

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF SOCIAL SIDE OF LIFE – I

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Definition of Social Psychology
- Nature and scope of social psychology
- Major trends in social psychology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are said to be social animals. Other human beings in our life are significant to us. We like to connect and stay with others. We don't prefer staying aloof and isolated for a longer time. Our thoughts, feelings and behavior are influenced by others around us. This influence is not only because of presence of some individuals rather it can also be

because of absence of other people. We are influenced by people we know and also strangers. We are affected by social situations. As we get affected by others, our behavior also affects other human beings.

Social psychology is one of the subfields of psychology which is concerned with the study of the effect of group membership upon individual behavior. It is different from other social sciences as it focuses on explaining influences on the individual's thought and behavior. It is also different from the informal observations that people generally do as the focus is on scientific approach. It tries to understand the various aspects of human behavior in social contexts. Social psychologists also study how groups influence us and our decision making potential. It also covers how we explain our own and others actions. Social psychologists study how people think about themselves at any given point of time or in a given specific situation. In other words, how people think about their identity, and how this identity develops through relationships with other people and eventually guides our social behavior.

This unit will help in understanding the theoretical perspectives of social psychology. It will help to describe the nature and scope of this field. It will also explain the scientific nature of social psychology and the four core values which help to understand the human social psychology. The focus of social psychology is on individual behavior in a social setting. It seeks to understand the causes of human social behavior. It also puts forward the evolving principles of social world. This unit also covers the recent major advances in the world of social psychology. This includes understanding the role of cognition, emotions, social relationships, social neuroscience, implicit processes and social diversity in social behavior of individuals. These major advances in the field will help you to update and understand the latest major trends in the field of social psychology.

1.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

Social psychologists cover a wide range of topics. It is a field which tries to study why and how individuals think, feel or behave in various social situations. It can be defined as the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior, feelings and thoughts in social situations.

According to Gordon Allport (1954), social psychology is best defined as the discipline that uses scientific method in “an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals are influenced by the real, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings”. For example, suppose students are laughing and chatting with each other in a class, but their behavior changes the moment teacher comes to the class. The very presence of teacher has changed their behavior. This is how our behavior is influenced by real people. On the other hand, take the example of a student, who dresses up in the finest of

clothes, practices a thanks giving speech because he imagines that he is going to be felicitated by the principal for being the topper his college. This may not be true, but the imagined behavior of principal has influenced his behavior. Let us take another example, suppose students see an old lady entering the class who is dressed very poorly and looks more like a beggar rather than a professor. Looking at her outward appearance, they may continue with their laughing and chatting and may even question her when she stands at the podium. Their behavior is influenced by her implied status. In reality, she may be the new professor. In other words, social psychology identifies the ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by the social environments in which we live-by other people or our thoughts about them.

According to Baron and Byrne, social psychology is the scientific field that seeks to comprehend the nature and causes of individual behavior in social situations.

1.2.1 Social Psychology is Scientific in Nature:

The term 'science' doesn't imply only to the field of biology, chemistry, physics or fields which use certain kinds of equipment rather it refers to two important aspects: (1.) a set of values and (2.) methods that can be used to study a wide range of topics. Social psychology follows the principles of science. It uses various scientific methods to describe the human behavior. Any scientific field has four most important core values which are accuracy, objectivity, skepticism and open-mindedness.

- **Accuracy** as a core value focuses on collecting and evaluating information about the social behavior of the people in careful, precise and error-free manner. It is not simply 'people watching'. A researcher must carefully plan his research, so that the research is error free. For a study to be scientific, it is necessary that it should be as accurate as possible.
- **Objectivity** means gathering information in an unbiased manner. This indicates that the casual 'people watching' may lack objectivity as different people may observe differently in which their own biases may hinder the gathering and reporting of observation. Plain observation will have lot of subjectivity. People have a tendency to watch what interests them and what they consider is important. They decide which behavior to watch and what to ignore. Due to this subjectivity, variety of errors will take place and it will be very difficult for other researchers to replicate those observations for verification.
- **Skepticism** refers to accepting the results of the study only when they are verified again and again. The researcher should not accept any findings on face value. He must ask himself, does the results of his study indicate the real difference or real relationship between two

things or is it just a chance occurrence. The replication of study is another important way of verifying the results obtained in a study. Replication of the research is done when different researchers reproduce the same procedure used by others and arrive at the same conceptual conclusions.

- **Open-mindedness** implies that accepting and changing one's views when recent studies does not support the previously, even strongly held, findings. Social psychologists continuously study various aspects of behavior which have provided surprises to the field as previously held strong findings have been reconsidered. Thus, the various aspects such as the role of groups in individual's wellbeing, how conscious and unconscious processes impact behavior, why and what makes people happy, why and what makes people to like each other, what makes people fall in love, etc. have suggested revisions in assumptions about human nature.

Social psychology is dedicated to these four core values of science and implements them in understanding human social behavior. Hence, we can say that social psychology is scientific in nature. Though one may argue that we can understand others and our own behavior by just using common sense and there is no need to study it in scientific manner as social psychology does. But it has been observed that common sense can sometimes provide very confusing and inconsistent and therefore, very unreliable picture of human behavior. This is so because individual's own experiences are unique and may not provide solid foundation for answering general questions such as "whether first impressions are important?" Along with unique experiences of individuals, there are various influences on them which indeed impact their findings of observations. Individuals own biases may hinder even while generating theories. One of the reasons may be that wishful thinking may influence common sense beliefs.

Social psychological research needs to verify some of the widely endorsed ideas about various aspects of social life that are inconsistent with each other. For example, consider the following statement "Two heads are better than one" and now consider this "Too many cooks spoil the broth". The first statement suggests that when people work together they are productive. On the other hand, the second statement states that when people work together they may actually harm the product e.g. they may take worst decisions. Thus, when such contradictory statements are presented, research helps in understanding how performance can be improved. Systematic and careful research reveals that whether performance will be better or worse depends on several factors such as – the nature of the task, work allocation, personality and preferences of group members and how well information is shared among the group members. Hence, common sense can be confusing and inconsistent presentation of human behavior.

Along with inconsistent and confusing common sense, people are also susceptible to several cognitive errors. For example, remember last time you were involved in some major project and try to remember how much time you thought you will require to complete the task and how much time you actually required. There might be a gap between the two. This is so because we fall victim to this error known as planning fallacy- it is the strong tendency to believe that any given task will be accomplished in less time than they actually do or we can accomplish more in a particular period of time than reality. Research tries to explain this error. Planning fallacy may occur due to our tendency to think about the future when we are estimating the time required to complete a task. This prevents us from actually thinking about past experiences and this in turn leads us to underestimate the time required at present to accomplish test. This is one of the many ways in which we do errors while thinking about social world.

1.2.2 Social Psychology Focuses on the Behavior of Individuals:

Social psychology gives importance to the individuals in social situations. It explains why and how individuals behave in certain ways in certain situations. It studies various topics like aggression, helping behavior, prejudice, discrimination, attitudes, etc. Individual behavior is often a reflection of existing social and cultural norms. The basic difference between sociology and social psychology is with respect to the emphasis on individual behavior. Sociology studies larger social institutions like, family, marriage, crowd, etc. on the other hand; social psychology studies the impact of these larger social institutions on individual. It also studies how individuals shape these institutions. It tries to explain the influence of internal and external factors on an individual's behavior. The internal factors includes personality, attitudes, perception of others and self, emotions and mood and so on. External factors include groups, culture, and other social and political factors.

1.2.3 Social Psychology Seeks to Understand the Causes of Social Behavior and Thought:

As social psychology focuses on individual behavior in social settings, it seeks to understand the reasons for individuals' behavior and thoughts behind it. Thus, social psychology explains the various causes of social behavior. Social psychologists aim to understand them in detail by conducting various researches. Some important causes are as follows:

Actions and Characteristics of Other Persons:

Human behavior is affected by actions and characteristics of other people. For example, you met your best friend after a long time and you noticed that he/she is constantly engaged on the phone. His/her behavior will affect your thinking and behavior. Similarly, any actions of others will have effect on your emotions, thoughts and behavior. Along with

actions and characteristics, appearance of others also affects us. We behave differently towards attractive people as compared to less attractive people. Despite the warnings to avoid “judging books by their cover”, we are strongly influenced by the appearance of others and their membership in any group. Research indicates that we cannot ignore others’ appearance even when we are consciously trying to do so. We rely on others’ appearance to understand their characteristics. Research indicates that relying on others appearance as a guide to understand others characteristics can be relatively accurate and not always wrong especially when we are observing someone’s spontaneous behavior as compared to posed photographs.

Cognitive Process:

Cognitive process refers to our thinking process. It plays an important role in human social behavior. It determines the way we make sense of the world. Many times our social behavior in different situations depends upon how we interpret a particular situation. Therefore, social psychologists seek to study social cognition. Social cognition includes thinking long and hard about other people, others’ likes and dislikes, thinking of others’ reactions to our behavior and so on. Our cognitive processes like perception, memory and thinking will determine our reactions to others, e.g. your behavior can be interpreted in two ways when somebody pushes you in a crowded train. Either you may think that this person is doing it purposely or you may think that it has happened accidentally. In the first interpretation, your behavior will be different (annoyance), whereas in the second interpretation, your behavior will be different (ignore).

Environmental variables: Impact of the physical world:

Human behavior is influenced by various environmental variables. Research studies have shown that people become irritated and aggressive in hot weather as compared to when it is a cold weather. Crowding and density also affect our social behavior. Smell also influences our behavior. Pleasant smell makes people become helpful towards others. Research suggests that various aspects of the environment influence our feelings, thoughts and behavior. Therefore, these variables also fall within the area of modern social psychology.

Biological Factors:

There is growing evidence which suggests that our behaviors, emotional reactions, preferences, and attitudes are to some extent determined by biological factors. Factors such as genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, brain structure, etc. are the various biological factors. A person’s social behavior is influenced by these factors. Evidence shows that the operation of biology and social experience is not unidirectional. That means biological factors can influence social behavior and social

behavior can lead to biological changes. For example, experiences of stress during childhood and then exposure to some trauma including political violence in adulthood can induce neurobiological changes which eventually affect the psychological wellbeing. There is growing research now which states that, through epigenetic processes – where the operation of certain genes turns on or off environmental factors and social experiences can influence behavior, sometimes this influence takes place long after initial exposure. Evolutionary psychology perspective holds that biological factors play an important role in social behavior. This branch of psychology suggests that humans, like any other species, evolve biologically throughout history and thus, we possess evolved psychological mechanisms that aid us in problems related to survival. Evolution involves three major components:

1. **Variation:** Organisms belonging to a given species vary in many different ways e.g. humans vary with regard to shapes, sizes, physical and mental traits.
2. **Inheritance:** Some of these variations can be passed from one generation to the next.
3. **Selection:** Variations that have helped the species to survive or to adapt to the environment are retained and transmitted to the next generation.

This basic process of evolution is also applicable to the development of some social behavior, e.g. selection of mate. Physical attractiveness plays an important role in the selection of a mate. According to the evolutionary perspective, it happens because physical attractiveness also implies health and vigor, which in turn implied healthy offspring.

Along with mate selection, other topics have been covered from the evolutionary perspective like aggression and helping others. However, it is important to clear some facts of evolutionary perspective. This perspective does not indicate that we inherit specific patterns of social behavior; rather, it holds that we inherit tendencies or predispositions that may be apparent in our overt actions.

1.2.4 The Search for Basic Principles in a Changing Social World:

Human social behavior is influenced by basic principles that will be true across time and in various cultures. For example, factors influencing helping, attraction, attitude, obedience, etc. Social psychologists also understand the role of various cultures in human social behavior and thought. Cultures change across time due to many factors such as advances in technology, social media etc. Social psychology seeks to study the influence of changing dynamics of social world on attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behavior of individuals.

Check your progress

1. Define social psychology and write a note on its scientific nature.

2. How do actions and characteristics of other people influence our behavior? Write your answer with suitable examples.

3. Why an individual is given main attention in social psychology? Explain in brief.

1.3 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: ADVANCES AT THE BOUNDARIES

Social psychology is an ever-growing field as it takes into account the changing dynamics of the society. Thus, there are advances in the field. The major advances in the trends of social psychology are as follows:

1.3.1 Cognition and Behavior: Two Sides of the Same Social Coin:

Social psychology seeks to explain why and how people think and behave in different social situations. Thoughts imply how people make sense of the social world and how they understand themselves and others. Behavior refers to the way people act in social situations. Behavior is not independent of thoughts.

Social psychologists are always interested in knowing how individuals think about other people or social situations. Thus, modern social psychology seeks to closely link thoughts and behavior. It considers

the role of various cognitive processes such as memory, attitudes and beliefs in human social behavior. Social psychologists suggest that there is a complex interplay between social thought and social behavior. Our thoughts about others affect the way we behave with them and the consequences of these actions then affect our emotions and social thought. Cognitive psychology is reflected in social psychological research in many ways. First, the basic knowledge about cognitive processes like memory, reasoning, and decision making- now applied to study social behavior. Secondly, there is growing emphasis in studying how we process social information.

1.3.2 The Role of Emotions in the Social Side of Life:

Emotions play an important role in many aspects of social psychology. Thus, social psychology seeks to understand the influence of emotions and mood in social behavior. For example, research indicates that positive moods increase our tendency to offer help to others. Therefore, we are more likely to get help when others are in a positive mood.

Suppose you are meeting someone for the first time, do you think your current mood will influence your behavior towards that person? If you answered 'yes' then you agree to the systematic research conducted which suggests that our impressions and thoughts about others are influenced by our current moods. Thus, recently social psychologists are investigating the impact of specific emotions on wide range of social behaviors.

1.3.3 Social Relationships: How important they are for Well-Being:

As humans are social beings, they don't live in isolation. They seek various kinds of relationships. These relationships play a key role in our psychological health and well-being. A successful and satisfying relationship leads to happiness and on the other hand, dissatisfying relations can disrupt various aspects of our life and can have harmful effects. As our relations to others are so important, social psychologists seek to study the nature of social relations. The study includes how various kinds of relations begin, change and strengthen overtime, how some relations weaken and end overtime. Social psychology also strives to study the factors responsible to like others, fall in love, to choose partners. Many types of social relationships are important for the wellbeing of people. For example, one researcher found that single people are as happy as married people. The question arises if relationships are important to people, then why single people are as happy as married people. The results of this research revealed that single people are more involved in community work and hence, are part of various social groups. Being involved in a number of groups not only predicts psychological wellbeing of the people who value those groups but also predicts longer life as compared to people who do not belong to any groups.

1.3.4 Social Neuroscience: The Intersection of Social Psychology and Brain Research:

Our feelings, thoughts, experiences, memories and actions are reflected within our brain. Modern tools have been developed which help to measure brain activities as human performs various functions such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), positron emission tomography (PET) scans, and other techniques. Social neuroscience research aids in providing intriguing answers. For example, a research was conducted to study what happens in the brain when people encounter consistent or inconsistent statements. These statements are aligned with participants' strongly held values and attitudes. For this purpose, the researchers recruited two groups of participants known to hold opposite views on many social issues. The first group was known to be against issues like euthanasia, growing equality of women in society, abortion and the use of drugs. Another group was the "nonreligious" were known to hold opposite views on those issues. On a computer screen, participants of both the groups were presented with statements related to these attitudes. When the participants were viewing the statements, electrical activity in their brains was carefully recorded. Participants were observed for their quick response, in terms of their brain activity, after the statements with which they disagree. They were also observed when they reacted quickly. The reaction was quick when they encountered a single word that is inconsistent with their views (e.g., "acceptable" in the statement "I think euthanasia is acceptable." if they are against this action) or the reaction was given only after reading the complete statement. Previous research suggested that certain patterns of activity occur very rapidly when individuals encounter words inconsistent with their values- only 250 milliseconds after seeing them- and indicate that intensified processing of this word is occurring. In case of other patterns, in contrast, occur somewhat later and reflect negative reactions to the value-inconsistent statement. Researchers predicted that each group would show stronger N400(a kind of activity in brain) reactions to words that were inconsistent with their values, for instance, the Christian group would show stronger reactions to the word acceptable in connection with euthanasia, while the other group would express stronger reactions to the word unacceptable when linked to euthanasia. The obtained results of the research strongly supported these predictions and suggest that we do indeed process information that disagrees with our attitudes very quickly-long before we can put such reactions into words. Thus, it can be said that attitudes and values do indeed exert powerful and far reaching effects on activity within our brains and on our overt actions.

