These hostile impulses that exist in every person accumulate over time. Freud's proposals were the result of the large-scale destruction that he witnessed during World War I. Contrary to Thanatos, is his formulation of the counter-concept of Eros. Eros is the wish to seek pleasure, love and procreate. These two opposing forces are powerful and exist side-by-side in their origins. Therefore, the link between sex and aggression is very potent and also noticeable.

Sex and aggression go hand-in-hand

Konrad Lorenz (1966) won the Nobel Prize for his theory of fighting instinct that human beings share with the rest of the species and that aggression arises from this inherited tendency.

Fighting enables population to be distributed widely and thereby get the maximum utilization of the natural resources. Even in today's world, people are aggressing over the resources of the earth—oil, water, land, etc. Aggression is also related to mating behaviour. This ensures that the strongest and fittest would pass on their genes to the next generation. Here again, human beings seem to be wired wrongly. We can see that the world is inhabited by the less fit and incompetent. This group forms the bulk of world's population and they are also the most fertile.

R. Ardrey (1976) extends Lorenz' position further to suggest that early, in human history, people who 'attacked' survived, the others 'starved' and perished. Therefore, he maintains that the human anatomy, physiology and psychological structures and functions are explicitly suited for hunting. So, there is a strong tendency to aggress and survive.

The sociobiologists, D. Barash (1977) D.M. Buss (1991) believe that aggression as a social behaviour has its roots in evolution. This theory suggests that those behaviours that help in passing on the genes to the next generation would become more dominant in the species. This means that males, who are more aggressive, would be the winners in mate selection.

Aggression is in part an inherited biological trait

There is no unanimity on the validity of these perspectives. The innate theorists observe the prevalence of aggression across the world in support of their formulations. Their opponents uniformly argue against the universal existence of aggression, all over the world. Violence rates vary greatly across the different regions of the world—Norway is the least, USA is eight times more and New Guinea, 800 times more.

If aggression is instinctual, such high differences in prevalence rates cannot be adequately explained. Therefore, many social-psychologists reject the theory of innateness as the basis of aggression. However, modern studies do indicate the role of biological factors, leading to aggressive behaviour; for example, violent

NOTES

crimes are associated with biological conditions. So biology is significant in aggression, but this does not imply that aggression is a universally inherited instinct. Thus, Aggression is not a universally inherited tendency in human beings.

NOTES

(ii) Aggression as an elicited drive

This is known as the drive theory of aggression, proposed by Leonard Berkowitz (1988). According to him, aggression arises mainly from an externally elicited drive to harm or injure others. So, external conditions like frustration, humiliation, etc., give rise to a strong urge to engage in harmful behaviours. This is known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

Being thwarted or frustrated is common in everyday life. So people are driven to being aggressive. Thus, this is crucial for aggression and not innate tendencies, according to this theory. However, this theory also runs into difficulties when we observe individuals who do experience frustration but do not always display aggression. They handle frustration in other non-aggressive ways. Thus, we can say that frustration does not always result in aggression.

(iii) Aggression as a reaction to aversive events

The role of negative affect or emotions

There has been a clear link between aggressive behaviour and negative emotions. Often, unpleasant feelings and aggression have been seen to be correlated. We can remember the times when we became aggressive and recognize the situation that acted as the trigger. This notion is called the cognitive neoassociationist view (Berkowitz). This theory proposes that exposure to negative events (those one wishes to avoid) causes unpleasant feelings. In turn these feelings activate a fight and flight response. Aggressiveness could be dependent on several factors that are as follows:

- (i) How painful the event is.
- (ii) Thoughts and memories of similar earlier events.
- (iii) The appraisal of the situation.

There are several instances in daily life where instigations for aggression are present. If the above conditions operate, overt aggression could follow.

(iv) Aggression as learned behaviour

Albert Bandura (1973) gave the social-learning view of aggression. This approach considers aggressive behaviour is learned, like any other form of social behaviour; aggression is largely the result of learning

This suggests that aggression is not innate. Aggression is learned through direct experience (an earlier aggressive behaviour involved, a parent or teacher, beating a child). Here, the child has suffered aggression as a victim. He also saw the gains that aggression had, in the form of control, for the adult. So, he learns the type of aggression to be carried out and the payoffs that it provides. Further, he

does not associate with any negative thoughts, as the parent/teacher is a venerated significant person in his life. Such people can do no wrong. So, beating is not perceived as being negative or undesirable. Thus, he learns how to aggress and also that it is not wrong.

Another way in which aggression is learned is by observing the behaviour of others (social models) who display aggressive behaviours. The models can be real-life people—parents, teacher, friends, etc., or even those from fiction, movies, TV, etc.

Bandura indicates that aggression is learned. Whether it would occur in a given situation is dependent on the following:

- (i) Past experience(s).
- (ii) The current reinforcement for aggression.
- (iii) Social/cognitive perceptions of appropriateness of aggressive behaviour.

5.2.2 Social Determinants of Aggression—Frustration, Direct Provocation and Exposure to Media Violence

Others' actions determining our aggression

This friend of mine, that boss of my neighbour are the common reason for getting angry for what they have done or said. Something that other people do seems to be the reason for our anger. Sometimes, it is also what others fail to do that could trigger anger in us. Rarely factors like bad food or rainy weather affect our mood or make us angry.

Social conditions give rise to aggression

Buss (1961) studied aggression in the laboratory using an ingenious device called aggression machine. There was a teacher and a learner (The learner was the accomplice) while the teacher was the critical subject (whose aggression was studied). The teacher was to punish or reward the subject depending on the answers being incorrect or correct, respectively. The machine had knobs that were to deliver electric shocks to the students, if an error was committed. These knobs would indicate the level of shock that would be passed if operated. He got the learner to make errors and studied the extent to which his participants were willing to increase the levels of shock to punish the learner's mistakes. In reality no shocks were delivered. The experiment has already been discussed in Unit 4. It is the same experiment which was carried out by S. Milgram to study obedience.

The experiment was a good measure of intent of aggression rather than aggression in itself. The willingness of people to harm others is reflected in this study.

5.2.2.1 Frustration as the cause of aggression

Frustration can be understood as thwarting of goal-directed behaviour. If we are prevented from what we wish to get, frustration does arise. This could lead to

NOTES

aggression. Children throw things if not allowed to go out to play, some get upset and irritable if there is some office problem. All these are conditions that upset or frustrate a person and generate anger or aggression in them.

NOTES

The greater the frustration, more intense is the aggression. To explain this phenomenon, Dollard et al. (1939) first proposed the frustration-aggression hypothesis. His early theories were sweeping generalizations. The conclusions of the hypothesis are as follows:

- (a) Frustration always leads to aggression
- (b) Aggression always stems from frustration

Both these conclusions do not always hold. In real life, people always do not aggress when frustrated. Further, aggression can arise from causes other than frustration as well. Berkowitz propounded a revised version of this hypothesis. He suggested that frustration does bring about negative feelings. Unpleasant experiences may cause aggression.

Negative feelings lead to aggressive behaviour

Direct provocation appears to be a reasonable explanation of aggression, especially when frustration that seems illegitimate or unwarranted (someone's whims, for example, boss denying leave unfairly) produces stronger aggression, than frustration as compared to expected frustration, that is seen as legitimate (for example, no leaves because all the leaves have been exhausted). It is perhaps in the former instance, the negative feelings aroused are stronger and this could trigger the aggression.

Even when negative feelings are generated, the aggressive tendencies are modified by the higher level cognitive processes. According to Berkowitz, people would evaluate their situation and then decide whether aggression is appropriate or not. Hence, frustration does not always lead to aggression. Frustration may be one of the potential causes of aggression, but it is by no means the only one.

5.2.2.2 Direct provocation

Saying something that really hurts or physically assaulting a person, are examples of direct provocation for anger. Since one is already the victim of aggression from another person, the victim could retaliate in an equal or even greater measure. This is the mechanism for the upward spiralling of aggression.