Using these techniques helps us to know much more about the complex relationships between neural events and psychological factors. For example, there are neurons in the brain that are activated during the observation and execution of actions, known as mirror neurons, and it has been suggested that they play a key role in empathy- our capacity to experience, vicariously, the emotions and feelings of other persons. Mirror

neurons are located in a portion of the brain known as the frontal operculum. In an intriguing study, researchers suggested that perhaps people who score high on a questionnaire measuring empathy would show more activity in this area of their brains when they viewed facial expressions of others. To test this prediction the researchers took two groups of individuals – They were tested on a measure of empathy and their scores indicating either high or low empathy (the capacity to take the perspective of other persons) were recorded and kept aside. Then one group was shown video clips of others' facial expressions (e.g. smiling, frowning) and the second group was shown video clips of faces that showed nonsocial movements (i.e., movements not associated with particular emotions). Activities in the brains of both groups of participants were recorded through fMRI scans. Results were clearly as predicted, participants high or moderate in empathy did indeed show greater activity in the frontal operculum (where mirror neurons are located) than persons low in empathy.

Social neuroscience is rapidly expanding field. However, it cannot provide answers to every question we have about social thoughts or behavior. There are many aspects of social thoughts that cannot easily be related to activity in specific areas of the brain-including attributions, group identities and reciprocity. In principle, all of these components of social thoughts reflect activity in the brain, but this does not necessarily mean that it is best to try to study them in this way. Just as all chemists agree that ultimately, every chemical reaction can be explained in terms of physics. However, but the principles of chemistry are still so useful that chemists continue to use them in their research and do not rush out and become physicists. The same may well be true for the field of social psychology. It does not have to seek to understand all of its major topics in terms of activities in the brain or nervous systems. Other approaches in social psychology are more useful in terms of providing important new insights.

1.3.5 The Role of Implicit (Non-conscious) Processes:

Human thoughts and behavior is also influenced by certain processes which we are unaware of. Such processes are known as implicit or non-conscious processes. These processes play a key role in various social interactions. A growing trend of social psychology seeks to explain the reasons behind implicit processes and various ways to measure them. Research examines impact of implicit processes on social behavior such as how our negative attitudes towards members of other social groups influences our behavior towards them, though at conscious level we deny having negative attitudes towards the other group. Non-conscious negative attitude also influences our evaluation of another person when we come to know that the target person belongs to a group that is different from the group we belong to.

Another example of the role of non-conscious processes is on first impressions. Research indicates that we form first impressions incredibly quickly often within mere seconds of meeting other people. Sometimes these first impressions are accurate but sometimes we make errors. Evidence reported by researchers indicated that we cannot intuit when these impressions are likely to be accurate and when they are not. So, non-conscious processes do influence our judgments and actions, but this happens in ways that we often are unable to control, and they can lead us astray.

1.3.6 Taking Full Account of Social Diversity:

We live in a society which includes people from diverse backgrounds. There are differences in language, religion, caste, socio-economic background and culture. All these factors play an important role in the way people think, feel and act in social settings.

Continuous predominance of religion in everyday life was indicated in a study of demographic profile of Indians. In India, separate values spheres exist. Each of the spheres exerts pressure to conform or exclude. The politics of partition in the year 1947 led to a radical shift in India. Due to this, sectarian identification paved the way which included Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. These discoveries led to differences in the same people. Out of the total population of India, three-fourths are Hindus. Muslims are still a minority faith in India. Out of 1,028 million population of India, little over 827 million have identified themselves as followers of Hinduism, 138 million of Islam, 24 million of Christianity, 19 million of Sikhism, 8 million of Buddhism and 4 million of Jainism. However, over 6 million people have identified themselves from other religion and faiths, including tribal religions, which are different from the six main religions of India. Along with these main religions, there are other religions of the world in India such as Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Jains, Jews and Bahai. The different states of India vary greatly in religious majority. E.g. Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya have a Christian majority, Punjab has Sikh majority, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim are dominated by Buddhist whereas Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep are Muslim majority states. This diversity is reflected in peoples' everyday behavior with others in all social situations. This may lead to prejudices and discrimination among people. This behavior would be present in an explicit manner or subtle manner.

Thus, the latest trend in social psychology has been to consider these factors and study its impact on human behavior. In other words, social psychology adopts the multicultural perspective which carefully and evidently recognizes the potential significance of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, religious orientation, and many other social and cultural dimensions. Past research in social psychology included subjects of United States only. The obtained findings of such research are limited and have limited applications as it cannot be

applied to other cultures. However, social psychologists have realized the importance of cultural and gender diversity. That is why; they have adopted a multicultural perspective.

Check your progress

1. Write in brief the role of emotion in social life. Write your answer with suitable examples.

2. Enumerate the modern tools for assessing brain activities.

3. Does social diversity affects individual behavior? Explain in brief.

1.4 LET'S SUM UP

Social psychology is one of the subfields of psychology that is concerned with the study of the effect of group membership upon individual behavior. Social psychologists study how individuals behave in groups. It includes how people are influenced by the group and how, in turn, they influence the group. Social psychology is the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior and thought in social conditions. It is scientific in nature as it uses the values and methods of other scientific fields. Values are essential for any field to be called as science. There are four core values of social psychology to which it is committed- accuracy, objectivity, skepticism and open mindedness. Accuracy refers to acquiring and evaluating information about social behavior and thoughts in a careful, precise and error-free manner. Objectivity means the information collected in objective in nature i.e. it is free from any biases. Another value, skepticism, emphasizes on

verifying the inferences repeatedly and then accepting it. Open mindedness is a willingness to change one's views when it is proved that the already held views are incorrect. Adopting scientific method is necessary because "common sense" provides inconsistent and unreliable information of human social behavior. Social psychology is called as a scientific field because it makes use of scientific research methods to tests different hypothesis and theories.

Social psychology gives importance to individuals and seeks to understand social thoughts and behavior. It also seeks to understand the causes of individual behavior in social setting. Social psychology understands the role of others' actions and characteristics. Individuals are often affected by actions of other people. People are also affected by the physical characteristics of others. It also covers the fact that our reaction to others is strongly affected by their physical characteristics. Cognitive processes also determine our thoughts and behavior to situations and other people. This is based on our interpretations of various social situations. Another factor that affects our affect feelings, thoughts and behavior is environment related variables such as temperature, pollution, crowding, architecture of building, landscape surrounding the building, and also aroma in the air. Biological factors such as genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, brain structure, etc. also influence our social thought and behavior. This field also seeks to study the impact of the principles of changing values and culture in the rapidly developing society on behavior and thoughts of individuals in social settings.

There are advances in the field with respect to various recent researches. Social psychologists seek to describe the interplay of cognition and behavior. They seek to explicate the reasons and the way people think and behave in different social situations. They also emphasize the influence of emotions and mood in social behavior. They aim at understanding the role played by various positive and negative emotions on social behavior. As relationships are important in human life, social psychology studies the role played by these relationships in our well-being. These relations play an important role in our psychological health and well-being. Latest trend of social psychology studies social neuroscience-efforts to relate activity in the brain to key aspects of social thought and behavior. Modern technology helps in measuring brain activities when humans perform various functions such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), positron emission tomography (PET) scans, etc. These techniques help to know about the complex relationships between neural events and psychological factors. Another avenue of social psychology is to study the role played by processes of which we are unaware of-known as implicit processes- on thoughts and behavior in social situations. Growing evidence in social psychology explains why and how implicit processes work. Social psychology also takes the multicultural perspective to take account of the diversity present in society and study its impact on who we are and what we do.

1.5 QUESTIONS

1. Write the importance of social psychology. Explain what it is and what it does.
2. Discuss in detail the causes of social behavior and thought.
3.
 - a. Elaborate the role of implicit processes.
 - b. Describe social neuroscience.
4. Explain the relationship between cognition and behavior. Why they have been called as two sides of the same social coin?
5. Write short notes on
 - a. Basic principles in changing social world
 - b. Social relationships
 - c. Biological factors
 - d. Skepticism.

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF SOCIAL SIDE OF LIFE – II

Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 How Social Psychologists Answer the Questions They Ask: Research as the Route to Increased Knowledge
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 - Check your progress
- 2.5 Let's sum up
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2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Understand the research methods used in social psychology along with its advantages and disadvantages.
- Describe the role of theory in social psychology.
- Identify the role of deception and how the dilemma of deception is addressed in social psychology.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

For scientifically studying human behavior, social psychology adopts some research methods. These methods aid in systematic study to answer questions about social thought and social behavior. Every research

method adopted has its own merits and demerits. It is the task of the social psychologists to select one or more methods depending upon the various factors of the area of research and research methods itself.

This unit provides an understanding of various research routes social psychologists use to understand human social behavior and thoughts. These include systematic observation, correlation and experimentation. Each of these methods are emphasized in detail for understanding its relevance in the field of social psychology. Systematic observation includes careful and step by step observation of people's behavior. Correlation is helpful technique to understand the relationship between two or more variables. When researchers' want to study human social behavior in a controlled setting, they adopt the method of experimentation. This unit also uncovers the role of mediating variables and the meaning and importance of meta-analysis in social psychology.

On the basis of research conducted, social psychologists propose a theory to explain the behavior. Thus, the meaning, steps in the formation of theories and importance of theories is explained in this unit. While doing research, social psychologists need to be ethical and hence, the last part of this unit focuses on various ethical issues and general principles that need to be followed when conducting a social psychological research. It also covers the use of deception in research and guiding principles in social psychological research.

2.2 HOW SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THEY ASK: RESEARCH AS THE ROUTE TO INCREASED KNOWLEDGE

In order to describe behavior, social psychologists adopt various methods which are explained below.

2.2.1 Systematic Observation: Describing the World around Us

Systematic observation is an objective, careful and well-ordered close examination of behavior as it occurs. It does not mean 'people watching' rather it is a scientific method which involves careful and accurate measurement of a particular behavior across people. When behavior is systematically observed in a natural setting, it is known as **naturalistic**

observation. Thus, observing behavior in a psychological laboratory would not be considered as naturalistic observation. In this method, researcher records the observed behavior without changing or influencing the behavior of the person being observed. Thus, the researcher takes great pain to hide behind natural barriers. The main goal of naturalistic observation is to describe the behavior as it normally occurs. It also aids to investigate the relationship among variables that are

present. The advantage of using naturalistic observation is to help in generalizing laboratory findings. This method is especially useful and important when experiment cannot be conducted due to ethical and moral issues.

Survey method is another technique that comprises a form of systematic observation. In this method, data is gathered by asking a number of questions to a large number of people. These questions might ask about the attitudes or behavior of people. Surveys are used for many purposes such as to measure attitudes towards alcohol abuse or college or university, to determine the feelings towards members of other social or religious groups, etc. For example, researchers investigating helping behavior might conduct a survey asking people to indicate their reasons for not wanting to come forward to help another individual or one conduct a survey to know attitude towards premarital sex. There are several advantages of survey method. Data can be acquired from hundreds or thousands of people. This method is cost effective and time-saving. Public opinion on any current issue can be quickly assessed by conducting survey.

There are certain disadvantages of survey method. People may give inaccurate information because they don't really remember or because they don't want to let the researcher know what they really believe about a particular issue. People sometimes provide responses which they think the researcher wants to hear.

While using survey method researcher needs to look at two important aspects. One is **sampling** and the other is **framing of questions**. Sample is the representative of the population being measured for the purpose of the research study. Researchers need to carefully select appropriate sample for the research. For example, if a survey is employed to measure the attitude of voters towards a voting system in a country then it will be appropriate if the research sample includes citizens of that country and those who have the right to vote. Second important aspect is wording and framing of survey questions. The questions should be simple and understandable. The meaning of the question should be clear. This is so because; the way the questions are worded can exert a strong influence on the outcomes obtained.

There are four methods of obtaining survey data which include mail surveys, personal interviews, telephone, and internet surveys. Though there are four methods, there isn't any one best way to fit in all circumstances. Each of the four methods have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Mail surveys are used for self-administered questionnaires. They are relatively quick. As they are self-administered, they also avoid the problems which occur due to interviewer bias. They are perceived as best method when dealing with highly personal or embarrassing topics,

especially when anonymity of respondents is preserved. Though they are convenient there are certain disadvantages of using this method. There may be decline in the response rate when individuals fail to complete and return the survey. Due to this, the final sample for this survey may not be a representation of the population.

In case of personal interviews, data is collected by trained interviewers. It allows greater flexibility in asking questions. This method is costly. However, it allows a greater control over how the survey is administered. Interviewer bias may also lead to inaccurate recording of respondents' responses.

Telephonic interviews are used frequently for brief surveys. This method can be quick and cost effective. However, this method is only limited to people who have telephones and are willing to stay on telephones for a longer time.

Data can be obtained through online surveys. Internet surveys are also efficient and cost effective. This method is used by social psychologists for collecting data from large, potentially diverse and underrepresented samples. There are also disadvantages of using this method. Response rate bias and selection bias can occur. Along with this, there is a lack of researchers' control over the respondents' environment.

2.2.2 Correlation: The Search for Relationships:

Another method used to describe human social behavior is correlation. Correlation can be simply defined as obtaining a relationship between two or more variables. Variables refer to the aspects of the world that have a tendency to change. They can take different values. Correlation method helps us to understand whether change in one variable is associated with change in another variable.

It is one approach used to determine whether two or more variables are related by engaging in careful observation of both. If changes in one variable are found to be consistently associated with changes in the other, evidence for a link between them is obtained.

Unlike experimental method, in correlation method, we do not make any attempt to vary one of the factors in a systematic manner in order to observe the effect of such variations on the other variable. In this method, naturally occurring variations in both the variables are observed to determine whether they tend to occur together in some fashion.

Correlation is of three types: Positive Correlation, Negative Correlation and Zero Correlation. **Positive correlation** refers to the relationship between two variables in which increase/ decrease in one variable is associated with an increase/ decrease in another variable and vice-versa. **Negative correlation** refers to the relationship between two variables in

which increase in one variable is associated with a decrease in another variable and vice-versa. **Zero correlation** refers to no relationship between the given variables.

The value of correlation analysis is known as correlation co-efficient. It refers to a single number that tells us to what extent two variables are related. This value can range from - 1.00 to +1.00, where +1.00 means perfect positive correlation; 0.00 means no correlation and - 1.00 means perfect negative correlation. Positive value indicates a positive correlation. Negative value indicates negative correlation while zero represents zero correlation.

Correlation helps in prediction of behavior. The stronger correlation between variables aids in more accurate prediction. The greater the departure from 0, the stronger is the correlation. For example, a researcher wants to find a correlation between donation to some natural disaster relief camp (one variable) and happiness (another variable). The obtained correlation co-efficient will help in predicting the behavior of people. A strong positive correlation will denote that the more people engage in the behavior of donation the more happy they feel. Thus, the researcher finds whether the results support the hypothesis or not. Hypothesis refers to yet unverified prediction of some aspect of social thought or social behavior.

Correlation method has advantages and disadvantages. Correlation helps us to study real life behavior in natural settings. It also helps to collect huge amount of data in short period of time. It is economical as well as efficient. It is mostly used in those situations where experimental methods cannot be used due to ethical and practical limitations.

However, while using correlation method, the researcher needs to understand that correlation is not causation, i.e. correlation does not establish the cause and effect relationship between the variables. In other words, correlation does not guarantee that whether the differences in the intensity of one variable are caused by the other. On the contrary, the relationship between the two variables may be due to the influence of a third variable. In the above example, we cannot state that donating to disaster camps leads to happiness. But we would just understand whether difference in one variable is associated with differences in other variables. Another limitation of correlation method is that strict control over independent variable is not possible. This may lead to confounding of variables.

2.2.3 The Experimental Method: Knowledge through Systematic Intervention:

One of the goals of psychology is explanation which is attained by experimental method. Every experiment is an attempt to discover

relationships among certain conditions or events that can change. The essence of experimental method is that -

- 1) the experimenter varies or changes something.
- 2) s/he keeps the other factor constant and
- 3) s/he observes the effect of this change on behavior

In other words, one variable is systematically changed in this method and the effects of these changes are carefully and systematically measured on one or more other variables. If one variable lead to changes in another variable, we can conclude with reasonable certainty that there is a causal relationship between the two variables.

The first variable which is systematically manipulated is called **independent variable**. It is the factor whose effect the experimenter wishes to find out or in other words it is a condition selected by the experimenter. This factor is increased, decreased or withdrawn by the experimenter, e.g. stimulus presented; a drug administered and so on. Another variable which is dependent on independent variable and which is measured in the experiment is called **dependent variable**. It is the dependent variable on which we want to see the effect of independent variable. In other words, the changes that come about as a result of the change in the independent variable is called as the dependent variable. A dependent variable may be a subject's response to a stimulus, a change in the behavior after administration of a drug, a score on a test and so on. In a simple experiment, different groups of people are randomly assigned to be exposed to various levels of independent variable (e.g. low, moderate, high, etc.). The characteristics of the group which are relevant in most psychological experiments on human beings are intelligence, age, sex, and personality of the subject. The researcher, then, carefully measures the behavior (dependent variable) to understand whether it does vary with these changes in the independent variable. If it does occur, including if two other conditions are met, then the researcher may tentatively conclude that the independent variable is causing changes in the behavior being observed.

For example, if a social psychologist wants to study that whether exposure to violent video games increase the likelihood that people will aggress against others in various ways (e.g., verbally, physically, spreading false rumors, or posting embarrassing photos of them on the Internet.). Then the psychologist can use the experimentation method. In this experiment, the type of video games played will be independent variable and the level of aggression will be dependent variable. However, we can conclude the findings only when two conditions are met. The first condition is termed random assignment of participants to experimental conditions. This condition means that all participants in an experiment must have an equal chance of being exposed to each level of the independent variable. If this is not done, then later, it will be impossible to determine whether the differences are due to differences in their behavior,

or from the impact of the independent variable, or both. The second condition which is necessary for successful experimentation is all factors other than the independent variable that might also affect participants' behavior must be held constant. For example, in the given experiment, the participants' age, socio-economic status, nationality, and culture should be constant otherwise they may interfere in the results of the experiment. In such case, the independent variable is said to be confounded with another variable-one that is not under systematic investigation in the study. When such confounding occurs, the findings of an experiment may be inaccurate. Hence, besides independent and dependent variable, in any experiment there is an important variable known as controlled variable. It means that there are certain factors that the experimenter should hold constant or uniform across all the different conditions. If these factors are not held constant then, along with the independent variable they also influence dependent variable. It is called confounding variable. If such confounding variables interfere then, experimenter cannot confidently establish the cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variable. This also lowers the validity of the experiment.

There are several advantages to the experimental method. It is the most scientific method. The cause and effect relationship established by an experimental method is highly accurate provided the experimenter adequately controls the other variables. Another advantage of experimentation is that the experiments can be replicated and results can be verified over and over again.

Laboratory situation is generally an artificial situation and poses problem of generalizability i.e. external validity. External validity refers to the extent to which the results obtained of the experiment can be generalized in real-life social situations. Researchers seek to obtain high external validity of their research. Another disadvantage of experimentation is the ethical constraints which may prevent a researcher from conducting a particular experiment.

2.2.4 Further Thoughts on Causality: The Role of Mediating Variables:

Social psychologists often use experimentation to answer the questions about causality i.e. to understand the cause and effect relationship. They are concerned in asking the question 'why' to understand why one variable produces changes in another. For instance, returning to the video game study described above, psychologists might ask why does playing such games increase aggression? Whether it induces increased thoughts about harming others or is there any other cause of this?

In order to understand the causes, social psychologists often conduct studies in which they measure not just a single dependent variable, but other factors that are influenced by the independent variable

and then, in turn, affect the dependent measures. For instance, in the above study, psychologists could measure participants' thoughts about harming others and their beliefs about when and whether aggression is acceptable social behavior. This will help to explain why playing violent video games increases subsequent aggression. If they do intervene, then they are known as mediating variables. Mediating variables are the ones that intervene between an independent variable and changes in social behavior or thought(dependent variable).

2.2.5 Meta-Analysis: Assessing a Body of Knowledge:

A large body of research is available for various topics in social psychology. For example, lot of research has been done to study the gender differences in helping behavior. In order to assess the outcomes of several researches, psychologists conduct a meta-analysis of the studies. Meta-analysis is a statistical technique of combining multiple studies to assess whether the same pattern of results are obtained despite various ways in which the studies were conducted. There are some factors that can alter the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable. These are called moderators. They can also affect the strength of relationship between two variables. Meta-analysis also helps in pointing out the gaps and biases in the scientific literature itself.

Check your progress

1. How research is playing an important role in increasing knowledge for social psychologist?

2. Explain the three types of correlation.

2.3 THE ROLE OF THEORY IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

One of the important goals of psychology is to explain behavior. This can be achieved when social psychologists want to explain 'why' of any social behavior or social thought. For example, why do people use impression management? To explain this, the researcher will construct a theory. All branches of science involve the construction of theories.

Theories are the frameworks to explain various events and processes. The following procedure is followed to construct a theory:

1. A theory is proposed based on existing evidence. It includes two main parts: basic concepts and statements concerning relationship between them.
2. This proposed theory helps in predicting observable behavior. These predictions are known as hypotheses.
3. Hypotheses are then tested by conducting actual research.
4. If obtained results of the research are consistent with the theory, confidence in its accuracy is increased. If not, the theory is modified and further research is done.
5. The theory is either accepted as accurate or rejected as inaccurate. Even if a theory is accepted as accurate, it remains open for further refinements with the development of improved methods of research. It also remains open for additional evidence relevant to the predictions of the theory.

Confirmation bias is one of the dangers inherent in theories. This phenomenon was suggested by Greenwald et. al. (1999). It is the tendency on the part of the researchers to seek support or confirmation for their beliefs. It is a tendency on the part of the researchers to become personally involved with and committed to theories which they have developed or which they support.

Confirmation bias is one of the hurdles in objective evaluation of a theory. In this a researcher over emphasizes data supporting the theories they favor and tend to ignore or downplay data which are inconsistent with their views.

Social psychologists generally disagree with the issue of confirmation bias. Some researchers say that confirmation bias is a serious danger in social psychological research. However, some researchers opine that confirmation bias poses far less a threat to scientific accuracy than what Greenwald and his colleagues have suggested. This is due to following reasons-

- 1) Leading journals in the field reject up to 90 percent of the papers they receive, the review process provides an important safeguard against operation of the confirmation bias.
- 2) Even after research reports offering support for specific theories are published, they are subject to careful review and criticism by colleagues who do not support those theories. Other researches may attempt to replicate the findings reported and, if they fail to do so, they will seek to publish papers that are critical of the earlier research and the theories on which it was based.

- 3) Finally, virtually all researchers in social psychology are fully aware of the potential impact of the confirmation bias and take steps to guard against it. Thus, they often ask people who are not committed to a given theory (or perhaps don't even know that it exists) to collect crucial data. Similarly, they take plans to consider alternative hypotheses and explanations when planning their research. Recent findings suggest that such steps can go a long way toward countering the impact of tendencies toward theory confirmation.

Here, **two important aspects** need to be highlighted. First, theories are never proven to be true in the ultimate sense. Theories are open to test. Second, social psychologists do not conduct research to prove or verify a theory rather; researches are conducted to obtain relevant evidence to the theory.

2.4 THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS: IN SEARCH OF AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE

Social psychological research is different from other types of research as it involves the technique of **deception**. Researchers employ this technique to withhold or conceal information about the purposes or procedures of a study from people participating in it. Deception is used in psychological research because if the participants are aware of the true rationale of the study in question, their behavior will be changed. Thus, without deception, the results of the study would be inaccurate. For example, suppose a researcher wants to know what will be the reaction of a female if a male stares at her for a long time? Will she be uncomfortable, anxious, scared or not concerned? To conduct this experiment, if the researcher tells a boy to stare at a girl and girl knows that the boy has been instructed to stare at her, will she react in the same way as she would have done, if she was not aware of boy being instructed. It might so happen that when it is in her knowledge that boy has been instructed to stare at her, she may start giggling when boy stares at her. This behavior may be totally different from her natural reaction that she might have given when she was unaware of boy being instructed to stare at her. So, in certain research situations it becomes necessary to use deception. However, the use of deception raises ethical issues which need to be considered.

The first issue worth considering is that deception may lead to some kind of harm to the participants of the study. They may be upset / disappointed by their own reactions / responses given during the experimental study. A milder form of deception is used by researchers is called **passive deception**. Researchers may also use another form of deception which involves providing misleading information which may be harmful to the research participants.

Second issue is , participants may get the feeling of being ‘fooled’ during a study. Recent studies have reported that deception, to some degree, can raise the feelings of suspiciousness in participants. This eventually leads to a negative attitude towards the scientific research of social psychology and psychology in general.

Thus, there is a dilemma in use of deception: it is important to obtain accurate and genuine results and on the other hand, it also has ethical issues. For this purpose, psychologists suggest some ways to resolve this dilemma. First, they agree upon the opinion that deception should never be used to persuade people to participate in a study; withholding information about what will happen in an experiment or providing misleading information in order to induce people to participate in it is definitely not acceptable. Secondly, social psychologists agree to two basic safeguards that help in temporary deception are informed consent and debriefing.

Informed consent refers to providing participants as much information as possible about the procedures to be followed before they make their decision to participate. This is done prior to a participants’ decision to take part in a given study. When informed consent is employed, subjects participate in the study only after learning what it will involve. The second safeguard is careful **debriefing** in which researchers provide participants with a full description of the true purposes of a study after they have participated in it. It includes an explanation of deception, and why it was necessary to employ it. It also includes explaining the major hypotheses under investigation to the participants. During debriefing, all questions raised by subjects are answered and any negative reactions on their part are discussed and eliminated. The basic guideline to be followed is this: participants should leave the session in at least as favorable and positive state as when they arrived. Existing evidence indicates that when both the safeguards are used together they can considerably reduce the potential dangers of deception.

On the contrary, researchers who are planning to use deception should follow the guiding principles: (1) Researchers should use deception only when it is absolutely necessary for the research being conducted - when no other means for conducting the research exists;(2) Researchers should always proceed with caution; and (3) It becomes the responsibility of the researcher to take precautions to safeguard the rights, security, and well-being of research participants.

Along with above considerations, it is important that the data gathered from the participants or the data obtained about them must be held in a strictest confidence. Preferably, data should be coded, so that it cannot be identified with participants’ names. But in any case, the information gathered in a study should be used only for research purposes, and must never be released to persons wishing to use it for some other ends.

Check your progress

1. Write about two important aspects of theory in social psychology.

2. Write a detailed note on deception.

3. Enumerate the guiding principles for using deception.

2.5 LET'S SUM UP

There are various research methods used in social psychology to study human social behavior and thought. The important research routes to study social thought and behavior are systematic observation, survey method, correlation and experimentation. Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages. Social psychologists select the method for research based on the appropriateness in the study. Systematic observation refers to an accurate and organized observation of people. When such observation is done in a natural setting, it is called naturalistic observation. In this method, researcher simply observes some naturally occurring behavior and does not intervene in the situation. While the advantage of observation is obvious i.e., we get a sample of what people do in their natural habitat. There is also an important drawback: the inability to control some variables.

Survey method involves asking a number of questions relating to the perceptions, attitudes or behavior to a large number of people. This method helps to gather data from a large number of individuals in a limited time span. However, care should be taken while using this method in social psychological research as people might give inaccurate responses as they may not remember the information or they don't want to reveal their true responses. While conducting surveys two important precautions would help reducing the errors in the research. First precaution is to avoid sampling errors. People who participate in the survey must be

representative of the larger population. Second precaution should be taken while developing items of the survey. Items of the survey should short and self-explanatory so that the participants can accurately understand what is asked.

Another method used in social psychological research is correlation. It taps to assess the relationship between two or more variables. The value of correlation is called correlation coefficient. This value ranges from -1.00 to +1.00. A positive value indicates that as the value of one variable increases/ decreases; the value of other factor will also increase/ decrease. This is called a positive correlation. On the other hand, a negative value indicates a negative correlation which means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of other variable decreases. It indicates an inverse relationship between two variables. When there is no correlation between the two variables, it is called zero correlation and the correlation coefficient is zero. Correlation helps in prediction. It is highly efficient as large amount of information can be obtained in a short period of time. However, even though strong correlations are obtained, it does not indicate cause and effect relationship.

The only way in which psychologists can establish a cause and effect relationship through research is by carrying out an experiment. Experimental method involves systematically altering one or more variables (independent variables) to determine its effect on some aspect of behavior (dependent variable). The relationship between two factors or variables is investigated by deliberately producing a change in one variable in a situation. This change is deliberately produced in a situation by an experimenter. Independent variable is the factor or variable which is varied or manipulated by an experimenter. Experimenter wants to observe its impact on subject's behavior. Dependent variable is measured and is expected to change as a result of experimenter manipulation or independent variable.

Two important conditions are required to be met for successful use of this method- random assignment of participants and avoiding confounding variables. In random assignment, a group of subjects are assigned to a different experimental manipulation or condition on the basis of chance and chance alone. Factors that are not held constant influence dependent variable along with independent variable are called confounding variable. If these conditions are not met, then the experimenter cannot confidently establish a cause and effect relationship between independent and dependent variable which lead to decline in the external validity. Researchers also attempt to study the mediating variables to understand the influence of independent variables on social thought or behavior.

Meta-analysis is a statistical technique used to combine various studies to synthesize a body of knowledge. The relationship between two variables can be influenced by moderators. Theories are important and

helpful in explaining various events and processes. It answers the why aspect of any behavior. There is procedure which must be followed to propose a theory. Confirmation bias is an obstacle in objective development and evaluation of a theory and thus, care should be taken by the researcher. Though evidence is obtained about accuracy of a theory, it is open to further test.

Deception means concealing or hiding the information from the participants-regarding the real purpose of the study. Psychologists do this because they believe that if they reveal the real purpose, then they may not get the valid results. There is a dilemma in the use of deception- on the one hand, it is useful for research and on the other, and it gives rise to ethical issues. Psychologists provide two important safeguards to address this issue: informed consent and debriefing. Informed consent means giving maximum information to the participants about search procedures, before they decide to take part in the research. Debriefing means after the research; participants are given full information about the real purpose of the research. We can conclude that if researchers want to use deception in their study, then participants' safety, well-being should be well taken care of.

2.6 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the different research methods in social psychology.
2. Discuss the role of theory in social psychology.
 - a. Write short note on independent variable.
 - b. Write in detail the role of mediating variable.
3. Describe survey method in detail. Write your answer with suitable examples.
4. Write short notes on
 - a. Informed consent
 - b. Debriefing
 - c. Correlation
 - d. Meta-analysis

2.7 REFERENCES

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SOCIAL PERCEPTION: SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS - I

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Defining Social Perception
- 3.3 Non-Verbal Communication: An unspoken Language
 - 3.3.1 Basic Channels of Non-Verbal Communication
 - 3.3.2 Non-Verbal Cues in Social Life
 - 3.3.3 Recognizing Deception
- 3.4 What research tells us about the role of non verbal cues in job interviews?
- 3.5 Let us sum up
- 3.7 Questions
- 3.6 Reference

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- Defining social cognition and social perception.
- Understanding non-verbal communication.
- Identification of various basic channels of communication.
- Analyzing and identifying nonverbal cues in social life.
- Being able to recognize deception and getting insight into deceptive patterns.
- Learning the effect of deception on social relations.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social perception is the procedure through which one seeks knowledge about others. It is a process through which one can get to know and understand other people around them. We will also seek to understand how social perception is different and how at times we are likely to get it right. To understand others one has to rely on their own abilities and skills. Since social perception is a complex phenomenon, it involves different tasks. Most important parts of social perception are focused in this module. Firstly, the Non-Verbal Communication - important information

about others' present feelings and reactions gained through their eye contact, body movements, postures and facial expressions.

The knowing and understanding about others can be done in two ways mentioned below.

I. Through Non-verbal Communication:

Non-verbal communication, as we all know, involves making use of body postures, movements, facial expressions and eye contact. However, only temporary causes of one's behavior can be understood through non-verbal communication. It can only tell us about the current feelings, emotions and affect of others.

II. Through the Process of Attribution:

In contrast to non-verbal communication, through the process of attribution we get to know about the permanent causes of other's behavior. Attribution can help us to know about other's motives, traits and intentions. Attribution is a complex process, in which one can observe other's behavior and later attempt to infer the causes behind it with the help of that information.

Social perception plays an important role in our understanding regarding others because of the following reasons:

- Our decisions and responses in a given situation are influenced by the way we perceive other's behaviors and themselves.
- The definite way in which we understand and perceive others, strongly shapes not only our evaluation but also relations with these people.
- One of the important tasks of social relations is having knowledge about others in order to have accurate predictions of their future behavior.

3.2 DEFINING SOCIAL COGNITION AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION

People are usually curious to know about other people apart from themselves. Social cognition is the phenomenon of how people think about other people. It is a broad concept which involves the perceiver encoding, processing and remembering and making use of information into social contexts to make sense of others' behavior. Hence, it becomes an essential element in one's understanding of groups and interpersonal aspects of people's lives.

Social perception is the process through which we get to know other people. It is a process which involves understanding ways in which we gather and analyze information about people.

3.3 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: AN UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE

Any idea which is communicated from one person to another without any usage of words is termed as non-verbal communication. Cultural norms are important to keep in mind while defining non-verbal communication. Various non-verbal tools signify various things in various cultures such as eye-contact, touching and personal space etc. For instance, in the United States it is considered to be polite to maintain an eye-contact when speaking to someone superior while in Asian cultures, this same gesture is viewed as disrespectful.

One of the most common phrases used while talking about non verbal communication is 'body language'. The term body language is broad, it includes aspects like movements, gestures and postures that are used to send messages about what one means as we will be seeing in this unit. Sometimes body language may not fall in sync with what is being said, so having an understanding of how to read the body language can be very helpful in determining what the other person needs or wants.

Non-verbal communication can be defined as the communication that does not involve spoken language content but instead relies on an unspoken language of facial expression, body language and eye contact.