Unreasonable behaviour, direct insults, slander and the like, top the list of anger-provokers. However, even in the face of direct provocations, the interpretation assigned to the other person's statements could mediate in lessening the provocation. In such contacts, aggression in a retaliatory manner may not occur at all.

5.2.2.3 Exposure to media violence

There is an abundance of violence to be seen and read about in the mass-media. Harming others is a typical fare in most movies, in shows and even televised sporting events.

Let us stop and consider, does exposure to media-violence increase aggression among viewers.

Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) carried out the classic study called Bo-Bo Doll Experiment. One group of children were exposed to a film clip, where they watched an aggressive model in action. Another group watched a non-aggressive model, film clip. Later, in a free play situation, the group that watched the aggressive model became more aggressive, as compared to those children who viewed the non-aggressive model.

The aggressive group of children not only displayed more aggression, but acquired new ways of aggressing from the model in the clip. The levels of aggression were also higher for the aggressive model viewing group.

Jacques Leyens (1975) carried out a field study to observe the effects of prolonged media-violence on children in natural conditions. The results confirmed that the greater the violence viewed, the greater aggression displayed.

Prolonged media-exposure to violence, results in higher levels of aggression. It was also found in another study that those who were waiting in a line to watch a violent movie, also scored higher on aggression scale, than those who waited to see a non-aggressive film. Further, those who had just viewed a violent movie had a higher score on the aggression scale, as compared to those who had just viewed a non-violent movie.

Not only does viewing violence increase the tendency to aggress; but those desiring to see violent movies already have an inclination for aggression. Thus, viewing violent movies, increases the already existing tendencies for aggression.

Viewing sports that have a large component of violence in them, (kick boxing, wrestling, rugby, ice hockey, soccer) also leads to increase in aggression among fans and viewers. This explains hostile reactions like making bon-fires, stampedes, etc. after certain games. In another disturbing study, it was found that the amount of violence watched during childhood is related statistically to their levels of aggression as adults.

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that there is moderate support for media exposure to violence as contributing to the aggressive behaviours along with other factors. Exposure to media violence can facilitate similar behaviour among viewers. This is indeed disturbing.

The role of aggressive cues

A doll says play with me, feed me, dress me and be gentle with me, by its appearance. A ball indicates that it should be tossed, bounced, kicked, etc. A gun suggests shoot, using me. This could well be a case of the trigger pulling the finger. The presence of aggressive cues could be one of the key factors in aggression.

Aggressive cues could elicit aggression. The cues can lead to actual aggression when a person is angered or troubled or otherwise ready to fight or attack. A study by Berkowitz and others found that angry or agitating weapons and other similar objects do act as aggressive cues to facilitate aggression.

NOTES

NOTES**Aggression can come from within as well as from without**

We have already studied that media violence impacts aggression. Now, the question that arises is why does it occur and how the impersonal media can have such an effect on human behaviour. Several factors have been identified that are as follows:

- (i) Viewing media violence weakens our inhibitions (there is a removal of restraints).
- (ii) Media exposure suggests to the viewers newer techniques for harming others.
- (iii) After-viewing aggression that can prime aggressive thoughts and memories. The aggressive schema that has been activated can increase interest in violent movies/actions.
- (iv) Repeated exposure to violence can desensitize viewers to the consequences of harming others.

Viewing violence often lowers emotional sensitivity to pain and suffering. Sexual violence viewing leads to further disturbing outcomes. Exposure to media violence enhances the possibility of overt aggression.

5.3 HEIGHTENED AROUSAL

The emotion-cognition-aggression link

When we are in a hurry and we experience a series of events that are further delaying us (our car keys are misplaced, we need to fuel-up the vehicle and then we run into an unexpected traffic jam) we may find ourselves irritated and our anger mounting. This is known as heightened arousal and it could increase the possibility of aggression. Zillmann (1988) described this with his excitation transfer theory.

According to this theory, whenever the human system is aroused physiologically, the arousal takes time to get dissipated. So, some of the arousal that persists is carried over from one situation to another. Therefore, even a minor annoyance could trigger a more intense reaction, than is warranted by the situation. For example, flipping at a small thing, which is otherwise minor. Such reactions occur in the following two conditions:

- (i) The person is unaware of the residual arousal.
- (ii) The person is aware of the arousal, but attributes it to current events.

This also leads to the de-individualization of the person who displays reduced awareness and therefore a decreased concern for the social norm of the given situation. So, the external attribution helps in reducing personal responsibility for the aggressive outburst.

Excitation transfer could enhance aggression

There is a complex interaction between emotion-cognition and aggression. The relationship between emotions and thoughts and thoughts and emotions have been well established. So, we need to examine the connection between emotions, thoughts and aggression.

In a study, one group received negative information about a teacher, prior to their participating in an experiment. The other group received it after the participation. A control group received no information at all. In all the three conditions, the teacher behaved rudely with the participants. Those who were informed before showed the least arousal while those who received no information at all showed the maximum arousal, and those who received the details after the experiment, showed intermediate levels of arousal.

High levels of arousal affect our thoughts about other's behaviour and this influences our tendencies to agree against them. So emotions affect our thoughts and these two together determine the extent of aggression that would be displayed.

5.3.1 Sexual Arousal and Aggression

Love and hate are the two sides of the same manifestation is a well known claim. Love is libidinal in nature and involves sexuality as a component. Passionate sex includes a lot of aggression. This means when sexual feelings are increased, it results in a state of intense arousal. The relationship between heightened arousal and aggression, has already found empirical evidence. For example, the desire to hurt one's lover or get hurt by the sexual partner—sadism and masochism—represent the two extreme forms of these tendencies.

Several studies have explored this phenomenon of sexual arousal and aggression. Mild levels of sexual arousal caused by viewing or reading about some mild passionate episodes, lead to reduced desire for aggression. Later, strong levels of sexual arousals generated by explicit pornographic viewing have been associated with increase in subsequent aggressive behaviour. This curvilinear relationship has been explained by a two-component model, suggested by Zillmann. According to this formulation, exposure to erotic stimuli produces the following two effects:

- (i) Increased arousal.
- (ii) It influences current affective states (emotions), that is, it induces positive or negative feelings.

Mild erotic materials enable mild levels of sexual arousal. They are generally pleasant in nature. So such exposures reduce later aggression. Explicit erotic materials generate strong arousal levels. Further, many people evaluate some of the passionate scenes viewed as aversive or objectionable. This produces a great deal of negative affect. This could give rise to increased aggression. There is a lot of support for the two-factor theory of sexual arousal and aggression. The relationship between sexual arousal and aggression exists clearly, but it is a complex one.

Effects of explicit displays of sexual behaviour have invariably a lot of violence mixed in it. Women are generally the victims and they are shown to be brutalized, tortured, ill-treated, etc., in cruel ways. This type of violence viewing has ill-effects and the consequences are often dangerous.

NOTES

5.3.1.1 The effects of violence pornography

The following are the ill-effects of violence pornography:

NOTES

- (i) It increases the tendency in men to aggress against women.
- (ii) Exposure to violent pornography leads to the development of an insensitive attitude towards sexual violence.
- (iii) This callous attitude makes people view crimes such as rape, as less serious and also have little sympathy for the victims. (Its makes many men believe that women almost ask to be raped.)
- (iv) It also suggests that these consequences can also occur even after watching purely violent movies, where sexuality is not explicit.

Conclusion

It is the violent content (aggression against women), more than explicit sexuality that is responsible for aggression. Since most violent movies have elements of sexuality thrown in, and as most violence is against women, it is possible to predict that violence against women is bound to increase with more exposure to violent pornography.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. According to Sigmund Freud, what is the cause of aggression?
2. What is frustration-aggression hypothesis?
3. What are the three factors aggressiveness could be dependent on?
4. Who carried out the Bo-Bo Doll Experiment?
5. What does the level of aggression in an adult depends upon?

5.4 ALCOHOL AND AGGRESSION

Generally, alcohol and aggression are seen as a heady mix. It is often seen that those who drink within legal limits (as per norms of alcohol in the blood stream) respond more aggressively as compared to those with less alcohol or no alcohol at all in the body. Following two reasons are assigned for this increased aggression:

- (i) Alcohol affects the brain and those parts that control emotions and rage. Our emotions get free from control. They are simply no longer capable of restraint.
- (ii) Alcohol also lessens the inhibitions against aggression and sexual behaviour, to some degree.

In another study, it was found that when a situation is non-threatening, alcohol intake does not increase aggression. However, confrontation could lead to aggression. This explains why provocation or competition in a bar or pub produces

brawls, etc., readily. The picture of alcohol and aggression is not decisive, but the effect of alcohol on aggression suggests the following:

- (i) Alcohol consumption does not automatically increase aggression.
- (ii) Many individuals are able to regulate their behaviour, suitably.
- (iii) Alcohol can increase aggression, if appropriate social cues are present (e.g. provocation by others, or aggressive role models).
- (iv) Alcohol can make people aggressive if they realize that the potential victim has no means of retaliation (e.g., women, children, seniors, etc.). Alcohol is dangerous only under specific conditions.

5.4.1 Personal Causes of Aggression: Types of Behaviour Patterns

Some individuals are more prone to being aggressive than others. Some of the key personal factors that promote aggressive behaviour can be categorized under Type A and Type B behaviour patterns (Glass, 1977) (refer Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Type A and Type B Behaviour Patterns

Type A	Type B
1. Extremely competitive	Less competitive
2. Always in a hurry	Not always in a hurry
3. Irritable and aggressive	Calm and not aggressive

These two personality types represent the two extreme ends of a continuum. Generally, people can be categorized as belonging to one type or the other. Type A people are competitive and therefore engage in aggressive behaviours. This is to further their own goals. They are also more hostile and have been found to show more child abuse or spouse abuse. These behaviours are not culture specific. Bus drivers in the USA were compared with those in India, after being classified into personality Types of A and B. Their on-the-job behaviour and their previous records in terms of accidents were studied. The behaviours of Type A and Type B drivers were similar in both countries (Evans, Pulsane and Carrere, 1987). The studies are put together in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Behaviour of Type A and Type B Drivers in India and USA

Type-A drivers	Type-B drivers
1. Drive faster	Drive slower
2. Honk more	Honk less
3. Pass other vehicles more	Pass other vehicles less
4. Frequently stepped on breaks	Stepped on breaks less
5. Involved in more aggressive encounters	Less involved in aggressive encounters
6. More accident prone	Less accident prone

In occupations where stress and frustration are likely, it may be wise not to hire Type-A individuals. The Type-B people would be happier and less dangerous to themselves and to others.

NOTES

5.4.2 Perceiving Evil Intent in Others and Shame Proneness

NOTES

Another personality characteristic is the tendency to perceive hostile intent in others' actions, even where none exists. This is termed as hostile attributional bias. Individuals differ in this attributional tendency by virtue of their personality.

Individuals, who see evil intent where none exist, are going to show great aggressive tendencies. Those who perceive malice in other people's actions are bound to respond with greater aggression.

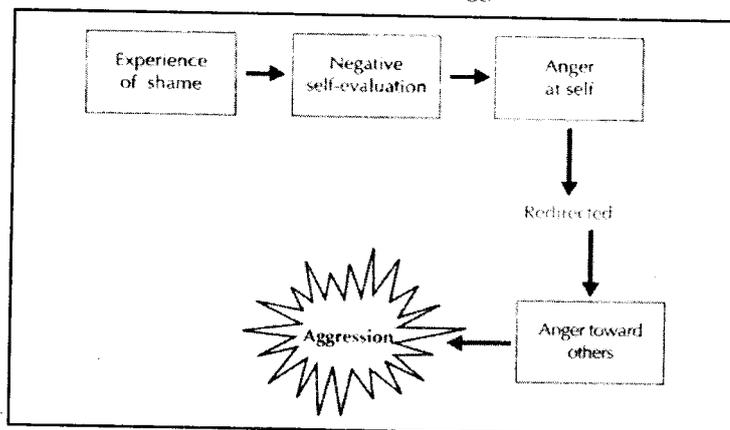
Shame proneness and aggression

Shame is a negative evaluation of the self when a flaw in an individual leads to a consequence and it is available for public scrutiny; for example, cheating someone. If caught it is a shameful deed because others get to know of it, the self-worth of the cheater is lowered. This is greater in a collectivistic society, like India. The shame is experienced because others, who matter, got to know about it.

In contrast is guilt; here the person who commits a wrong act is aware of it. Others may or may not come to know of it. So, guilt is a moral transgression. Guilt is manifest in the form of an intra-psychic conflict. A conflict between a person's ego and the super-ego (moral-keeper) in Freud's psychic structure, shame is the outcome of intra-social conflict if societal norm is violated.

Both shame and guilt generate negative feelings. Studies demonstrate that when people experience shame, they also experience hostility and anger. They are angry at themselves for having behaved in a way that brought about the shame. They also view others as the cause for feelings of shame in themselves to occur. This is because others are found to disapprove of the particular behaviour and cause humiliation. This leads to hostility being directed at others. Since shame is a powerful emotion, the negative effect is intense, often disproportionate to the triggering events. So, such people blame others for their own negative feelings and become angry at them. Therefore, persons who are prone to shame are also likely to aggress according to Tangney, 1992 (refer Exhibit 5.1).

Exhibit 5.1 Shame and Aggression



Source: Based on suggestions by Tangney et al., 1992.

Studies do support such a formulation. Shame is potentially harmful to the person experiencing it and to others around him as well. Shame-prone individuals are also

more likely to display aggression.

Value orientation and aggression: The Patri model

Exhibit 5.2 Value Orientation and Culture

NOTES

Value Orientations and Culture	
Asian/Indian culture	Western culture
1. Adaption/accommodation to the world.	Controlling the world
2. How to live	What to live for
3. Collectivism/sense of family/community	Individualism
4. Training/socialisation for dependence/interdependence	Training/Socialisation for independence
5. Shame orientation for control/regulation	Guilt-orientation for control/regulation
6. Conflicts primarily	Conflicts mainly Psycho-social intra-psychic
7. Circular/cyclical concept of time	Linear concept of time
8. Conservative/traditional	Liberal/Non-traditional
9. Limited freedom for individual growth	Unlimited freedom for individual growth
10. Passive/submissive/cooperative	Assertive/domineering/competitive
11. Feudalistic orientation	Democratic orientation
12. Dominant values are security, obedience and sensitivity to feelings	Dominant values are freedom, achievement and neutrality in terms of feelings
13. Society structured on direct personal relationships	Society built on legal and contractual relationships
14. A hierarchical and Spiritual orientation	A horizontal and pragmatic orientation

Vasanth R. Patri and Neelakant Patri, in their book '*Essentials of Effective Communication*', have presented the profile of the Asian/Indian people as opposed to the Westerners in terms of their value orientation (refer Exhibit 5.2). Here, the shame orientation as compared to the guilt orientation is proposed as a major behavioural control source for the Asian group. The collectivistic orientation of the Asian societies also supports this formulation. Most of the people in the Western society are regulated more by guilt and less by shame in their social behaviours; while the dominant part of society in Asian societies' behaviour is controlled more by shame and less by guilt. This in an indirect way also accounts for the prevalence of rampant corruption in daily life in Asian societies.

5.4.3 Gender Differences in Aggression

NOTES

Legends and folklore suggest that males are more aggressive than females. Crime bureaus also report more violent behaviour in males, than females. The research evidence seems to suggest a mixed result. Males display a lot of physical aggression; while females show a lot of indirect aggression (spreading rumours, harmful gossip, psychological harassment, etc.). Females are more manipulative while males are more direct in their expression of aggression.