Non-verbal communication makes use of certain cues to recognize temporary causes of one's behaviors, feelings, emotions and their current moods. As these are temporary factors or causes that influences one's behavior, we can study the temporary causes of others behaviors by either asking them directly about how they feel or by observing their non-verbal actions to understand what they are feeling. When individuals are asked directly to tell something about their current affective states or moods, they may not be willing to reveal their inner personal feelings. Some may actively conceal emotions experienced at the given moment or they may even deliberately deceive others about their true feelings. It is in these kinds of instances where non-verbal expressions help understand them better. For example:

- While negotiating negotiators may hide their reactions from their opponents
- Students may not reveal their dislike openly towards their teachers.
- Salesman or waiters in restaurants showing more liking and friendliness towards potential customers than they really feel.

Receiving information about others through the means of their non-verbal expressions is a less direct method of investigation. In Non-verbal behavior it is difficult to hide or control our feelings and behavior, making it a behavior which is relatively irrepressible. In other words, these are the feelings which one cannot control or conceal actively, they are bound to get leaked through non-verbal cues.

Mechanisms of Social Perception :

Mechanisms of social perception are implied in order to have a superficial or deeper understanding of people by making use of different methods, techniques, methods and ways. These mechanisms of social perception consist of non-verbal communication channels, external and internal attribution, impressions and implicit theories regarding people. Our social perception is found to be setting stages for social interactions. To determine the nature of our interaction with others, our perceptions about the way others feel, their traits and motives play an important role. There are two stages to get to know about other people. First, understanding their temporary states which consist of present feelings and emotions. Second, understanding the most lasting and permanent characteristics which consist of their intentions, motives or traits.

Understanding Temporary States:

Various factors can influence our temporary states. Temporary states are those by which our behavior gets affected socially. These temporary factors or causes may include fatigue, changing mood, illnesses and drugs are found to be influencing the ways in which one thinks and behaves. For instance, when one of our good friends started to behave in a 'peculiar manner' we realized that he was on a heavy dosage of medicine for his illness. Such temporary factors exert an influence on one's thoughts and social behaviors, while we try to find out how others are feeling. How to go about with this process of understanding? We may not be able to get a genuine answer when we attempt to ask people about how they are feeling. The next less direct method for gathering information about others is to give careful attention to others' body language and other non-verbal cues through changes in their eye-contact, posture, body movement and facial expressions. Research suggests such non-verbal behavior is relatively difficult or irresistible to take control of hence even when others attempt to hide or conceal their inner feelings from us, these non-verbal cues tend to spill out real feelings in many subtle ways towards those whom these people are close would understand. When information is conveyed by such cues and efforts involved to interpret are often named as non-verbal communication that is through the language of tone, posture (body language), eye contact and facial expressions.

3.3.1 Basic Channels of Non-Verbal Communication:

Most individuals differ in their behaviour when they experience different emotional states. The ways in which these behavioral differences in one's inner state- emotions, mood, feelings are seen, are through these below mentioned basic channels of non-verbal communication. There are five basic channels: facial expressions, body movements, posture and touching

1) Facial Expression:

Facial expressions are guides to inner feelings, emotions and moods of others. Ancient scholars considered facial expressions as the 'Face being an image of the Soul'. It means that human feelings and emotions are often reflected in the face and can be specifically read. Research suggests that one can learn a great deal about others present mood and feelings from their facial expressions. This sums up for the largest proportion of non-verbal communication. It has been found that there are five basic emotions expressed by human face from an early age, these facial expressions mount for happiness, sadness, anger, disgust and fear are similar across cultures throughout the world. Surprise is also seen as one of the commonly reflected facial expressions, however evidence for this seems to be mixed hence it may not be found to be as basic as other emotions. However, since there are only these five emotions, they may not imply that people show only a small number of expressions, many emotions may be expressed by combining these basic emotions. For example, joy can be expressed with sadness or sorrow, anger combined with fear and so on. These emotions vary greatly in terms of their strength. These basic expressions are expressed universally, but there may be cultural differences in terms of the way they are being expressed and the meanings associated with it. For example, in India, there are various connotations to the word 'lajja' it can be associated with shame, guilt, shyness, bliss or happiness. But like verbal or spoken languages, facial expressions do not need much of effort to translate what one intended to express.

Eye Contact as A Nonverbal Cue:

Ancient wisdom described eyes as "windows to the soul". This is correct to a large extent. We do judge others' feelings through their eyes. For example, if another person avoids eye contact, we may conclude that he is not trustworthy, he is unfriendly, does not like us or is simply shy. On the other hand, if a person maintains lot of eye contact, we will conclude that this person is very friendly, seems to be honest, truthful and likes us.

Eye Gaze Looking, Staring, and Blinking are All Considered Types of Eye Gaze

We can often learn a great deal about others internal states through their eye-contact. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, or attraction.

We often get to learn a lot from the eyes of others. There are two types of eye contacts, namely,

- A. **Gaze:** It is considered as a high level of eye contact, and is generally viewed positively by others. It involves establishing eye-contact but is not continuous. We usually gaze at the ones whom we like or are

friendly with. One can identify gazing to be a sign of friendliness or liking while in contrast those who avoid eye-contact can be viewed to be unfriendly.

- B. **Stare:** However, anything in excess is not welcome. Same is true for eye contact too. If a person gazes at a person continuously and maintains eye contact irrespective of what we do or say, such a gaze will be called staring. A stare is considered to be a sign of anger, hostility, unfriendliness, etc. This is considered as cold stare and many people find it very disturbing. People react to such cold stares by quickly terminating the interaction or quickly withdraw from that place. Some people find stare as weird while others feel a person who stares is rude or does not know how to behave in social situations.

Eye contact plays a role in several important types of relational interaction.

2) Body Language: Gestures, Postures and Movements:

Body language is very subtle and may not be very definitive. These are the cues provided by one's position, posture or movements of body parts. For example, rounded body postures communicates warmth and friendliness, while angular body postures communicate hostility or threat as shown in Indian classical dances.

Body language and Postures also reveal one's emotional states, for example, large number of movements suggest emotional arousal (scratching, rubbing, touching). Higher the frequency of such movements, higher is the intensity of arousal or nervousness. Information about one's traits and emotions can be drawn from the number of body movements or postures that a person makes. They also provide us specific information about what others are feelings through gestures. For example, in many countries holding one hand with thumb pointing up may indicate a sign of 'Okay'. Lastly they also reveal a lot about other's physical states for example, their gait, vigor, age etc. It is the extent to which they possess several different traits.

3) Touching:

Touching conveys various kinds of intentions behind one's behavior. It depends on numerous factors depending on who is touching (stranger, friend or member of the other gender). Not only that but also the nature of contact (gentle, rough, brief, prolonged), the part of the body touched and the context where touching takes place (social, business setting or doctors office) convey different information. Touching (Haptics) is especially important in infancy and early childhood. It is an important aspect of interpersonal communication and perception. Touch or Physical contact can be influenced by many factor like one's age, culture, relationship between them etc. Handshakes are the most acceptable way of touching, even strangers. Other five major aspects of touching are:

affectionate touch, care giving touch, power and control touch, aggressive touch, ritualistic touch. One of the most acceptable ways in which many people touch strangers in various cultures is through handshaking. Findings suggest that handshakes are a form of non-verbal communication where firm and longer handshakes are viewed to be more favorable. Hence touching is used as the basis to form one's social perception.

Scent: Another important channel of Non-verbal Communication:

Even though body movements, eye-contact, gestures, touching and facial expressions are crucial and important foundations of non-verbal information, those are not the only ones. Information can also be gained from what we term as paralinguistic cues, gauging information through the changes in the inflection or tone and pitch of people's voices (which is quite apart from the meaning of words). Recent research indicates that subtle cues that are related to others body chemistry are reveal the importance of paralinguistic cues. For instance, one of the researches indicated that changes in the women's internal chemistry that takes place during menstrual cycle can be transferred to others (especially to men) through the medium of subtle olfactory cues that take place via the change in odour emitting from their bodies. A large number of women during this research were ask to wear clean T-shirt in the night during that month – either while they were ovulating (during 13 to 15 days of their menstrual cycle) or/and post the ovulation period (during 20-22 days of their menstrual cycle). Those T-shirts were then sealed into plastic bags and were presented to men, who were asked to open the bag slightly and then smell those shirts. Men were unaware about the women who were involved or about their menstrual cycle, post that when their testosterone were assessed, clear results emerged, where men who smelled those T-shirts worn by ovulating women displayed higher levels of testosterone than those who smelled the T-shirts worn by women who were not ovulating or those who smelled clean T-shirts which weren't worn by anybody. Surprisingly, men couldn't mention the differences in the scents of the T-shirts that were worn after ovulation was over, but still their testosterone levels differed. In sum, these findings indicated that chemical changes in the body too can provide non-verbal cues regarding other people – at least in case of females and their menstrual cycle. So truly, there are many sources to obtain information about people's internal states and not all of it can be revealed by eye-contact or facial expressions or other basic channels of non-verbal communication.

Why is Nonverbal Communication Effective?:

Nonverbal cues may vary from culture to culture. On the other hand, studies have indicated seven types of facial expressions that are universally present throughout the human race. It has been found and estimated that most of the communication takes place nonverbally, summing up to be around 80 percent of it, based upon the perception of person's eye-contact, gestures, environment and clothing.

By observing and keeping a track of someone's nonverbal communication cues can help us find out what is truly being said beyond the words spoken verbally. There are times where a person may be agreeing with us verbally while other cues like avoiding eye-contact or fidgeting indicate them not being completely honest with their words. This means that only when we notice the match between people's non verbal and verbal communication we can determine and be sure of their response over our idea or thoughts

Once we understand the importance of body language, we can also understand its importance in helping people to understand each others' point of view. This can be done through various techniques, e.g., 'mirroring' technique can help us to understand each other. In this technique we subtly imitate or mimic the other person's body language, gestures and even speech patterns. Usually mirroring takes place naturally when there's a communication between people, but it can also be used in a strategic method to help make others more comfortable in a tense situation. However, some precautions should be taken; like the person whom one mimics should not feel that they are being teased, meaning that the mirroring shouldn't be the exact.

3.3.2 Non-Verbal Cues in Social Life:

Have you ever heard people saying this phrase 'action speaks louder than words'? In a way it indicates that when people communicate, there is something more than just words, their non-verbal cues. Although verbal communication is very important, non-verbal cues are perhaps more revealing as discussed below.

Paralanguage:

Paralanguage is a vocal means to communicate, which does not include words but is still considered as a part of nonverbal communication. Paralanguage includes gasps, sighs murmurs and even voice quality, intonation and pitch. Findings indicate that we often tend to learn more from non-verbal cues which take place when people speak as compared to their words alone. Paralanguage, a type of non-verbal communication involves vocal effects apart from speech like tone and pitch, we often convey our emotions through the specific sound or the quality of one's voice, independent of the words used by them. for example, being able to sense someone's anger not by their words but by the way they sound.

Facial Feedback Hypothesis:

Have you ever tried to smile or whistle while you are in a nervous situation and then ended up smiling and calming down? It not you must try it out. Now, this indicates that it is not a one-way process to feel and influence emotions but a two way one, i.e., facial feedback hypothesis states that contractions of facial muscle movement can not only indicate

what the person wants to communicate to others but also what s/he wants to communicate to himself. In other words, it is believed that facial expressions have a direct influence over the experience of one's affect. In other words, we can say that non-verbal cues not only influence our emotions but also influence our inner states.

Facial information: An important source of information about others:

As we have seen that there are many sources of non-verbal information to gauge others, we now place emphasis over facial expressions, although this is certainly true and the rising evidence support the importance in this respect. In this sense it is not astonishing because we pay ample attention to others' faces as we converse/interact with them. This has been supported by many studies, e.g., studies have shown that if visual stimuli are viewed in a particular situation, it reduces the attention to those stimuli in subsequent occasions. But this is not true for facial expressions. Even if we see facial expressions once, they still grab our attention on subsequent occasions. This is specifically true for facial expressions that are negative. Even though these kinds of expressions are noticed only once, they are still easier to notice as compared to other stimuli on later occasions. For instance, it is easy and quick to spot an angry face in an array of faces as compared to smiling or neutral faces. Another important aspect is the extent to which neutral facial expressions of a person resembles a specific emotional expression, even when there is no experience of any strong emotion. For instance, faces of males are seen to be more of like angry expressions to a great extent than faces of females. In short, humans tend to perceive more in the faces of others than it really is there, inferring the basic expressions on their faces to be suggestive of specific emotions, even if they aren't really present. This simply suggest that facial expressions are an important pillar of non-verbal information, although the conclusions received in this context may be far from accurate. Finally, the most interesting fact is that facial expressions do not only serve as a piece of information to the observers who make use of them to understand what people show by displaying expressions about what they feel but also play a crucial role in generating such feelings or emotions. In other words, as suggested by one of the prominent American psychologists, facial expressions are not only the exterior signals of internal states, but they can also influence or trigger emotional experiences. The view that these facial expressions trigger emotions is called facial feedback hypothesis as we discussed above. For instance, Davis et.al. (2010) conducted a very interesting experiment. They compared the facial expressions and emotional reactions of two groups of people who received different types of anti wrinkle drugs. First both the groups were shown positive and negative video clips and asked to rate their feelings about each video clip on a rating scale from very negative to very positive. After days of taking these ratings from them, one group was administered Botox, a medicine that paralyzes muscles involved in facial expressions. The other group was administered Restylane, a drug that simply fills the wrinkles without paralyzing facial muscles. Then after a

gap of 14 to 24 days after the administration of drugs, both the groups were again shown the video clips and asked to rate their feels. It was found that those who received Botox reported weaker emotional reactions to both types of clips. This clearly indicated that facial muscles influence our emotional experiences. So what we express influences what we feel inside too.

This gets support from traditional wisdom too. Very often you must have seen that when a small child is sobbing, others try to make him laugh by deliberately instructing him to smile and laugh. The child may do it without feeling happiness to begin with but as he starts smiling, he starts feeling better and gets over his gloomy mood.

3.3.3 Recognizing Deception:

Why do we deceive others? Probably, to avoid hurting others' feelings or may be to get ourselves out of trouble with a friend, parent or teacher. Deceptive communication occurs more often than we can think. Findings indicate that most people lie at least once, every day and make use of deception almost 20% of the times during social interaction. Since lying seems to be frequent, we must be able to recognize when it occurs. It is very difficult to recognize deception. There are several reasons for it, such as –

We tend to perceive others to be truthful due to which we don't search for cues of deception. We tend to be polite to others and that makes us reluctant to report deception by others. Another reason can be our moods. Our moods can influence our ability to recognize deception. Studies have shown that those with sad mood can recognize deception better than those who are in a happy mood. It has also been found that those who are successful in lying to others can successfully conceal their deception by nonverbal cue management. Research indicate that one's accuracy in decoding non-verbal cues is associated with one's desire to be liked and accepted by others depending about the need to belong of that person i.e. Higher the need to belong of an individual, better they are at being able to read non-verbal cues of others by paying careful attention due to their need to understand them.

It is a well known fact that everyone engages in deception at least occasionally. Hence it is important to be able to identify lies when they tend to occur. In order to decipher when our social perception gets tricked by others, one can pay careful attention to both their verbal and non-verbal cues to reveal the deception created.

The following information has been found to be useful to be helpful with respect to nonverbal cues:

1. Micro expressions:

These are fleeting expressions which usually last only for a one tenths of a second. Such reactions are difficult to control or suppress and appear quickly on face after an emotion provoking event. Consequently, revealing true feelings/emotions of another person. For example, you might ask someone about something that you have purchased, to find out how the person really felt, pay close attention to their facial expressions. If you happen to see them frowning immediately followed by smiling, it may be a sign of lying by stating a different reaction or opinion than otherwise felt.

2. Inter- channel differences:

It is the second non-verbal cue which reveals deception. Here, the word channel indicates the kinds of non-verbal cues, such as body movement being one channel while facial expressions being another one. Usually, when people are trying to deceive another person, there will be discrepancies between the non-verbal cues from different basic channels. People who lie cannot manage all their channels at one. For instance, one may control and manage their facial expressions while lying by forgetting to make an eye-contact.

3. Eye-contact:

One's efforts to deceive can be revealed through eye contact too. It is found that people who lie blink their eyes more often and have dilated pupils as compared to those who do not lie. They may also display low or surprisingly high level of eye-contact, making an attempt to be honest by making a direct eye-contact.

4. Exaggerated facial expressions:

It is sometimes seen that people who lie may display exaggerated emotions. Their smile maybe broader than usual and may show greater sorrow than in a particular situation. Such as someone saying no to your request and then feeling overly sorry for it signifying the reasons of the person to say no to be false.

Along with these non-verbal cues people may also display other signs of deception through what they actually say or the choice of words they make. People often speak in high pitch when they attempt to lie. They often seek a longer time to respond to a question or to start participation in an event. While speaking, they may also display a greater tendency to start sentences, stop suddenly and then begin again or they may often repair their sentences. So, people's linguistic styles can reveal their deception. We can often identify through people's way of speaking whether they are lying or attempting to hide their feelings from others. However, the successfulness of being able to identify those who deceive us is uncertain, as some people may simply be skilled at lying.

Effects of Deception on social relations:

As we have seen till now, deception seems to be a very common aspect of social life, having large impact, as we may rightly guess, they are highly negative. Recent findings indicate that when people who are lied to display mistrust and dislikes towards the liar. In fact, more the lies that a stranger is found to be saying, more s/he is disliked. Perhaps it is also witnessed that after one gets exposed someone who has lied, may engage in similar kinds of behavior themselves.

3.4 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE ROLE OF NON-VERBAL CUES IN JOB INTERVIEWS?

Evidence suggests that in order to make a good impression at job interviews, it is important to take non-verbal cues into consideration. For example, in one study, professional interviewers (having several years of experience) were shown actual job interview's videotapes. Applicants were rated by these interviews over the level of motivation and social skills - ability to interact well with others. Whereas trained judges rated their non-verbal cues at the interview. Results indicated that non-verbal cues like smiles, gestures and time taken to talk were related to both the judgment of applicant's social skills and motivation. Applicants who received higher ratings from the interviews were the ones who were high on these behaviors.

Would something as simple as posture have an effect over one's interview performance?

Research suggests that it can. One can display the feelings of being powerful non-verbally; by occupying more space with a strong, tall posture. On the other hand, low-power posture is indicated by a hunched over body which minimizes space occupied space. Such postures not only influence others as one being powerful or non-powerful but also influences the person himself to feel more powerful physiologically and behaviorally.

Check your progress

1. Define social perception.

2. What is non-verbal communication?

3. Write a detailed note on body language and postures.

4. What are the effects of deception on social perception?

3.5 LET'S SUM UP

As we saw in this unit, we understood social cognition - which explains how people think about other people and social perception that includes ways through which we understand other people. This is done to understand other's emotional states by relying upon nonverbal communication.

We also looked into the mechanisms of social perception which consist of non-verbal communication channels, external and internal attribution, impressions and implicit theories about other people. Followed by the understanding of temporary states, which are the factors that include fatigue, mood, illnesses and drugs which induce a certain way to behave in people.

Non-Verbal Communication is an unspoken language of eye contact, facial expressions, body movements and touching. While facial expressions may not be universal for all basic emotions, they do provide useful information about others. Even body language helps us learn about one's emotions through movements, postures and positions. Emotions can also be expressed through the way people speak vocally through their

tone, volume, pitch and rhythm. Emotions not only influence our non verbal cues but also these cues themselves influence our internal feelings as given by facial feedback hypothesis.

We also learnt about the effectiveness of non-verbal communication and regarding the cues such as Paralanguage and Facial feedback hypothesis which are helpful in our social lives.

We discussed ways to recognize deception and ways through which one can identify them. Micro-expressions are revealing of deception, however, they tend to get unnoticed. These signs of deception are also present in the way one speaks - their linguistic style. One's mood can influence their ability to recognize deception. People in happy mood can recognize deception better than those who are in a sad mood.

3.6 QUESTION

1. Discuss the basic channels of non-verbal communication.
2. Explain the role of non verbal cues in a job interview.
3. Why do people use deception? Explain in brief.
4. Describe and mention ways to recognize deception.
5. Write short notes on
 - a) Paralanguage.
 - b) Facial feedback hypothesis.

3.7 REFERENCE

- Branscombe, N. R. & Baron, R. A., Adapted by Preeti Kapur (2017). Social Psychology. (14th Ed.). New Delhi: Pearson Education; Indian Reprint 2017.



SOCIAL PERCEPTION: SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS - II

Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Attribution: Understanding the causes of behavior
 - 4.2.1 Theories of Attribution: Attempting to make sense of the Social World
 - 4.2.2 Basic Sources of Error in Attribution
 - 4.2.3 Applications of Attribution Theory: Insights and Interventions
- 4.3 Impression Formation and Management: Combining information about information
 - 4.3.1 Impression Formation
 - 4.3.2 Impression Management
- 4.4 What research tells us about why some people conclude they are superior to others?
- 4.5 Let us sum up
- 4.6 Question
- 4.7 References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- Defining Attribution
- Identify the causes of human behavior
- Analyzing errors, we commit while we attribute
- Understanding theories of Attribution
- Understanding how impression formation takes place
- Learning to manage impression

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we understood what social perception is and various aspects of it. After looking into one of the ways of obtaining information about one's perception, through Non-Verbal Communication we will now discuss the next two very important aspects of social perception. First, Attribution, the process of understanding the reasons

behind others behavior - why one acted in the way s/he did and what goals and intention they seek to attain. Second, impression formation - how first impressions of others are formed and impression management (self - presentation) - trying to create favourable impression on others.

4.2 ATTRIBUTION: UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF BEHAVIOR

Attribution can be understood as a process through which we attempt to identify the causes of others' behavior and to seek knowledge of their stable dispositions and traits. In other words, we come to know through this process about the stable causes and permanent characteristics of individuals' actions and behavior. Attribution answers the 'why' of other's behavior. In other words, attribution refers to not only the causes behind other's behaviors, but also in some occasions the causes behind our behaviors.

4.2.1 Theories of Attribution: Attempting to make sense of the Social World:

Since the process of attribution is complex, many theories have been proposed to explain regarding how it operates, about when, why and how we do so. We will be discussing two classic theories of attribution which continue to be influential and other factors related to attribution.

Theory of Correspondent Inference (Jones & Davis, 1965):

Correspondent inference asks the question on what basis we use information for inferring the traits of others behavior? To begin with it might seem to be a simple question to answer. Others provide us about lot of information, based on observing behavior carefully. People act in certain ways not because doing that reflects their traits or preferences but due to the external factors which leave them with little choice. For example, the receptionist at a restaurant who greets and smiles and act in a friendly manner does so because it's her job which requires her to act that way. For situations like these, using others behaviors as a guide to their lasting motives or traits can be misleading.

According to this theory we are likely to focus on the kinds of actions that are most likely to be informative. First, when behavior is freely chosen we are likely to consider it to be corresponding to a person's traits. In contrast, if this behavior has been forced upon a person we are less likely to view it as a person's trait. Second, careful attention is paid to, non-common effects- one specific behavior that is unusual and stands apart from others' response to a specific condition. If we rule out all other possible causes that may be responsible for this unusual response then, actions that produce non-common effects are found to be informative.

Finally, theorists suggest that actions of others which are low in social desirability are paid more attention to than the actions that are high on this dimension. In other words, we learn more about others when their actions are not very ordinary than from those which are ordinary just like all other people.

To conclude, according to this theory, behavior reflects people's stable traits (correspondent behavior is drawn from the inferences between one's behavior and their personal qualities) provided when behavior is either chosen freely, displays distinctive, non-common effects and is low on social desirability or shows some kind of violation of the social norms.

Covariation theory (Kelly,1972):

As humans, it is a natural human tendency that we would want to know the 'why' behind any behavior, being central attributional tasks people face. We want to know why some events turned out to be the way they did or why we acted in a particular way. Such information is crucial because it is important to make sense of the social world around. To make this task more clear we often manage it in terms of whether others behavior mainly stem from causes that are internal (their own motives, traits, intentions) or external (aspects of physical or social world) or both. For example, one may wonder, the reason why you didn't receive promotion was because you failed to work hard (an internal cause) or your boss's unfair and biasness (an external cause) or perhaps both. In order to answer this problem, covariation theory attempts to answer the 'why' to other's behaviors by focusing on three major types of information.

First, Consensus - information about the extent to which other people behave the same way towards the same stimulus as the actor does.

Second, Consistency – the extent to which people react to the stimulus or event in the same way on all the occasions.

Lastly, Distinctiveness - extent to which people react in the same way to different stimuli or events.

According to this theory, when the consensus and distinctiveness are low but the consistency is high, we are more likely to attribute that behavior to an internal cause. In contrast, when the consensus, consistency and distinctiveness are all found to be high, we're likely to attribute that behavior to an external cause. Lastly, when the consensus is low, but the consistency and distinctiveness are high, we are likely to attribute that behavior to a combination of internal as well as external factors. To conclude, main assumptions of this theory have been confirmed in a wide range of social situations, providing important insights into the nature of causal attributions.

Other Dimensions of Causal attribution:

We are often interested in figuring out whether others' behaviors stem mainly from internal or external causes. We are also concerned with stability of the behavior which is influenced by the causal factors and controllability. Whether individuals can influence or change their behaviors if they desire to. Some causes of behavior which are internal to people are quite stable over time, like temperament and personality traits. Whereas, other internal causes can or may often change, like one's health, motives, and fatigue. Likewise, some internal causes are controllable like trying to control one's temper. Whereas some internal causes like illnesses or disabilities may be nearly impossible to control. The same is true for external causes of behavior.

Fate Attributions VS Personal Choice:

Attribution is the belief of how we perceive an event, by concluding that something was meant to be or we have a role to play in causing those events to happen. Another approach to attribution is that of attribution of events to fate, forces that operate outside our understanding and control. Since both interpretations are possible, what are the factors that lead us to choose one over another? Some answers on this have been provided by research which suggest belief in fate is related to two aspects, one - belief in complex causality, that events are influenced by many causes, as no single cause is sufficient to explain the occurrences and second, the existence of god and religious convictions. These two beliefs lead to the conclusions that occurrences of unlikely events 'are meant to be'.

Action Identification and Attribution Process:

There are times when we try to understand the reason why some people act in some particular way and what they want to accomplish, there are a wide range of interpretations that we have with us. For instance: seeing that someone is putting loose change into his piggy bank we may assume that the person is saving money to address his future needs. Here, the first is a low level of interpretation focusing on the action while attributing very little to the way of planning of the person involved. Second, the action (putting into the piggy bank) attributes to the person's plans or intentions and goals. Here, the action is same but its interpretation is different and the reason of why it occurs is different. This level of interpretation is called as action identification. There are a wide range of possibilities or interpretations when we seek to understand why others do what they do, which also include what goals they want to accomplish. Action identification can be defined as the interpretation that we place on an act in terms of its varying degrees of abstractions.

4.2.2 Basic Sources of Error in Attribution:

People feel that they have been generally doing a good job of evaluating and making sense of the social world accurately. However this is not the case, our efforts to understand ourselves and other people involve several types of misconceptions. These errors of attribution can lead us to conclusions which are false regarding why others acted as they did and also influence one's predictions about their actions in the future. Let us see some of these errors that can take place.

Correspondence Bias:

It is also called fundamental attribution error. It is a tendency to explain other's behavior in terms of internal factors, such as his personality, in spite of compelling situational factors being present that can explain his behavior. In other words, we believe that others behave the way they do because they are 'that kind of a person'. This is done even when there are external logical factors motivating behavior of another person. Hence, people are bound to overlook the circumstances and tend to infer on the basis of the person's actions. This error is more likely to take place, especially, when both consensus and distinctiveness are low, and when we are trying to predict a person's behavior in far off future rather than in near future.

The question arises why we attribute others' actions to their internal traits rather than to external situations. One of the reasons can be that when we observe another person's behavior, we tend to ignore potential situational causes and pay more attention to personal disposition. This error tends to be more predominant in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

Actor Observer Effect:

It is a tendency to attribute one's own behavior to situational (external) causes, but the behavior of others to dispositional (internal) causes. This effect occurs partly since we are usually aware of the external factors affecting our own actions, but are however, less aware of external factors that may have influenced the actions of other people. Hence our behavior is perceived to rise out of situational causes but others behavior is perceived to derive mainly from their traits.

Self-Serving Bias:

Self-serving bias is the tendency to attribute one's own positive outcome to internal causes but the negative outcomes to external factors. This bias has a powerful effect. There are several explanations to this biasness, out of which, it has been suggested that it mostly falls in two categories i.e., cognitive and motivational. Cognitive model suggests that positive outcomes are attributed to internal causes while negative

outcomes are attributed to external causes as we expect to succeed. Motivational model suggests that our need to enhance and protect our self-esteem is where self-serving bias stems from. However, both play an important role in self-serving bias, motivational model holds more evidence.

4.2.3 Applications of Attribution Theory: Insights and Interventions:

Attribution theory helps understand not only other's behaviors but also how to apply it to understand depression, a mental health disorder. It also helps gain insight onto terrorism and harm doings and reasons behind it.

Attribution and depression:

Depression being the most common mental health disorder has been estimated to affect almost half of the human population at least at some point in their life. Out of the numerous factors that play a role in depression, the most likely one is that of self-defeating pattern of attribution. This is in contrast to most people who display self-serving bias as discussed in the previous section. The depressed people tend to display opposite pattern. Negative outcomes are attributed to internal causes of one's own which are lasting, but positive outcomes, if any, attributed to external causes and are temporary. Due to this pattern of attribution these people think that they hold little or no control over what happens to them. Higher the severity of depression, higher is the tendency to engage in self-defeating patterns of attribution. To treat this, several forms of therapies based on the theory of attribution have been developed and have appeared to be quite successful. These therapies help depressed people to bring change into their patterns of attribution - learning how to take credits personally for successful outcomes and not blame themselves for negative outcomes and try to view some (obvious) failures as a result of external factors.

Attribution and Terrorism:

When the word terrorism is heard, many people are likely to recall events that have occurred closest to their homes like the 26/11 attacks taking place in Mumbai being the most threatening and memorable memory of people living in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Terrorism can be in many forms such as kidnapping, torture, harm doings and executions. Coming to the question, how the terrorists who commit such crimes explain what they do? Insights gained from the attribution theory helps us to find out how these terrorists justify their actions.

Researchers analyzed public speeches of members of Al Qaeda who spoke about justifying terrorist acts that had been committed between 2001 and 2004. They focused on the statements that attributed the actions of the group to various causes - particularly, willingness to do good for the

largest number of people or to punish enemies for violating basic rights of humans. Results indicated that Al Qaeda emphasized on the idea that its actions were justified because of the harm done by their enemies, by simply attributing their actions to external causes.

However, since these suggestions hold a small amount of evidence they should be viewed to be tentative in nature.

Check your progress:

1. Define attribution. How attribution works in our day to day life?

2. What is an action identification in the process of attribution?

3. Write a detailed note on self-serving bias.

4. Role of attribution in depression.

4.3 IMPRESSION FORMATION AND MANAGEMENT: COMBINING INFORMATION ABOUT OTHERS.

When we initially meet someone for the first time there is a large amount of information which reaches us, however we somehow manage to combine all into that person's first impression or a mental representation as a basis for our reaction to them. We will now be looking at how these impressions develop and what should be done to manage these impressions.

4.3.1 Impression Formation:

Have you ever observed that when you meet someone for the first time, you are probably flooded with lots of information? At a first glance, we are able to gauge about how they look and dress, how they behave and the way they speak. Although the information reaching us is huge, we try to somehow manage to combine it into the first impression of this person - mental representation of that person and our reactions towards him or her. This indicates that impression formation is clearly a part of social perception. Impression formation being an important aspect of social perception is the way in which we develop our view about others and can be deeply understood by some famous and classic findings in this field.

Pioneering Research on First impressions:

Solomon Asch (1946) conducted pioneer studies in the field of Impression formation. He was heavily influenced by the work of Gestalt Psychologists, who believed that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. Like Gestalt Psychologists, Solomon Asch held the view that impression is not formed simply by adding together all of the traits we observed in other people. Rather, these traits are perceived in relation to one another, so that the traits can be a part of an integrated, dynamic whole. Asch studied impression formation by giving individuals lists of traits supposedly possessed by a stranger, and then asked them to indicate their impression of this person by checking the traits on a long list that they felt would fit with their impression of the stranger.

In one of his studies participants were given the following two lists:

- Intelligent - Skillful - Industrious - Warm - Determined - Cautious - Practical
- Intelligent - Skillful - Industrious - Cold - Determined - Cautious – Practical

The lists differed only with respect to two words: warm and cold. Thus, the impression formed by persons exposed to these lists should not differ a lot in forming impressions merely by adding together individual traits. The results of this study revealed that those who read the list containing “warm” were likely to view the stranger as good natured,

sociable, generous, happy, popular, and altruistic than those who read the list containing “cold.”

On the basis of many studies such as these, Asch and other researchers concluded that forming impressions of others involve more than simply adding together individual traits.

Implicit Personality theories: Schemas shaping first impression:

Supposedly, your friend described someone he has met as being helpful and kind. Would you also assume that person to be sincere? Probably. What if your friend describes a stranger to be as being intelligent and practical, would that lead you to assume that the person is ambitious? Probably. Have you ever wondered, why do you believe this even when there is an absence of these specific traits, why do you assume the person to possess them? The answer is, partly, because we all possess implicit personality. Implicit personality theories are the beliefs regarding what characteristics or traits might go together. These specific kinds of schemas suggest that when people are found to possess some traits they are more likely to possess others too. Culture in which people live also strongly shapes these kinds of expectations. For instance, many cultures assume that ‘things that are beautiful are good’ - people who are found to be attractive (beautiful) possess positive traits like social skills and having good things and good times in life. When we see individual possessing these traits we may assume them to possess other traits also that eventually covary. The tendency to assume certain characteristics or traits go together is not uncommon and can be seen in many contexts. In sum, impressions that we form about others are strongly shaped by beliefs about what characteristics or traits go together. These beliefs might be so strong at times that people may bend their perceptions about others just to be consistent with them. This results in forming impressions about others that reflect ones implicit belief more rather than their actual traits.