Men are less guilty or anxious about their aggressive behaviours; while women show concern about their own safety when thinking of engaging in aggressive actions. This is an attitudinal factor. Women and men differ in their willingness to aggress in interpersonal situations. Is there a biological difference leading to this or is it largely due to socialization influences?

Role of hormones and sexual orientation

Though socialization does teach men to be more aggressive and women to be more cooperative; the role of biology cannot be overlooked.

Several studies have identified the male hormone testosterone, being present in high concentration in males and this is associated with aggression. This was also found to be true of both heterosexual and homosexual males. In fact, it was observed that the greater the levels of concentration of testosterone in their blood, the greater the tendency to engage in physical and impulsive aggression. In females, higher levels of testosterone tended to decrease their tendencies to engage in different types of aggression. Lesbian women however are reported to be less likely to engage in physical aggression than heterosexual women.

Males by virtue of their biology tend to demonstrate more aggression than females. This by no means suggests that males would show more aggression than females under all conditions.

Interaction between hormones and personality (Testosterone and Type A Behaviour)

As higher levels of testosterone and Type A persons are associated with higher levels of aggression, it was hypothesised that both these would influence aggression.

The findings are summarized as follows:

- High levels of testosterone: Aggressive behaviours
- Type A personality: Aggression
- Type B personality: Lowered aggression
- Lower levels of testosterone: Decreased aggression

Males with Type A personality and higher levels of testosterone engage in more aggressive behaviour. Also, we must note that aggression is influenced by learning, experience, cognition and individual differences. All these factors interact in bringing about aggression.

5.5 PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF AGGRESSION

There are various techniques to prevent aggression. Since aggression results from the interplay of several factors like learning, external events, cognition, and individual differences; it raises the hope of being able to manage or control aggression. Aggression can be prevented, or at least reduced.

5.5.1 Punishment

Since the dawn of civilization punishment has been used as a method to deter violence. Most countries have established laws for handling severe crimes. In some ways, these are effective in other ways, they have failed. Punishment used in a scientific way does have some merit as an effective deterrent.

Conditions for punishment to be effective

The following are the conditions for the punishment to be effective:

- (i) It must be prompt and follow the aggression as closely as possible.
- (ii) It must be strong; the magnitude of the punishment must be sufficient to render it highly aversive, to the receiver.
- (iii) It must be certain to follow aggression. The punishment should be expected to follow aggression (every time it occurs), Bower and Hilgard (1981).

These conditions are rarely met in the criminal justice proceedings of most countries. In some countries like India, rarely are criminals apprehended, tried or convicted on time. So punishment has failed to deter violence.

5.5.2 Catharsis

Catharsis means blowing off steam or ridding the system of the aggressive impulses. Many societies believe that purging the system of violent and aggressive tendencies, does have the benefit of reducing aggression/violence, etc. Catharsis means allowing people an opportunity to participate in activities wherein they can give expression to their anger and hostility. Such an environment must be safe, so that the anger reduction can occur, even after it has been demonstrated. Such expressions of anger and hostility have the following two benefits:

- (i) Facilitate reduction of emotional tension.
- (ii) Since the anger is expressed in a safe environment, the likelihood of more dangerous forms of aggression gets mitigated.

Some of the most common types of cathartic activities are as follows:

- (i) **Physically exhausting activities:** These help in reducing arousal statistics and thereby lowering aggressive tendencies. There are hard fought games devised by every society that act as a catharsis; for example, soccer, hockey, kabaddi, athletics, etc. Not only do they instil a spirit of fair play and

NOTES

NOTES

competition, but also help-in reducing aggressive impulses. However, these have been found to be temporary.

Some of the findings seem to suggest that catharsis can even lead to provoking hostile impulses. Viewing violence in cinema, television, internet, etc., have been found to increase these impulses. The feelings of anger and hostility do tend to reappear, after the energy-draining activities are over. Catharsis is not effective in producing long-term reduction in aggression.

- (ii) **Cognitive interventions:** It sometimes helps if we say 'sorry' and give explanations. Many people get angry for being let down or for being treated unfairly, or taken for granted.

Being late for personal and professional meetings is one such case. Waiting because of delay at the other end, is indeed annoying. As the waiting period increases, anger could set in. One of ways to lessen such anger is to offer sincere apology for the delay. It has to be seen as genuine. Then, the delay may be condoned and the anger may be reduced. Giving an explanation for the delay could be added to the apology, for example, the car did not start, there was some trouble getting the machine, got caught in an unexpected traffic jam, etc.

Giving reasons would help further in reducing the anger felt. If the reasons are specific and reasonable, it would work, but if it is an alibi for being late, it could infuriate those waiting further. So, offering apologies and explanations does have some effect in aggression reduction and preventing overt aggression.

5.5.3 Other Techniques of Reducing Aggression

Some other techniques for reducing aggression, as given by Baron (1983) are as follows:

- (i) Use of non-compatible response strategy
- (ii) Training in social skills
- (iii) Exposure to non-aggressive models

Two of the three techniques are described and are as follows:

- **Exposure to non-aggressive models:** Just as exposure to aggressive models leads to learning aggression, the counter position is that viewing non-aggressive models should lead to a reduction in aggression. Non-aggressive models demonstrate restraint in the face of provocation. Several studies have been done to demonstrate that aggression can be reduced by planting non-aggressive models in the midst of threateningly explosive situations.
- **Social skills training:** We like ourselves better when others like us. One of the major reasons for aggression in daily living is the poor or insufficient social skills that we possess; for example, we do not know how to respond

to provocations without blowing our top. People's flaming anger is often a needless response to a remark or an action from another person. Often the reactions are exaggerated. Again, we are unable to express our wishes or fears to others, so that they are easily understood by others. Thus, there is a lot of frustration or anger when our expectations are not met. This happens so often at home and at work, and it leads to needless show of temper, etc.

Our emotional sensitivity to other people's feelings is also low. Therefore, many of us end up hurting others or get hurt ourselves in turn by the insensitive remarks made by others. Insensitivity is another big reason for running into interpersonal difficulties and getting angry. Social skill training can go a long way in reducing interpersonal aggression, hugely.

5.5.4 Cognitive Intervention and Other Techniques

Modern behavioural and cognitive-behavioural interventions emphasize the role of learning and adaptation to the environment both in shaping and maintaining normal life functions and in the emergence of maladaptive symptomatology.

Some simple procedures are as follows:

- Teaching people to respond in a non-aggressive manner to any annoying situation, by learning to belittle the situation or laugh at it.
- To avoid overreacting to a frustrating situation, learning to be calm and composed, even if the situation is one that is irritating or troublesome.
- To understand other people's feelings and reactions more accurately, think about their emotions or responses in a given situation.

Such training can be given to children, young adults, colleagues, friends, students, sports teams and also family members. There is bound to be a sharp reduction in aggression and an increase in cooperation. Other specific skills could include the following:

- Recognizing other's feelings
- Self-control strategies
- Dealing with one's anger in a non-aggressive way
- Staying out of fights, consciously
- Dealing with embarrassment
- Responding to teasing, in a jovial way
- Dealing with failures
- Incompatible response training (humour, empathy in response to aggression)
- Playing with pets
- Helping behaviour, etc.

All these could result in a sharp reduction in aggression.

NOTES

NOTES

Culture and aggression

There are some cultures which are inherently aggressive in their orientation, while others are more passive. The aggressive cultures are also very supportive of aggressive behaviours. Their socialization patterns also show that child rearing practices favour aggression. These cultures also view aggression as positive. Also, cultures differ in terms of how their population deals with frustrations, e.g., in Sri Lanka, quiet self-control is highly valued as a response to frustration. So, even in the face of provocations, dignified restraint is visible. According to a study, Anglo-Saxon cultures permit more aggression, when annoyed, while the Hispanic cultures display easy-going tendencies when anger-provoking situations present themselves.

In Japan, aggression is to be largely expressed within the family; while in Israel, expression of aggression outside the family, is seen as appropriate. Such beliefs about aggression and their expressions also encourage in certain cultures and discourage or deter in others.

5.6 GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

A group consists of two or more interacting persons who share common goals, have a stable relationship, are somehow interdependent and perceive that they are in fact part of a group, Paulus (1989).

5.6.1 The Consequences of Belonging

A group is not just a collection of individuals; there exist certain criteria of every group that are as follows:

- (i) Members must interact, directly or indirectly.
- (ii) Must be interdependent in some manner.
- (iii) The relationship must be stable for at least (weeks, months or years).
- (iv) Interactions must be structured in some way.
- (v) Members must perceive themselves as belonging to the group.

Belongingness to group is most important. However, it is interesting to know why people join group. We belong to several groups—the family group, the professional group, the card group, the music group, and so on. However, some of these group memberships are vital while the others are secondary; like family group is crucial, the club group is secondary. People join groups to meet their psycho-social needs.

Following are the reasons why we need groups:

- (i) The need to belong, for example, to a family, a nation, etc., gives some anchor, pride, security.
- (ii) To receive attention and affection (groups provide this opportunity).
- (iii) Achieve goals in a group; which individuals cannot attain singly (personal tasks like conducting a marriage, professional tasks like goal achievements).

- (iv) To obtain knowledge and information (which would not be available otherwise). For example, full members have access to privileged information in a certain situation).
- (v) For security reasons, strength in numbers.
- (vi) To establish a positive social identity (prestige, pride, etc.).

All these could bolster one's self concept. Most people seek entry into some group, during their lifetime.

5.6.2 Nature, Function and Formation of a Group

Stages in group socialization leading to formation groups are dynamic. People enter and leave groups and groups influence the members as much as the members influence the group. This is called group socialization. Three noticeable stages are present in all group formations that are as follows:

- (i) **Evaluation:** People join and leave groups for several reasons. Most members join a group to achieve personal goals. Every member makes an assessment of the rewards and costs involved in joining a group. This is the process of evaluation. If the gains are greater than the costs, then the evaluation is positive and the decision to join the group is easy. If the costs are prohibitive compared with likely gains, then the outcome is negative and an individual may not wish to enter the group. Simultaneously, every member could also evaluate other prospective groups that are open for consideration.
- (ii) **Commitment:** If the evaluation is positive, then the person shows interest and greater involvement with the members. The person also takes interest in the activities of the group.
- (iii) **Role functioning:** Once the member has entered a given group then certain role functions become obligatory. Some are very casual while others take on extremely serious roles. A fully committed person takes on roles, assigned by the seniors in the group and tries to execute them to the fullest.

How groups function

Not all members of a group act in the same way or carry out the same functions. A considerable degree of differentiation exists in the functioning of members. Different people work at different tasks and accomplish things for the group. These are roles that members are required to fulfill. Sometimes roles are assigned in a formal manner sometimes roles emerge in the course of group interaction; for example, a leader may be assigned by designation or a leader can emerge in terms of the task that needs to be accomplished.

Within a group, two types of roles have been described, viz., (i) task-oriented roles, and (ii) relations-oriented roles. The former role focusses on getting the job done, while the latter emphasises reducing interpersonal friction and maintaining a harmonious interaction among the members. These two are differentiated in familiar terms as the role of being a father and mother. Once the roles have been accepted, people internalize them.

NOTES

NOTES

Roles

Individuals occupying specific positions within a group are expected to perform a certain set of behaviour. For many people, the roles they perform define and contribute their self-concept, like Deputy Commissioner, Head of the department, CEO, etc. Roles help in clarifying responsibilities and obligations of the persons belonging to a group.

Roles also involve a way in which groups shape the thought and behaviour of the members. Roles can also generate conflict. For example, when members have to take on more than one role at a point in time—a task master as well as a pacifier. Another type of conflict, as seen in personal life, is being a parent as well as a professional.

At times, roles are clearly circumscribed and the boundaries are specified. This could limit freedom; for example, a leader has to maintain a certain distance from the rest (this does limit certain interactions). This is a limitation because roles impose a structure and this could prevent flexibility in functioning.

Another dimension along which groups function is status—the prestige associated with a given role. Status is the social standing or rank that is seen related to a role. Some of the measures of status are office size, size of table, number of assistants, special privileges like assigned car, parking slots, travel benefits, etc. Status is significant in determining how roles are performed.

Norms

These are rules by which group members are regulated. There are two types of norms, viz., prescriptive (how to behave) and postscriptive norms (how not to behave). Almost all groups insist on norm obedience from their members.

There are norms that family members are expected to follow. Office norms control and specify how the office-goers must observe, like all members must join for dinner (in a family), office begins at 9.00 am, lunch break 1.30–2.00 pm (in office).

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness is the force that acts to keep group members part of a group. This includes mutual attraction, interdependence, shared goals and so on. It is cohesive if the members like one another very much, strongly desire the goals that the group is seeking, and feel that another group would not satisfy their needs. The opposite of this situation is when the members do not like each other much, do not share common goals and find that other groups could offer them more satisfactory memberships. The first condition would lead to cohesiveness, while the latter would lead to disintegration of the group.

Cohesiveness involves the following two distinct elements:

- (i) **Interpersonal cohesiveness:** The extent to which members like each other.

(ii) **Task-oriented cohesiveness:** This refers to the extent to which the membership provides for the achievement of personal goals. For example, being a member of a sales team. The ultimate goal at the individual level comes from the group functioning; being in an assembly line manufacturing group, etc.

When both these dimensions of cohesiveness are high, good performance can be predicted. When tasks can be carried out singly, then task-based cohesiveness is not critical. Sometimes high levels of interpersonal cohesiveness might interfere with performance because members may spend time socializing rather than focussing on the task completion. Other factors that influence cohesiveness are as follows:

- (i) The extent of difficulty in gaining entry into the group (greater effort, more attraction).
- (ii) The presence of external threats or severe competition, invasion from outside, more unity/cohesiveness (fighting terrorism, etc.).
- (iii) Size—small groups are found to be more cohesive.

All these jointly determine the influence of the group on members. Figure 5.1 illustrates an overview of Janis' theory on groupthinking.

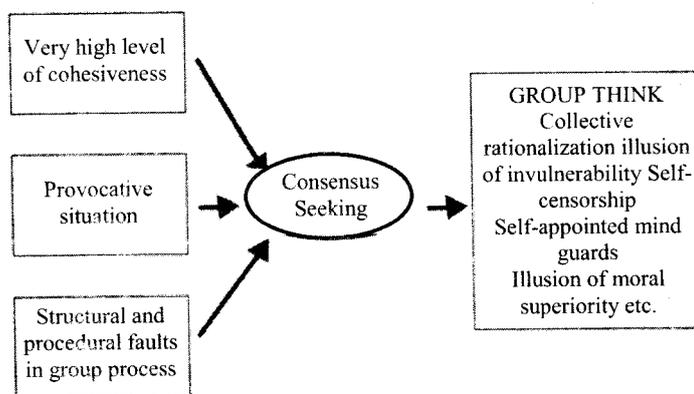


Fig. 5.1 Groupthinking: An Overview of Janis' Theory

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. Define guilt.
7. What is catharsis?
8. What are the techniques for reducing aggression?
9. Why do people join groups?
10. List the three stages of group formation.
11. What are the two types of roles described within a group?
12. What are the types of norms?