Cognitive perspective to Impression formation:

Through the help of Solomon Asch’s research there has been a great deal of understanding about the nature of information formation. It is important to understand this furthermore, it is useful to examine its cognitive process. For instance, when we meet someone, instead of focusing on all kinds of information we pay attention to only certain kinds of information, that is, the input which we may find useful. In order to have lasting first impressions, one must collect various kinds of information and store in their memory, to recollect in the later times. Since humans view others through the lens of their own motives, desires and traits, our first impression of others are to some extent based on our own characteristics.

4.3.2 Impression Management:

Most of us would want to look good or the best when we desire to make a favorable impression as first impression is always strong, once it is formed after meeting someone. Efforts to make a good impression on others are also termed as self-presentation and impression management. Evidence suggests that people who engage in impression management do gain advantage in many situations. Research below indicates what tactics used by these people make them favorable.

Tactics for Looking Good to Others:

Most of the tactics for boosting our images fall into two major categories:

1. Self-enhancement (efforts in increasing our appeal to others):

Specific strategies of self-enhancement include efforts in boosting one's appearance either professionally or physically. Professional appearance refers to appropriate dressing, personal grooming and hygiene. People may sometimes also make use of props to enhance their appeal for instance, carrying a right kind of handbag for particular occasion.

2. Other enhancement (efforts in making the target person feel good in various ways):

Specific strategies for other-enhancement include efforts of flattering others, expressing agreement with others, asking for their advice and doing favors for them. In short, in order to enhance one's appeal people bend the truth, this can be found on online social applications like Facebook, Instagram and Yahoo where new friends are made while keeping up with the old ones. They offer their descriptions in flattering terms because they know that by presenting themselves in a good manner may win them more dates or contacts.

Impression Management: The Role of Cognitive load:

Impression management is of great importance when it comes to dealing with others. We have crucial reasons for wanting to be seen as good by others (on dates, interviews or in society). This can be done quite well since people are trained to form an impression of others since years. Due to this experience people can often present themselves positively in an effortless and automatic manner. However, cognitive overload may take place if the number of situations to manage and form impression increases many folds. In such a scenario, when a person is busy creating good impression in one situation may bungle up in another situation simultaneously, and may make serious blunders due to overload or fatigue. Hence, cognitive overload may act as a hindrance to look good in the eyes of others.

Why do people engage in Impression Management?:

So far we have seen that people engage in impression management for one sole reason – to enhance people’s reactions towards them. This can be certainly a primary reason to indulge into such kind of behaviour. But, research states that there are many other reasons too. For instance, efforts that one makes to form an impression (termed as self-presentation) may serve to enhance the mood of people who ideally engage in it. This can be the case as one’s effort to appear happy, pleasant and cheerful might be through the mechanism proposed by facial feedback hypothesis which generate real increment in such feelings. In other words, by trying to appear positive and happy, people might actually encourage such feelings. Research suggests that this is actually the case. To verify this assumption, researchers asked dating couples to give a rating to their moods both pre and post interaction with an opposite sex dating partner or with a stranger. It was predicted that they would feel happier after interacting with their dating partners, but results showed a bigger boost in mood post the interaction with a stranger. This may be due to the fact that participants had to involve more impression management tactics with a stranger than their own dating partners. In short, we engage in impression management to get better appraisal from others’. There might be extra paybacks to such tactics for those who make use of them for attempting to display themselves into a positive light to others which can often make them feel better in several basic ways.

Check your progress

1. Write a detailed note on impression formation and impression management?

2. Discuss in brief Solomon Asch research for impression formation.

3. State the reasons why people engage in impression formation.

4.4 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT WHY SOME PEOPLE CONCLUDE THEY ARE SUPERIOR TO OTHERS?

Hubris is an example of self-serving bias and it refers to a strong tendency of holding exaggerated positive views about oneself. It is a form of extreme confidence, a person who displays hubris typically perceives himself as being completely responsible for positive outcomes. Highly individualistic culture especially encourages the belief that creative outcomes in music, art, science and business are all because of the special abilities of the individuals, while ignoring critical role played by the communities where these creative outcomes originated. At times some inventors do acknowledge the role of the situation and that of others in their achievements, but most of them do not do so. Their background and the institutions to which they belong may possibly encourage their belief that they alone are responsible for their successes. This fosters the belief that they cannot make any wrong decisions, consequently leading to self-serving attribution.

4.5 LET'S SUM UP

We often engage in attribution to gain information about others traits, intentions and motives. Attribution is seeking to understand why people behave in a particular way. According to the theory of correspondent inference, observation of particular aspects of behavior leads us to try to infer something about them - behavior that is freely chosen often produces non common effects as well as may be low in social desirability. Moving forward to the covariation theory, while focusing on information related to consistency, consensus and distinctiveness we seek to understand whether behaviors of others stem from an internal or an external cause. Another two important aspects or casual contributions relate to whether specific causes of behavior being stable or unstable over time and whether behavioral causes are controllable or uncontrollable. Action identification is when the level of abstraction is used to interpret an individual's action.

One of the factors related to attribution concerns the extent to which one attributes events in their lives to their fate or to the personal causes. People are more likely to attribute important events to fate when they strongly believe in the strong existence of God. It may also be true for those who believe more into the acceptance of causality in their cultural heritage.

Attribution is a subject to bias. Amongst which the Correspondence Bias is a phenomenon in which others actions are explained to be stemming from their dispositions even during the presence of situational cues. Another attribution error is self-serving bias i.e., Attribution of positive outcomes.

The formation of first impressions takes place very quickly, within seconds or less, however the speed doesn't determine its accuracy. Studies show that even a little information about others can lead to accurate perceptions, whilst other studies indicate the accuracy of first impressions to be above chance. Even after the formation of the first impression, it does change every time with new information coming in. This may occur when one reinterprets the previously known information while the new information is found to be relevant to the situation being judged.

People often engage in impression management or self-presentation to make a good impression on others. Techniques used to do this fall in two categories. One is self-improvement, that is, the effort to increase one's appeal to others and the other is other-enhancement which is the effort to induce positive reactions or moods in others. Evidences indicate limited working of impression management. If they are over performed, people might be able to recognize it leading to negative rather than positive reactions from others. Impression management is seen to be something we practice all through our lives, engaging ourselves into it in an effortless manner. Impression management can suffer when there are tasks which need cognitive resources as these kinds of tasks may distract us from fears and anxiety leading to poor performance.

4.6 QUESTION PATTERN

1. Explain Kelley's theory of attribution.
2. Discuss fate attribution and personal choice with suitable examples.
3.
 - a. Describe in brief the sources of error in attribution.
 - b. Discuss the uses of tactics to look good.
4. Explain in detail the applications of attribution theory.
5. Write short notes on:
 - a. Theory of Correspondent Inference
 - b. Causal attribution
 - c. Actor Observer effect
 - d. Attribution and Terrorism

4.7 REFERENCE

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ATTITUDE: EVALUATING AND RESPONDING TO THE SOCIAL WORLD - I

Unit Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Attitude Formation: How Attitudes Develop

5.2.1 Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association

5.2.2 Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the “Right” Views

5.2.3 Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others

5.3 When and Why Do Attitudes Influence Behavior?

5.3.1 Role of the Social Context in the Link Between Attitudes and Behavior

5.3.2 Strength of Attitudes

5.3.3 Attitude Extremity: Role of Vested Interests

5.3.4 Attitude Certainty: Importance of Clarity and Correctness

5.3.5 Role of Personal Experience

5.4 How Do Attitudes Guide Behavior?

5.4.1 Attitudes Arrived at Through Reasoned Thought

5.4.2 Attitudes and Spontaneous Behavioral Reactions

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will understand following concepts:

- Learning processes through which our attitudes are formed
- Link between attitudes and behavior and the factors that affect their relationship
- Processes through which attitudes guide behavior

5.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most central concepts in social psychology is that of attitudes (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010). In this unit, we will focus on attitude formation and how attitudes guide our behaviour. We will see that attitudes are an essential component of our lives because they play a vital

role in helping us effectively interact with our environment. Our attitudes allow us to make judgments about events (e.g., “I don’t mind waiting in a queue for these concert tickets”), individuals (e.g., “I really admire the Dalai Lama”), social groups (e.g., “I love my university”), and many other things.

Let us begin the topic on attitude with one example which is very easy to understand. If I ask you what are your beliefs about climate change and how those beliefs were formed? Are you going to be influenced more by the source’s expertise than others? Because of human activity there is increased carbon emissions in the planet’s atmosphere. As a result, global warming is on the rise and increased extreme weather events (e.g., droughts, rising sea levels, wildfires, and heat waves) can be expected. 98 percent climate scientists agree that human-caused climate change is actually happening but general public is not so sure about the reasons behind the climate change. Why is there this “belief gap” among the scientists and general public? Is this because public is not properly informed or are there psychological factors that predict how people perceive this complex environmental issue?

Research reports that 50 percent of the U.S. population believes that the earth is getting warmer because of human activity. Do you think age and education level of respondents will have an impact on their belief about climate change? Probably you would say yes. It was found that those who were more educated and younger (18-29 years) endorsed this belief as compared to less educated and older people (65 years and more).

Apart from education and age, there is an important role of self-interest in the attitudes people form about climate change and the intensity with which those are held. That is, people who live on coastlines (around the world) are more concerned about climate change and the expected rise in sea levels than are people who are less proximal and therefore expect to have less direct experience with the consequences (Milfont, Evans, Sibley, Ries, & Cunningham, 2014).

Are we guided by scientists’ statements on the matter of climate change or are we more influenced by politicians’ statements? Is it possible that because the consequences of climate change are so severe and scary that many people ignore the issue altogether? Is it possible that some of the climate change messages are so frightening that large numbers of us simply dismiss the message?

In this chapter we will explore the factors that shape the attitudes we hold, and address the key question of whether our attitudes are simply a product of rational thought. We will study various learning theories such as classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning and observational learning and their role in attitude formation. We will also see why attitudes influence our behaviour and role of our own personal experiences in forming attitudes.

5.2 ATTITUDE FORMATION: HOW ATTITUDES DEVELOP (VARIOUS LEARNING PROCESSES)

What is Attitude?:

Let us first see how can we define attitude? “An attitude is a tendency to respond positively (favourably) or negatively (unfavourably) to certain people, objects or situations. In other words, it is a tendency to react emotionally in one direction or another”. Now the question is how these attitudes are formed. There are certain learning processes which make us understand the formation of attitudes. Let us see all those learning processes. Following are some learning theories which explain the phenomenon of attitude formation.

5.2.1 Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association:

Classical conditioning is learning based on association. When two stimuli occur together or in close proximity, they come to be associated with one another. When one stimulus regularly precedes another, the one that occurs first may soon become a signal for the one that occurs second. In other words, when the first stimulus is presented, individuals come to expect that the second will follow. As a result, they may gradually demonstrate the same kind of reactions to the first stimulus as they did to the second, especially if the second stimulus is one that induces fairly strong reactions when encountered. This is the basic principle of classical conditioning.

In psychology it is a basic principle that when a stimulus that is capable of evoking a response known as unconditioned stimulus—regularly precedes a neutral stimulus, the one that occurs first can become a signal for the second—the conditioned stimulus. Advertisers have considerable expertise in using this principle to create positive attitudes toward their products. To use this method for creating attitudes, you need to know what your potential audience already responds positively toward (to use as the unconditioned stimulus). If you are marketing a new beer, and your target audience is young adult males, you might safely assume that attractive young women will produce a positive response. Then, you pair the product repeatedly (the formerly neutral or conditioned stimulus—say, your beer logo) with images of attractive women and, beforelong, positive attitudes will be formed toward your new beer! Of course, for other target audiences, another unconditioned stimulus might be successfully paired with the new beer logo to achieve the same result.

Classical conditioning contributes in shaping our attitudes—it can do so even when we are not aware of the stimuli that serve as the basis for this kind of conditioning. For example, in one study (Walsh & Kiviniemi, 2014), students saw photos of apples and bananas. While these photos were shown, other photos known to induce either positive or negative feelings

were exposed for very brief periods of time—so brief that participants were not aware of their presence. Participants who were nonconsciously exposed to photos that induced positive feelings (e.g., baby animals) were later more likely to select fruit as a snack than participants who had been exposed to photos that no consciously induce negative feelings (e.g., junk cars) or those who had been exposed to neutral images (e.g., baskets). The repeated pairing of fruits with positive images created affective associations that affected subsequent behavioural choices. These findings suggest that attitudes can be influenced by subliminal conditioning—classical conditioning that occurs in the absence of conscious awareness of the stimuli involved.

Once formed, such attitudes can influence behaviour. For example, initially people may be neutral toward a particular product label (for example particular brand of beer). However, after repeatedly pairing the product's logo with an “unconditioned stimulus” of various attractive women to the targeted group of young males, then seeing the product logo may come to elicit positive attitudes on its own.

5.2.2 Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the “Right” Views:

Second learning theory where we learn by the consequences of our behaviour is known as instrumental or operant conditioning. If we ask you about your attitudes toward marijuana, you may say immediately “Oh, that’s wrong!” This is because most children have been repeatedly praised or rewarded by their parents and teachers for stating such views. As a result, individuals learn which views are seen as the “correct” attitudes to hold—because of the rewards received for voicing those attitudes by the people they identify with and want to be accepted by. Attitudes that are followed by positive outcomes (e.g., praise) tend to be strengthened and are likely to be repeated, whereas attitudes that are followed by negative outcomes (e.g., punishment) are weakened and their likelihood of being expressed again is reduced. Thus, another way in which attitudes are acquired is through the process of instrumental conditioning.

Sometimes the conditioning process is subtle, with the reward being psychological in nature such as rewarding children with smiles, approval, or hugs for stating the “right” views. (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005).

Sometimes we may find ourselves in a situation where our attitudes are different than the attitudes of others in a new group. In this kind of situation what will happen to our attitude? In order to get approval from others are we going to change our attitude by agreeing with others?

To investigate this issue, Levitan and Visser (2009) assessed the political attitudes of students at the University of Chicago when they arrived on campus and then determined over the course of the next 2 months the networks the students became part of, and how close the students felt toward each new network member.

This allowed the researchers to determine the influence of these new peers on students' political attitudes. Those students who entered networks with more diverse attitudes toward affirmative action exhibited greater change in their attitudes over the 2-month period. These results suggest that entering new social networks can be quite influential—particularly when they introduce us to new strong arguments not previously encountered (Levitan & Visser, 2008). The desire to fit in with others and be rewarded for holding similar attitudes can be a powerful motivator of attitude formation and change.

It is also the case that people may be consciously aware that different groups they are members of will reward (or punish) them for expressing support for particular attitude positions. Rather than being influenced to change our attitudes, we may find ourselves expressing one view on a topic to one audience and another view to a different audience. Indeed, such potentially incompatible audiences tend to remain physically separated (e.g., your parents and your friends on campus).

5.2.3 Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others:

A third means for acquiring attitudes is observational learning, and it occurs when individuals acquire attitudes or behaviours simply by observing others (Bandura, 1997). For example, people acquire attitudes toward many topics and objects by exposure to advertising—where we see “people like us” acting positively or negatively toward different kinds of objects or issues.

The question here arises is why we often adopt the attitudes and behaviours of others? According to Festinger (1954) there is a mechanism of social comparison—our tendency to compare ourselves with others in order to determine whether our view of social reality is correct or not. If we find that our views are similar with those of others, we tend to believe that our ideas and attitudes are accurate. On the other hand, if we find that our views and attitudes are not in line with majority, we tend to discard them.

It is seen that people often adjust their attitudes so as to hold views closer to those of others and identify with—their reference groups. If you hear someone (whom we respect) expressing negative views toward a particular group, this usually should not influence your attitudes. Right? But research findings indicate that hearing others, whom we respect or see as similar to ourselves, stating negative views about a group can lead us to adopt similar attitudes—without ever meeting members of that group (e.g., Maio, Esses, & Bell, 1994; Terry, Hogg, & Duck, 1999).

Check your progress

Short Notes

Attitude

Classical Conditioning

Instrumental Conditioning

Observational Learning

5.3 WHEN AND WHY DO ATTITUDES INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR?

We have seen how attitudes are formed. But we haven't considered one important question, which is, whether attitudes predict behaviour? LaPiere (1934) was the first researcher who tried to answer this question. LaPiere wanted to know whether people with negative attitudes toward a specific social group would in fact act in line with their attitudes. He spent two years travelling around the United States with a young Chinese couple.

While travelling, they stopped at 184 restaurants and 66 hotels and motels. He observed that most of the time, they were treated courteously; infact, they were refused service only once.

When Lapiere completed the travels, he wrote to all the businesses where he and the Chinese couple had stayed or dined. He asked the businesses whether they would or would not offer service to Chinese visitors. He was stunned by the results. 92 percent of the restaurants and 91 percent of the hotels that responded said “No to Chinese customers!”

These results indicated that there is a gap between attitudes and behaviour—that is, what a person says and what that person actually does when confronted with the situation of that attitude may be quite different. We are back to our original question. Do attitudes predict behaviour? Above research by Lapiere shows that attitudes don’t predict behaviour. But to understand why attitudes might not predict behaviour, we need to recognize that there are various norms that can affect the likelihood of discriminatory behaviour.

5.3.1 Role of the Social Context in the Link Between Attitudes and Behaviour:

Let’s consider now how the social context can affect the link between attitudes and behaviour. Context of the situation: There is role of situational pressure which makes people do otherwise, that is, behave in contradiction in relation with their attitude. Have you ever noticed a gap between your attitude and behaviour? Your answer would be probably yes. This is because the social context can directly affect the attitude–behaviour connection. For example, if one of your friends shows you a new tattoo and asks for your opinion? Suppose you are against tattoo, would you say that you do *not* like it? The chances are quite good that you would try to avoid hurting your friend’s feelings so you might even say you *like* it even though your attitude is negative. As this example illustrates, depending on the degree to which the action has social consequences or not, attitudes may be differentially related to behaviour. In contrast to your attitude–behaviour inconsistency in responding to your friend’s tattoo, your attitude might be a very good predictor of whether you would get a tattoo or not.

Research has found that attitudes that are held with greater certainty are more strongly linked to the behaviour (Tormala & Petty, 2004) compared to attitudes that are held with some uncertainty. Research shows that older people are often more certain of their attitudes than are young people. They usually place greater value on “standing firm” in the attitude positions they adopt, and for this reason they tend to show greater attitude (Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009).

5.3.2 Strength of Attitudes:

Attitudes that are stronger are better predictors of human behaviour than weak ones. This phenomenon is very well shown in the Hollywood movie “The Insider” where the protagonist goes against his own organization because he felt that they were not working responsibly

towards public safety. People like this are committed to the notion that corporations must be honest, especially when there is the potential for damage to the public. Attitudes like these—that are based on moral convictions—can give rise to intense emotion and strongly predict behaviour (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). In other words, whether attitudes will predict sustained and potentially costly behaviour depends on the strength of the attitudes.

There are three important factors: extremity of an attitude, certainty with which an attitude is held and personal experience with the attitude object which determine the extent to which attitudes will drive our behaviour (Fazio, Ledbetter, & Towles-Schwen, 2000).

5.3.3 Attitude Extremity: Role of Vested Interests:

We will first consider attitude *extremity*—the extent to which an individual feels strongly—in one direction or the other—about an issue (Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006). In this context the term ‘vested interest’ is important. It means to what extent the attitude is relevant to the person who holds it.

Many studies have shown that more the vested interest, stronger the impact is of the attitude on behaviour (Crano, 1995; Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003). In one study, on increasing the legal age of alcohol drinking, with university students, Sivacek & Crano (1982) found that who had vested interest, that is, who would be affected by the new law were more likely to take part in the campaign than those who had low vested interest. Sivacek & Crano, 1982 conducted a research on university students in which students from a large university were asked if they would participate in a campaign *against* increasing the legal age for drinking alcohol from 18 to 21, their responses depended on whether they would be affected by the policy change or not. Students who would be affected by this new law—those younger than 21 — have a stronger stake in this issue than those who would not be affected by the law because they were already 21. Thus, it was predicted that those in the first group—whose interests were at stake— would be much more likely to join a rally against the proposed policy change than those in the second group. This is exactly what happened: While more than 47 percent of those with high vested interest agreed to take part in the campaign, only 12 percent of those in the low vested interest group did so.

Not only do people with a vested interest behave in a way that supports their cause, they are likely to elaborate on arguments that favour their position. By doing so, attitude-consistent thoughts come to mind when an issue is made salient. For example, Haugtvedt and Wegener (1994) found that when participants were asked to consider a nuclear power plant being built in their own state (high personal relevance) they developed more counter arguments against the plan than when the power plant might be potentially built in a distant state (low personal relevance).

Thus, attitudes based on vested interest are more likely to be thought about carefully, be resistant to change, and be an accessible guide for behaviour.

5.3.4 Attitude Certainty: Importance of Clarity and Correctness:

Attitude certainty is when a person learns that others share one's attitudes, it acts as justification for that attitude and thereby increases certainty. Attitude certainty is conceptualized in terms of attitude clarity (the subjective sense that one knows what one's attitude is) and attitude correctness (the subjective sense that one's attitude is correct or valid).

When more people agree with your idea it gives a positive feedback about the correctness of the idea. Clarity is another component of attitude certainty. The more often you are asked to report on your attitude, the more it will facilitate clarity and thereby certainty.

The social context too is important in assessing the relative effects of attitude clarity and correctness. High clarity will be more predictive of behaviour in private, but not public contexts—where correctness concerns are likely to be greater. Moreover, when people's attitudes are attacked, successfully resisting those attacks may well increase perceptions of attitude certainty because mounting and expressing counter arguments will increase perceptions of attitude correctness. In terms of attitude-behaviour consistency, an attitude that is high on *both* clarity and correctness is most likely to reliably predict behaviour in public and in private.

5.3.5 Role of Personal Experience:

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 that an information processing difference exists between direct and indirect experience. Subjects watched a videotape of an individual working examples of a variety of puzzles under instructions 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. Similarly, attitudes based on personal relevance are more likely to be elaborated on in terms of supporting arguments, and this makes them resistant to change (Wegener, Petty, Smoak, & Fabrigar, 2004). Personal experience is one way to create involvement with an issue, and people who are more involved with an issue and whose values are linked with that issue are more likely to act on their attitudes (Blankenship & Wegener, 2008). In relation with personal experience, attitude accessibility was also studied by Fazio (1989). Attitude accessibility refers to the ease with which specific attitudes can be

remembered and brought into consciousness. The kinds of attitudes that have been found to be closely related to behaviour are the ones that would probably be most accessible.

In sum, existing evidence suggests that attitudes really *do* affect behaviour. However, the strength of this link is strongly determined by a number of factors. First of all, situational constraints may not permit us to overtly express our attitudes. Second, attitude extremity, which is a function of whether we have a vested interest in the issue or not, influences whether our attitudes translate into behaviour, and this is particularly likely when a message is framed as having an immediate impact rather than one far in the future. Third, attitudes that are clear and experienced as correct are more likely to affect behaviour than are those that lack clarity or that we are uncertain about their correctness. Fourth, whether we have personal experience with the attitude object or perceive it as relevant to our important values can affect the accessibility of the attitude, and attitudes that are more accessible are more likely to determine behaviour compared to those that are not accessible.

Check your progress

Short Notes

Strength of Attitude

Attitude extremity

Attitude certainty

Attitude clarity

Attitude correctness

Attitude accessibility

5.4 HOW DO ATTITUDES GUIDE BEHAVIOUR?

In this section we will focus on two processes through which attitudes guide behaviour. Those two processes are a) attitudes based on reasoned thought and b) Attitudes and spontaneous behavioural reactions. We will first consider behaviours that are driven by attitudes based on reasoned thought, and then examine the role of attitudes in more spontaneous behavioural responses.

5.4.1 Attitudes Arrived at Through Reasoned Thought:

Theory of reasoned action was refined by Ajzen & Fishbein in 1980 and termed as theory of planned behaviour. This view assumes that the decision to engage in a particular behaviour is the result of a rational process. Various behavioural options are considered, the outcomes of each option are evaluated, and a decision is reached to act or not to act. That decision is then reflected in *behavioural intentions*, which are often good predictors of whether we will act on our attitudes in a given situation (Ajzen, 1987). Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile (2001) found that intentions are moderately correlated with behaviour.

Research has proved that the intention– behaviour relationship is even stronger when people have formed a plan for how and when they will translate their intentions into behaviour (Barz et al., 2014; Frye & Lord, 2009). Suppose that you form the intention to go to the gym to work out. If you develop a plan for *how* you will translate your intention into actual behaviour—beginning with setting your alarm, preparing your exercise clothes, and so forth—you will be more likely to succeed at doing so. Gollwitzer (1999) noted that a plan to implement our intentions is very effective because it involves delegating control of one’s behaviour to the situation.

But, how can one form an intention to change some aspect of your behaviour ? According to the theory, intentions are determined by two factors: *Attitudes toward the behaviour*— people’s positive or negative evaluations of performing the behaviour (whether they think it will yield positive or negative consequences), and *subjective norms*—people’s perceptions of whether others will approve or disapprove of this behaviour. A third factor, *perceived behavioural control* —people’s appraisals of their ability to perform the behaviour—was subsequently added to the theory (Ajzen, 1991).

5.4.2 Attitudes and Spontaneous Behavioural Reactions:

In many situations, people have to act spontaneously. For example, suppose you are driving and you may have to suddenly apply the brakes to avoid an accident. In such a case, attitudes influence behaviour in a more direct and automatic manner, with intentions playing a less important role. According to Fazio’s attitude-to-behaviour process model (Fazio, 1990; Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1994), some events activate our attitude; that attitude, once activated, influences how we perceive the attitude object. At the same time, our knowledge about what’s appropriate in a given situation (our knowledge of various social norms) is also activated. Our attitude and whatever information are already stored helps in shaping our *definition* of the event. And this perception This perception influences our behaviour.

It can be said that attitudes affect our behaviour through two mechanisms, and these operate under contrasting conditions. When we have time to engage in careful, reasoned thought, we can weigh all the alternatives and decide how we will act. Under the hectic conditions of everyday life, however, we often don’t have time for this kind of deliberate weighing of alternatives, and often people’s responses appear to be much faster than such deliberate thought processes can account for. In such cases, our attitudes seem to spontaneously shape our perceptions of various events—often with very little conscious cognitive processing.

Check your progress

Short Notes

Behavioural intentions

Subjective norms

Perceived behavioural control

Spontaneous behavioural reactions

5.5 SUMMARY

Attitudes are evaluations that can color our experience of almost any aspect of the world. Very often, attitudes can be accessed consciously and are easy to report. These type of attitudes are explicit. But attitudes can also be implicit as well, and therefore not consciously accessible or controllable. We usually acquire attitudes from other persons through social learning. Such learning can involve classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, or observational learning.

Sometimes, attitudes can also be formed on the basis of social comparison, which is, our tendency to compare ourselves with others to know whether our view of social reality is correct or is not. In order to be similar to others we usually accept the attitudes that others hold, to the extent that we identify with that group.

There are many factors that can affect the strength of the relationship between attitudes and behavior. *Situational constraints* may prevent us from expressing our attitudes overtly—including concerns about what others may think of us. People often show pluralistic ignorance which means wrongly believing that others have different attitudes than we do, which can limit our willingness to express our attitudes in public. Several aspects of attitudes themselves also moderate the attitude–behaviour link. These include factors related to attitude strength: including the *extremity* of our attitude position, the *certainty* with which our attitudes are held, and whether we have *personal experience* with the attitude object. All of these factors can make our attitudes more accessible, and therefore likely to guide our behavior.

There are two different mechanisms through which attitudes influence behavior. According to the theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behavior, when we can give careful thought to our attitudes, *intentions* derived from our attitudes strongly predict behavior. According to the attitude-to-behavior process model, in situations where our behavior is more spontaneous and we do not engage in such deliberate thought, attitudes influence behavior by shaping our perception and interpretation of the situation.

5.6 QUESTIONS

1. Define the term attitude?
2. How do attitudes influence one's behavioural choices and decision making with long-term consequences?
3. Discuss the role of classical conditioning in shaping our attitudes. Give examples.
4. How are attitudes acquired through instrumental conditioning? Discuss with examples from your life.
5. Why do people's expressed attitudes change or stand in opposition for different audiences and contexts?
6. How are our attitudes influenced by our identification with groups and our perception of the attitudes held by the group members?
7. What is the social modelling effect? What are some of the potential functions of social modelling of eating behaviours?
8. Discuss the role of social norms in regard with the way people act and the way they feel about a particular object.
9. What factors determine whether behaviour is consistent with attitudes?
10. Discuss an instance where you failed to express your true attitude about an issue because you were worried what others would think of you.

11. How does the strength of attitudes influence attitude behaviour consistency?
12. What is a *vested interest*? Discuss some relevant research.
13. Give two important components of attitude certainty and discuss their role in attitude change and resistance to change.
14. How do direct and indirect experiences with an object affect our attitude toward it and guide behaviour?
15. What are the factors that affect the strength of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour?
16. According to the theory of planned behaviour, what are the factors that determine our intention to change some aspects of our behaviour?
17. According to the attitude-to-behaviour process model by Fazio, why do attitudes sometimes influence behaviour in a direct and automatic manner?
18. Explain why people always engage in careful and reasoned thought when there is ample time to make decisions but make hasty decisions under hectic conditions.

5.7 REFERENCES

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ATTITUDE: EVALUATING AND RESPONDING TO THE SOCIAL WORLD - II

Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 The Science of Persuasion: How Attitudes Are Changed
 - 6.2.1 Persuasion: Communicators, Messages, and Audiences
 - 6.2.2 The Cognitive Processes Underlying Persuasion
- 6.3 Resisting Persuasion Attempts
 - 6.3.1 Reactance: Protecting Our Personal Freedom
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 - 6.3.4 Actively Defending Our Attitudes: Counter arguing Against the Competition
 - 6.3.5 Individual Differences in Resistance to Persuasion
 - 6.3.6 Ego-Depletion Can Undermine Resistance
- 6.4 Cognitive Dissonance: What Is It and How Do We Manage It?
 - 6.4.1 Dissonance and Attitude Change: The Effects of Induced Compliance
 - 6.4.2 Alternative Strategies for Resolving Dissonance
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- 6.8 References

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will understand following concepts:

- Factors determining persuasion attempts to alter our attitudes
- Methods that help people resist attempts to persuade them
- Effects of cognitive dissonance on attitude change

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of attitudes is central to the field of social psychology because attitudes are capable of influencing almost every aspect of our experience. Even when we do not have strong attitudes toward a specific issue, related values can influence what attitudes we form.

Social psychologists view attitudes as important because they often *do* influence our behavior. This is especially likely to be true when attitudes are strong and accessible (Bizer, Tormala, Rucker, & Petty, 2006; Fazio, 2000). Attitudes can also affect important behavioral choices that have long-term consequences, so it is important to understand how they influence decision making.

In this unit, we will address the important question of how attitudes are changed—the process of *persuasion*. Persuasion is the process of changing our attitude toward something based on some kind of communication. Much of the persuasion we experience comes from outside (external) forces. How do people convince others to change their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? What communications do you receive that attempt to persuade you to change your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors?

We'll also examine some reasons *why* attitudes are often resistant to change. Finally, we'll consider the important topic of cognitive dissonance which is an internal form of attitude change. It is the tension we experience when our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are in conflict. In order to reduce dissonance, individuals can change their behavior, attitudes, or cognitions, or add a new cognition. Cognitive dissonance has fascinating implications not just for attitude change, but for many aspects of social behavior as well.

6.2 THE SCIENCE OF PERSUASION: HOW ATTITUDES ARE CHANGED

In this section we will deal with the factors that determine whether persuasion attempts to alter our attitudes will be effective. If I ask you to close your eyes and think whether in the last few days did someone try to change your attitudes about something? If you think about it for a moment, you may be surprised to realize that it happened almost every day. You were bombarded with such attempts by billboards, television commercials, magazine ads, telemarketers, pop-up ads on your computer, and even friends. To what extent are such attempts at persuasion—efforts to change our attitudes through the use of various kinds of messages—successful? And what factors determine if they succeed or fail? Social psychologists have studied these issues for decades, and as we'll soon see, their efforts have yielded important insights into the cognitive processes that play a role in persuasion (e.g., Petty, Wheeler, & Tormala, 2003; Wegener & Carlston, 2005).

6.2.1 Persuasion: Communicators, Messages, and Audiences:

Persuasion research was conducted by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley(1953) which focused on characteristics of communicators, communications and audience.

Communicators who are *credible* or considered to be experts with respect to the topics or issues they are presenting — are more persuasive than those who are seen as lacking expertise. For example, we can change our eating habits much in accordance with the advice from a family doctor than from a next-door neighbor who is an ordinary clerk in the railways. If the source of the message is from credible person, it has power of persuasion than a message which lacks trustworthiness and credibility.

If a communicator has personal gain (financial or otherwise) in persuading you then that communicator loses credibility and ability to persuade. Consequently, communicators are seen as most credible and, therefore persuasive, when they are perceived as arguing against their self-interests (Eagly, Chaiken, & Wood, 1981).