5.7 GROUPS AND TASK PERFORMANCE

NOTES

There are both benefits and costs associated with working in groups. One of the advantages includes social facilitation based on drive theory and distraction based in conflict theory. Simply put, often some people work better in groups. One of the disadvantages is social loafing among members of the group. One of the most comprehensive models to explain social loafing is that of the collective effort model. The perception of fairness and justice within the group can also affect its members.

Additionally, advantages and disadvantages to utilizing groups can be seen during the decision-making process. The advantages are that by pooling the expertise and knowledge of their members, and by avoiding extreme courses of action, groups usually come to better decisions than individuals. The disadvantages are that groups may develop group polarization and groupthink, making poor decisions of extreme nature and then sticking with those decisions even in the face of overwhelming evidence that the decisions are bad.

5.7.1 Benefits and Costs of Working with Others, and Social Facilitation

There are tasks which are best carried out when one is alone; for example, studying, creative work, etc. In a group, most of these tasks are done with others, or in the presence of others. This often does impact our performance.

It is interesting to know if groups are more efficient or less efficient in carrying out tasks as compared to individuals.

5.7.1.1 Performance in the presence of others

Sometimes, the presence of others improves one's performance; for example, a veteran musician finds an audience highly encouraging to put out his best performance, or to a new debater. the presence of an audience might make him nervous and reduce the effectiveness of his/her delivery. Such two completely opposite phenomena can be explained through the drive theory of social facilitation.

The presence of others acts as a source of arousal. This theory of Robert Boles law Zajonc (1965) suggests that the presence of others produces increments in the level of arousal. The excitement experienced by having an audience generally suggests arousal. This arousal affects performance and it has been explained through the following two aspects:

- (i) Increments in arousal enhance the occurrence of the dominant response, these are most likely to be given by a person. As the arousal increases, the tendency to give the dominant response also increases.
- (ii) The dominant response may be the correct one or the incorrect one.

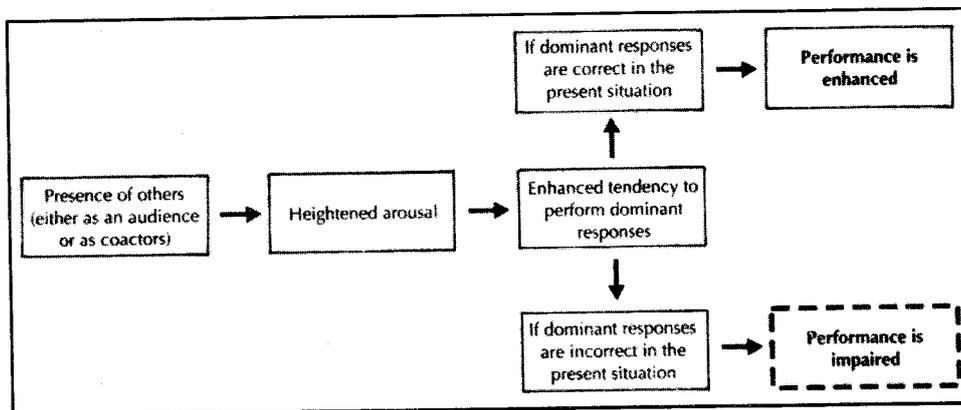
When others are present, there is arousal. When the arousal occurs, the dominant response is most likely to occur. If the dominant response happens to be the correct response then the performance would get facilitated in that situation.

If the dominant response is an incorrect one, then the arousal would impair performance in that situation.

Presence of others would facilitate the performance of strong well learned response, but it could interfere with the performance of a new yet-to-be-mastered response (refer Exhibit 5.3).

NOTES

Exhibit 5.3 The Drive Theory of Social Facilitation: An Overview



Source: Based on suggestions by Zajonc, 1965

Sometimes, the situation is a high pressure one, like scoring a penalty stroke goal, which would decide the championship; the audience induced pressure would be almost unbearable. Under such conditions, even the most seasoned player may wilt and perform poorly.

There are several researchers who proposed that social facilitation largely arises from evaluation apprehension. This is concern over being judged by others. It involves an element of self-presentation also, like appearing good in the presence of others. There may be other factors and not the mere presence of others that is crucial in determining performance. Other researchers found that the mere presence of others facilitates performance, when there is just one task. For complex tasks, the presence of others was not very helpful. Thus, simple tasks are performed better in the presence of others while complex tasks are performed better when one is alone. This contradictory finding has been sought to be explained with the help of the Distraction-Conflict Theory by R.S. Baron et Al. (1986).

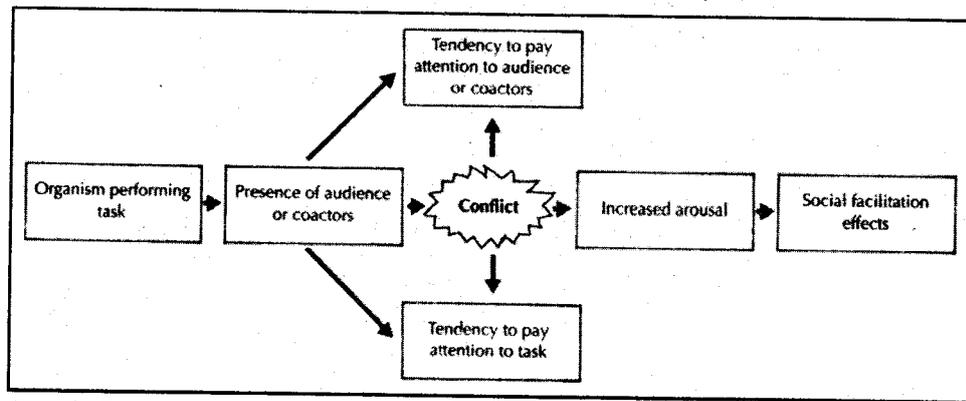
The presence of others causes arousal to be heightened. Such an arousal stems from the following two sources:

- (i) The tendency to pay attention to the task to be performed
- (ii) The tendency to pay attention to the others present

There is a conflict of interest here. The conflict occurs due to competing tendencies. This, in turn, increases arousal. The arousal enhances the tendency to perform—the dominant response. If the dominant response is correct, performance is enhanced; if the dominant response is incorrect, then the performance suffers. Exhibit 5.4 illustrates the distraction–conflict Theory.

Exhibit 5.4 Distraction–Conflict Theory

NOTES



Source: Based on suggestions by R.S. Baron, 1986.

There are activities where directing attention to the audience does not come into conflict with some task demands; then social facilitation will not occur. When paying attention to the audience conflicts with task demands, then social facilitation occurs. When individuals have little reason to pay attention to others, social facilitation fails to occur.

When the task is a simple one, the focus on the relevant cues becomes easy for task achievement. For complex tasks, where several cues have to be attended to simultaneously, the presence of others could be hampering. Here, there is no need to post an arousal notion. So, the modified distraction conflict theory explains social facilitation in terms of the limits imposed by information processing capacity of individuals. This is a promising explanation.

Letting others do the work in a group

In every group—a home, office, community, etc.—not all people contribute equally. There are some hangers on. Some people work hard, while others loaf. In additive tasks, the contribution of each person is not easy to identify clearly. The group effort is the final output. The following points must be kept in mind:

- (i) As the group size increases, each person puts out less effort. This is due to increasing lack of coordination. Coordination is critical in larger groups.
- (ii) It occurs in all cultures and in both genders.
- (iii) It happens in both cognitive tasks as well as physical tasks.

Reducing social loafing—some techniques

Social loafing indicates that some people will do less than their share of work in a group. Some useful techniques to counter social loafing are as follows

- Make the output or effort of each person clearly identifiable.
- Get members commitment to the task increased.
- Provide members with an opportunity to evaluate their own contributions to the group.

- Increasing group cohesiveness.
- Provide the members with a standard against which to evaluate their contributions.

Reactions

The following are the reactions:

- Anger, resentment, and annoyance
- Withdrawal from the group (being unfair)
- Social compensation; making up for loafing members

5.7.2 Social Facilitation and Social Loafing

Bandura (1980) proposed a theory called self-efficiency theory to explain social facilitation and social loafing, which are the two related phenomena. This is an individual's motivation to a task. It is based on the following two types of expectancies:

- (i) Self-efficiency expectancy:** Self-efficiency is one's belief of a capacity to perform a task.
- (ii) Outcome expectancy:** Outcome expectancy is the expectation that a specific behaviour or level of performance would yield a particular result.

Individuals tend to work hard when they believe that they can perform a task well and that doing so would produce desired outcomes, for example, a manager. High self-efficiency, but low outcome expectations would not lead to much effort, like a clerk.

Social facilitation is reflected in the first case while social loafing is seen in the second instance. Social loafing would also occur when there is high self-efficacy expectancy, but low outcome expectancy.

When self-efficacy is high, then some withdrawal was observed as compared to when working alone (working with others was rewarded). This occurred because the individual efforts were not clearly observable. When self-efficacy was low, they performed better when working in a group than alone and prefers working in the presence of others. (others would notice their poor efficiency). These suggest that social facilitation and social loafing can be understood in terms of self-efficacy expectancies and outcome expectancies.

5.8 DECISION-MAKING BY GROUPS

Groups perform a variety of tasks the world over—harvesting, assembly line functions, constructions, surgical procedures, etc. One of the most important activities of a group is decision-making. Government, military, corporations, educational institutions (even families) are all required to take decisions as groups. Most of our laws and policies are decided by groups.

NOTES

5.8.1 Decision-Making by Group and Decision-Making Processes

We all believe that groups have pooled expertise, group decisions tend to be less extreme and several inputs are possible. Therefore, we think that group decisions are better and always tend to seek them.

NOTES

Group decision-making process

We will discuss how people move towards consensus. When a group starts discussing any topic, it begins with a variety of assumptions and opinions. After some discussions, there could be a deadlock And finally a decision is made. There are a number of procedures by which the members arrive at a decision. They are as follows:

- (i) **Majority wins rule:** This means the position adopted by the majority of the group members, becomes the decision. Here, discussion strengthens the most popular point of view.
- (ii) **The truth-wins rule:** The correct solution or decision on a given issue is adopted as the decision.
- (iii) **Two-thirds majority rule:** If two-thirds of the members of a group endorse a particular decision, then that prevails.
- (iv) **First-shift rule:** A decision that is consistent with the direction of the first-shift in opinion indicated by a member.

Generally, these processes seem to be sufficient for arriving at group decisions. Wherever opinions are involved, the majority position is favoured. In intellectual tasks, the truth-wins rule is adopted as most suitable.

Procedures determine decisions

The methods used for arriving at a decision often influence the decisions. Some of the methods are as follows:

- **Straw poll:** This is more in the form of opinion seeking from among the members. Members are therefore free to change their views. Here, each member expresses his/her opinion sequentially. Members express their preferences in a non-binding vote. This can lead to significant shifts in the positions held and then the decision is reached as a group.
- **Deliberation style:** This refers to the manner in which members exchange information about their individual views. Two styles have been identified that are as follows:
 - (i) **Verdict driven:** Here, members first arrive at their own personal decision and then discuss the decision with other members.
 - (ii) **Evidence driven:** Each piece of relevant information is examined by the group first, and then individual decisions are made

In verdict driven deliberation style, the personal decision is discussed and in evidence driven deliberation style, each piece of data/information

is discussed. For example, the way the financial frauds are discussed, involving the various groups; sometimes the panelists express their opinions, in others the data is analysed.

- (iii) *Conjunctive decision*: Taking the example provided, if the members conclude that there was clear intention to swindle, then they will decide to find those involved in the fraud. This is conjunctive decision.
- (iv) *Disjunctive decision*: Again, taking the example just discussed, if the criteria of a fraudulent conduct is analysed according to data available and then the decision about the guilty is made, it is one of disjunctive decision. So, the style of deliberating on an issue has an impact on decision-making.

NOTES

5.8.2 Nature of Group Decisions

Does it produce moderation or polarization? Rarely do individuals take decisions on important matters. Even dictators and monarchs have their advisors. The parliament or the senate in a democracy is a decision-making body. Qualifications, training experience, etc., all involve those who would be entrusted with decision-making. This is superior to individual decision-making.

Group decision-making

In a study by Stoner (1961), students had to play the role of advisers to persons who had to choose between the following two alternatives:

- (i) Highly paying job- Corporate job
- (ii) Low paying but secure job- Government job

In the first part of the study, the subjects made individual recommendations, about the job. Then, they met in small groups, and discussed the matter, until a unanimous agreement was reached.

Surprisingly, groups recommended the high-risk jobs. However, in later studies with larger groups, it was found that the group decision tended to be more cautious. This contradictory finding was explained on the basis of the concept of Group Polarization, i.e., group decisions tended to become more extreme and not necessarily more cautious or more risky. Group decision enhanced the existing positions held by the members. So if one held a cautious position initially, it became stronger after the group discussed choice of jobs, or vice-versa.

Social comparison and persuasive arguments are two explanations offered for group polarization. The social comparison approach holds that before a group decision, people believe that their view is the better one and that their views are in the right direction. After the group discussion, they are rudely awakened by the realization that their views are nowhere as far above the average as that of the group. So, they shift their position to an extreme degree.

Persuasive arguments provide a contrasting explanation for polarization.

NOTES

After group discussions, individual members slowly convince themselves of the correctness of their initial views, and thus, come to adopt them even more strongly. This results from the shift to an extreme position. Most of the information presented by group members are in support of their own position.

Polarization has important implications. Group decisions could become extreme after discussions. The decision to escalate the Vietnam War (USA), the dissolution of the Soviet Union, liberation of Bangladesh, etc., are important polarized decisions in the world, in the last few decades of the 20th century.

5.8.3 Group Decision-Making: Some Pitfalls

Some of the pitfalls are as follows:

- Polarization is a serious matter for accurate decision-making to happen. However, there are other disadvantages also in group decisions. Groupthink is one such potentially harmful way for groups to decide a course of action.
- Another is the inability of group members to pool their expertise while discussing any issue. They do not discuss information not shared by all members.

Groupthink represents too much cohesiveness. Generally, high cohesiveness is expected to produce highly desirable outcomes for a group. This is true up to a point. Janis (1982) proposed the term groupthink where high levels of cohesiveness exist with certain other conditions that are as follows:

- (i) Provocative situation – a group is fighting for survival against external adversaries
- (ii) Structural and procedural faults (lack of means for resolving internal conflicts)

These conditions could lead to groupthink.

Groupthink is a mode of thinking that members of a group are locked into. Here, the main thinking is concurrence seeking. This is the overreaching motivation. All courses of action are evaluated with this in mind. Groupthink therefore involves a shift from the concern of making the best possible decision to that of reaching and maintaining consensus. Once groupthink sets in, unhealthy decision making could follow.

Some of the pitfalls of groupthink are as follows:

- Members view themselves as invulnerable (they possibly cannot make a mistake).
- They engage in collective rationalization (discrediting or ignoring contrary positions/information).
- They feel that their group is not only right, but morally, superior (all those who do not share these views are evil).
- Once groupthink develops, pressure on members to go along with the group stated view becomes intense.

- Members, who have some doubts, engage in some form of self-censorship; otherwise they are quickly silenced by the other group members. To top it all, the mind-guards (self-appointed) shield the group from external sources of information that is inconsistent with the group's position.

Result

A powerful illusion takes hold of the group into believing that the group is correct and is infallible and has no dissent (refer Figure 5.1).

Some research studies on groupthink, however, does not fully support Janis's position when applied to decisions made in the international context. However, the phenomenon of groupthink does exist. How powerful and how often it comes into play is in some doubt.

Countering groupthink: Managing the effects of groupthinks

- Groups should promote open inquiry and scepticism among members.
- Leaders must encourage careful questioning of each alternative.
- As a rule, play the devil's advocate.
- Form subgroups to consider different aspects of an issue.
- Subgroups are freer to engage in sharper discussions and can halt possible consensus happening too soon.
- Offer second-chance meetings. Those with lingering doubts have an opportunity to express themselves. This can reduce pressures towards conformity.
- Encourage new ideas and open oneself to criticisms in a non-defensive manner.
- Always avoid premature closure of any issue.

All these could counter tendencies towards groupthink.

Sharing information

Often group members tell each other what they already know; rarely do they tell what others do not know. Group members only discuss that information what others already know. So where is the pool of information? Then how is group decision better than individual decision? Do groups get the benefit of expertise and knowledge of individual members? To test the validity of information sharing in a group discussion studies were carried out using the information sampling process. Here, the information that was mostly mentioned during group discussion was examined. It was found that information that was most discussed was the one available already to most members. Thus, members tell each other what they already know.

This means, the unshared information is often withheld. If the members recognize that the unshared information is crucial for a correct answer or decision, then perhaps this new input would be offered. If merely reaching a consensus is the focus, then the value of the unshared information would be minimized.

NOTES

The hidden profile of information would be needed if a good decision is to be arrived at.

Conclusion

NOTES

Groups are always better at re-hashing information that is already known to members. Groups must be made aware that the unshared information is important for coming up with the correct decision. This would increase the possibility that group members will uncover and discuss unshared information. Unshared information prevalent among groups is found to enhance the quality of decisions, if given and discussed.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. What are the two types of expectancies according to Bandura?
14. Why do we seek group decisions?
15. What are the two forms of deliberation style?

5.9 SUMMARY

- According to the psychological definition, aggression is any form of behaviour directed toward harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such harm.
- Konrad Lorenz won the Nobel Prize for his theory of fighting instinct that human beings share with the rest of the species and that aggression arises from this inherited tendency.
- Saying something that really hurts or physically assaulting a person, are examples of direct provocation for anger. Since one is already the victim of aggression from another person, the victim could retaliate in an equal or even greater measure.
- Whenever the human system is aroused physiologically, the arousal takes time to get dissipated.
- Some individuals are more prone to being aggressive than others. Some of the key personal factors that promote aggressive behaviour can be categorized under Type A and Type B behaviour patterns.
- Shame is a negative evaluation of the self when a flaw in an individual leads to a consequence and it is available for public scrutiny; for example, cheating someone.
- Legends and folklore suggest that males are more aggressive than females. Crime bureaus also report more violent behaviour in males, than females.
- There are various techniques to prevent aggression. Since aggression results from the interplay of several factors like learning, external events, cognition,

and individual differences, it raises the hope of being able to manage or control aggression.

- There are some cultures which are inherently aggressive in their orientation, while others are more passive.
- Belongingness to a group is most important. However, it is interesting to know why people join groups.
- Stages in group socialization leading to formation groups are dynamic. People enter and leave groups and groups influence the members as much as the members influence the group. This is called group socialization.
- Individuals occupying specific positions within a group are expected to perform a certain set of behaviour.
- Cohesiveness is the force that acts to keep group members part of a group. This includes mutual attraction, interdependence, shared goals, and so on.
- There are both benefits and costs associated with working in groups. One of the advantages includes social facilitation based on drive theory and distraction based in conflict theory.
- There are tasks which are best carried out when one is alone; for example, studying, creative work, etc.
- Several researchers have proposed that social facilitation largely arises from evaluation apprehension.
- In every group—a home, office, community, etc.—not all people contribute equally. There are some hangers on. Some people work hard, while others loaf. In additive tasks, the contribution of each person is not easy to identify clearly.
- Bandura (1980) proposed a theory called self-efficiency theory to explain social facilitation and social loafing, which are two related phenomena.
- One of the most important activities of a group is decision-making.
- Groupthink is a mode of thinking that members of a group are locked into. Here, the main thinking is concurrence seeking.
- Often, group members tell each other what they already know; rarely do they tell what others do not know. Group members only discuss that information what others already know.

NOTES

5.10 KEY TERMS

- **Thanatos:** The death wish that exist in every person, as explained by Sigmund Freud
- **Eros:** The wish to seek pleasure, love and procreate

- **Shame:** Negative evaluation of the self when a flaw in an individual leads to a consequence and it is available for public scrutiny
- **Cohesiveness:** The force that acts to keep group members part of a group

NOTES

5.11 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Sigmund Freud held the view that aggression arises from a powerful 'death-wish' that exists in every person. He called this as Thanatos.
2. According to Leonard Berkowitz, , aggression arises mainly from an externally elicited drive to harm or injure others. So, external conditions like frustration and humiliation give rise to a strong urge to engage in harmful behaviour. This is known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis.
3. Aggressiveness could be dependent on several factors that are as follows:
 - (i) How painful the event is.
 - (ii) Thoughts and memories of similar earlier events.
 - (iii) The appraisal of the situation.
4. Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) carried out the classic study called Bo-Bo Doll Experiment.
5. In a study, it has been found that that the amount of violence watched during childhood is related statistically to their levels of aggression as adults.
6. Guilt is a moral transgression. It manifests in the form of an intra-psychic conflict. A person who commits a wrong act is aware of it.
7. Catharsis means allowing people an opportunity to participate in activities wherein they can give expression to their anger and hostility.
8. Some of the techniques for reducing aggression are as follows:
 - (i) Use of non-compatible response strategy
 - (ii) Training in social skills
 - (iii) Exposure to non-aggressive models
9. People join groups to meet their psycho-social needs.
10. The three stages of group formation are evaluation, commitment and role functioning.
11. Within a group, two types of roles have been described, viz., (i) task-oriented roles, and (ii) relations-oriented roles.
12. There are two types of norms, viz., prescriptive (how to behave) and postscriptive norms (how not to behave).
13. The two types of expectancies according to Bandura are self-efficiency expectancy and outcome expectancy.

14. We believe that groups have pooled expertise, group decisions tend to be less extreme and several inputs are possible. Therefore, we think that group decisions are better and always tend to seek them.
15. Two forms of deliberation styles are (i) verdict driven, and (ii) evidence driven.

NOTES

5.12 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why do many psychologists reject the theory of innateness as the basis of aggression?
2. What is the cognitive neoassociationist view?
3. What are some of the key personal factors that promote aggressive behaviour?
4. What are the reasons assigned for increased aggression when it comes to alcohol?
5. What is the difference between shame and guilt?
6. What are the two types of behaviour patterns?
7. What is the role of hormones and sexual orientation in aggression?
8. What are the conditions for effective punishment?
9. What are the benefits of expressions of anger and hostility?
10. Briefly explain the techniques for reducing aggression. Also, give some simple procedures for the same.
11. What is the importance of role in a group?
12. What is cohesiveness? What are its elements?
13. What are the advantages and disadvantages of forming a group?
14. What are the various methods adopted to arrive at a decision?
15. How do procedures determine decisions?
16. Why does group polarization occur?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the various theories of aggression.
2. Describe the various social determinants of aggression.
3. Discuss heightened arousal as a form of sexual arousal and aggression.
4. What are the processes involved in learning aggression? Describe with the help of suitable studies.
5. Discuss the reasons that cause difference in male and female expression of aggression.

6. Discuss the most common types of cathartic activities.
7. Describe the nature, function and reasons for joining a group.
8. Explain the three stages of group formation.
9. Write an explanatory note on social facilitation and social loafing.
10. Discuss the various group decision-making processes. What are some of the problems in group decisions?

NOTES

5.13 FURTHER READING

Baron, R.A. and D. Byrne. 1995. *Social Psychology*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Gilovich, T., D. Keltner and R.E. Nisbett. *Social Psychology*. 2006. New York: W.W. Norton.

NOTES

NOTES