Popular and physically attractive communicators are more effective in changing attitudes than unpopular and unattractive ones (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Frequently, advertisers whose attractive models are attempting to suggest to us that if we buy their product ,we too will be perceived as attractive.

We believe those communicators more who are in our own social networks. They have more persuasive powers. When opinions are provided in an informal person-to- person manner, it is referred to as word-of-mouth marketing (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). If someone from our own group has given good feedback about something, for example, a movie, we tend to believe it because we see them as trustworthy and as having the same interests as ourselves.

Messages that do not appear to change our attitudes are usually more successful than those that try to achieve this goal (Walster & Festinger, 1962). Research on this issue indicates that fore warning lessens the extent to which attitude change occurs (Benoit, 1998). So, simply knowing that a sales pitch is coming your way can undermine its persuasiveness.

Persuasion can be enhanced by messages that arouse strong emotions such as fear in the audience. When the message is sufficiently fear arousing that people genuinely feel threatened, they are likely to argue against the threat (Liberman & Chaiken, 1992; Taylor & Shepperd, 1998). Fear-based ads have been used in an attempt to frighten people about future consequences if they fail to change their behavior. Despite the long-standing use of such fear-based messages, research concludes that it is not generally effective at changing people's behaviors (de Hoog, Stroe be, &

de Wit, 2007). You must have seen ‘tobacco causing cancer’ ads in movies. Despite this gruesome advertisement tobacco consumption has not gone down.

Research findings (Broemer, 2004) suggest that health messages of various sorts are *more* effective if they are framed in a positive manner (e.g., how to attain good health) rather than in a negative manner (e.g., risks and undesirable consequences of particular behavior).

6.2.2 The Cognitive Processes Underlying Persuasion:

Cognitive approach to persuasion focuses on the cognitive processes that underlie persuasion. We can process persuasive messages in two distinct ways.

1. Systematic processing
2. Heuristic processing

The first type of processing is known as systematic processing or the central route to persuasion, and it involves careful consideration of message content and the ideas it contains. Such processing requires effort, and it absorbs much of our information-processing capacity.

The second approach, known as heuristic processing or the peripheral route to persuasion, involves the use of mental shortcuts or simple rules of thumb. This kind of processing requires less effort and allows us to react to persuasive messages in an automatic manner. Attitude change occurs in the absence of careful thought. When do we engage in each of these two distinct modes of thought? Modern theories of persuasion such as the elaboration-likelihood model (ELM; e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005) and the heuristic-systematic model (e.g., Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998) provide the following answer. We engage in the most effortful and systematic processing when our motivation and capacity to process information relating to the persuasive message is high. This type of processing occurs if we have a lot of knowledge about the topic, we have a lot of time to engage in careful thought, the issue is sufficiently important to us, or we believe it is essential to form an accurate view (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In contrast, we engage in heuristic type of processing when we lack the capacity or time to process more carefully or we have little knowledge about the issue or when our motivation to perform such cognitive work is low (the issue is not very important to us or has little potential effect on us). Advertisers, politicians, salespersons, and others wishing to change our attitudes prefer to push us into the heuristic mode of processing because, for reasons described later, it is often easier to change our attitudes when we think in this mode than when we engage in more careful and systematic processing.

The discovery of two contrasting modes of processing—systematic versus heuristic — has provided an important key to understanding when and how persuasion occurs. For instance, when persuasive messages are not interesting or relevant to individuals ,the degree of persuasion they produce is *not* strongly influenced by the strength of the arguments these messages contain. When such messages are highly relevant to individuals, however, they are much more successful in inducing persuasion when the arguments they contain *are* strong and convincing.

Can you see why this is so ? According to modern theories such as the ELM that consider these dual pathways ,when relevance is low, individuals tend to process messages through the heuristic mode, using various mental shortcuts. Thus, argument strength has little impact. In contrast, when relevance is high, they process persuasive messages more systematically and, in this mode, argument strength *is* important (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Similarly, the systematic versus heuristic distinction helps explain why people can be more easily persuaded when they are distracted than when they are not. Under these conditions, the capacity to process the information in a persuasive message is limited, so people adopt the heuristic mode of thought. If the message contains cues that will induce heuristic processing (e.g., communicators who are attractive or seemingly expert), persuasion may occur because people respond to these cues and not to the arguments being presented. In sum, the modern cognitive approach really does seem to provide the crucial key to understanding many aspects of persuasion.

Check Your Progress

Short Notes

Persuasion

Credible communicators

Systematic processing (central route to persuasion)

Heuristic processing (peripheral route to persuasion)

Elaboration-likelihood model (ELM)

6.3 RESISTING PERSUASION ATTEMPTS

In the previous section we were discussing how people can be persuaded to change their attitudes and behavior — either because they think systematically about a compelling message, or because they are influenced by more peripheral cues. In the following section we will discuss how it is not always possible to change people's attitude and how people resist efforts which are directed towards changing their attitude.

6.3.1 Reactance: Protecting Our Personal Freedom:

Many times you must have felt that you could not express your attitude freely on some issue. You also might have felt pressure to change your attitude. Some of us might be alright to be told what to do but most of us would not like a situation where we do not have freedom to express our attitude. Sometimes there is an individual, on other occasion there are advertisers, politicians who pressure others to change their attitude on some issue. Whether “public” persuaders or private ones, you are on the receiving end of threats to your freedom to decide for yourself. As a result, you may experience annoyance and resentment. So, what do you do? You may try to resist the persuasion attempts. Sometimes you may adopt views *opposite* to those the would-be persuader wants you to adopt. Such behaviour is an example of what social psychologists call reactance—a negative reaction to efforts by others to reduce our freedom by getting us to believe or do what *they* want (Brehm, 1966).

Research indicates that in such situations, we do often change our attitudes and behaviour in the opposite direction from what we are being urged to believe or to do. Indeed, when we are feeling reactance, strong arguments in favour of attitude change can increase opposition compared to moderate or weak arguments (Fuegen & Brehm, 2004). This is the reason why hard-sell attempts at persuasion often fail. When individuals perceive such appeals as direct threats to their personal freedom they are strongly motivated to resist.

6.3.2 Forewarning: Prior Knowledge of Persuasive Intent:

Forewarning means knowing beforehand that someone is making an attempt to change our attitude. Thus, forewarning is advance knowledge that a particular forthcoming message is specially designed to change our attitude. Research studies have shown that forewarning helps us to resist persuasion. For example, when we watch commercials on television, we know that these messages are designed to persuade us to purchase various products, we are often less likely to be affected by it than if we do not possess such knowledge. Why? Because forewarning influences several cognitive processes that play an important role in persuasion.

Forewarning helps us to resist persuasion in two ways: First, helps us to prepare counter arguments and defenses against a given message. When we receive a persuasive message, especially one which is opposite to our present views, we often indulge in counter arguments. When we know the content of such a message in advance, we can get sufficient time to prepare our defenses and in addition, forewarning gives us more time to recall relevant facts and information from memory. This can help us to refute a persuasive message.

6.3.3 Selective Avoidance of Persuasion Attempts:

Selective avoidance can be defined as a tendency to direct our attention away from information that challenges our existing attitude. We can consider an example of television viewing to explain how selective avoidance occurs in our processing of information. People do not simply sit in front of the television passively absorbing whatever the media decides to throw at them. Instead, they channel-surf, mute the commercials, record their favorite programmes, or simply cognitively “tune out” when confronted with information contrary to their existing views. The opposite effect occurs as well. When we encounter information that *supports* our views, we tend to give it our increased attention. We stop changing channels and watch carefully. Together these tendencies to “tune out” information that contradicts our attitudes and “tune in” information that support our attitudes are two sides of selective exposure. Such selectivity in what we make the focus of our attention helps ensure that many of our attitudes remain largely intact for long periods of time.

6.3.4 Actively Defending Our Attitudes: Counter arguing Against the Competition:

Many times, we try to ignore or screen out information which is not matching with our current views. This is one way of resisting persuasion. This is known as passive defense of our attitudes. In addition, we also use a more active strategy which is counter arguing against views that are contrary to our own attitudes (Eagly, Chen, Chaiken, & Shaw Barnes, 1999).

Research has proved that we are good at resisting persuasion because we not only ignore information that is inconsistent with our current views, but we also carefully process counter-attitudinal input and argue actively against it. In this way, exposure to arguments opposed to our attitudes can serve to strengthen the views we already hold, making us more resistant to subsequent efforts to change them.

6.3.5 Individual Differences in Resistance to Persuasion:

Different people respond differently at attempts to persuasion in relation with their attitudes (Brinol, Rucker, Tormala, & Petty, 2004). Some people are very much motivated to counter arguing and hence, resistant to change. On the other hand, some people try to strength their own beliefs when faced with persuasion attempts. Brinol (2004) conducted research to find out which of these two strategies was predictive of attitude change. He found that both the approaches resisting persuasion predicted successful resistance to attitude change. Further , the types of thoughts people have when they are confronted with a counter-attitudinal message are predicted by their preference for resisting persuasion by either counter arguing or strengthening their initial attitude position. So, apparently people do know something about how they deal with attempts to persuade them, and they use their favored techniques quite effectively.

6.3.6 Ego-Depletion Can Undermine Resistance:

Ego depletion refers to the idea that self-control or willpower draws upon a limited pool of mental resources that can be used up. When the energy for mental activity is low, self-control is impaired, which would be considered a state of ego depletion. People have limited capacity to self-regulate (i.e., to engage their willpower in controlling their own thinking). Prior expenditure of our limited resources can make us vulnerable to persuasion. When people are tired or are in a state of ego-depletion, they may simply agree with other people's ideas which is in contrast with their own idea, that is, they will show attitude change.

The process of ego depletion was studied by Wheeler, Brinol, and Hermann (2007). They gave participants an easy or difficult first task, with the difficult task being designed to deplete their self-regulation resources. Later, participants were given a weak or strong message in

favor of compulsory examinations for graduation. Students were initially strongly against compulsory graduation examination. The question in front of the researchers was “did ego depletion result in people being more persuaded by bad (weak) arguments?” The answer was a yes. The weak arguments were unpersuasive among those who were not ego depleted, but they were just as persuasive to those who were ego-depleted as were the strong arguments. Examination of the participants’ thoughts in response to the message verified that the non-depleted participants had more favorable thoughts about the message when the arguments were strong compared to when they were weak. In contrast, the thoughts of the ego depleted participants were equally as favorable in the strong and weak arguments case.

Recent research has confirmed that those who have resisted a persuasive message have less ability to subsequently exert self-control (Burkley, 2008; Vohs et al., 2008; Wang, Novemsky, Dhar, & Baumeister, 2010). It has been found that resistance depletes our self-control, which results in greater vulnerability to persuasion, and when we are depleted, we may find it more difficult to resist would-be persuaders’ weak messages. Furthermore, when people are attempting to persuade others, they are more likely to be dishonest when their capacity to exert control has been depleted (Mead, Baumeister, Gino, Schweitzer, & Ariely, 2009). This research suggests that we need to beware of communicators who are the most tired when they are attempting to persuade us — for they may be strongly tempted to colour the truth in ways that favour them over us.

Check Your Progress

Short Notes

Reactance

Selective avoidance

Counter-attitudinal message

6.4 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO WE MANAGE IT?

We know that attitudes and behaviour are linked. But in many situations, there can be a gap between what we feel on the inside (positive or negative reactions to some object or issue) and what we show on the outside. For example, your father gifts you a Maruti car and you do not like Maruti cars for various reasons. Maybe because Maruti brand is not liked in your friends circle or it does not sound like a foreign brand etc. If your father asks you how is the new car? You probably end up saying that it is a very nice car. You did not want to offend your father. But you certainly felt uncomfortable when you uttered those words. Why? Because in this situation you were aware that your behaviour was *not* consistent with your attitudes and this is an uncomfortable state to be in.

Psychologists term this reaction as cognitive dissonance—an unpleasant state that occurs when we notice that our attitudes and our behaviour are inconsistent. It has been studied and found that when we cannot justify our attitude-inconsistent behaviour, we end up changing our own attitudes. Any time you become aware of saying what you don't really believe (e.g., praise something you don't actually like "just to be polite"), make a difficult decision that requires you to reject an alternative you find attractive, or discover that something you've invested effort or money in is not as good as you expected, you are likely to experience dissonance. In all these situations, there is a gap between your attitudes and your actions, and such gaps tend to make us uncomfortable. Research has found that the discomfort associated with dissonance is reflected in elevated activity in the left front regions of our brain (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, Fearn, Sigelman, & Johnson, 2008). Most important from the present perspective, cognitive dissonance can sometimes lead us to change our own attitudes—to shift them so that they *are* consistent with our overt behaviour, even in the absence of any strong external pressure to do so.

6.4.1 Dissonance and Attitude Change: The Effects of Induced (Forced) Compliance:

The theory of cognitive dissonance was introduced by Leon Festinger (1957) to explain how individuals change their own attitudes. Cognitive dissonance can be defined as an unpleasant internal state that results when individuals notice inconsistency between two or more of their

attitudes or between their attitudes and their behaviour. This theory predicts that dissonance will be stronger when we have *few* reasons for engaging in attitude-discrepant behaviour. When we have little justification and therefore cannot explain away our actions to ourselves, dissonance can be quite intense.

When someone is forced to do something they really don't want to do, dissonance is created between their cognition and their behaviour. Forced compliance occurs when an individual performs an action that is inconsistent with his or her beliefs. The behaviour can't be changed, since it was already in the past, so dissonance will need to be reduced by re-evaluating their attitude to what they have done. This prediction was tested in an experiment by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959).

They asked participants to perform a series of dull tasks (such as turning pegs in a peg board for an hour). Participant's attitudes toward this task was highly negative. Festinger and Carlsmith investigated if making people perform a dull task would create cognitive dissonance through forced compliance behaviour. They used 71 male students as participants to perform a series of dull tasks (such as turning pegs in a peg board for an hour). They were then paid either \$1 or \$20 to tell a waiting participant that the tasks were really interesting. Most of the participants agreed to persuade other participants that the boring experiment would be fun. When the participants were asked to evaluate the experiment, the participants who were paid only \$1 rated the tedious task as more fun and enjoyable than the participants who were paid \$20 to lie.

What could be the reason of above findings? Being paid only \$1 is not sufficient incentive for lying and so those who were paid \$1 experienced dissonance. They could only overcome that dissonance by coming to believe that the tasks really were interesting and enjoyable. Being paid \$20 provides a reason for turning pegs, and there is, therefore, no dissonance.

These findings were very surprising and social psychologists refer to this prediction as the less-leads-to-more effect—less rewards for an action often leads to greater attitude change—and it has been confirmed in many studies (Harmon-Jones, 2000; Leippe & Eisenstadt, 1994). The more money or other rewards that are offered to people for them to behave in an attitude-discrepant way provides a justification for their actions and can undermine the likelihood that attitude change will occur. Small rewards lead to greater attitude change when people believe that they were personally responsible for both the chosen course of action and any negative effects it produced. However, if ordered by an authority to do a particular behaviour that is inconsistent with our personal attitudes, we may not feel responsible for what happens and therefore not experience dissonance.

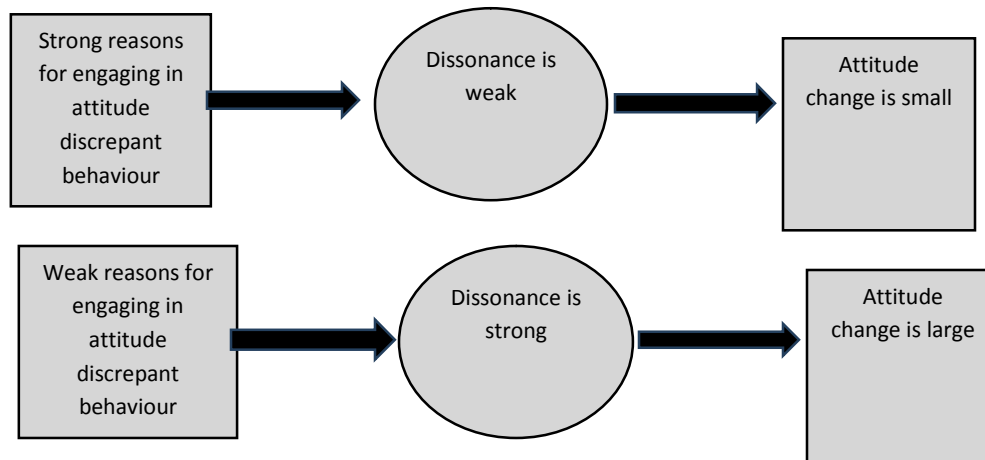


Fig. 6.1 Attitude-Discrepant- Dissonance-Attitude Change

6.4.2 Alternative Strategies for Resolving Dissonance:

In this section we will discuss various strategies people use to reduce dissonance. Changing attitude is not the only method to reduce dissonance. There are direct and indirect methods used by individuals to reduce dissonance.

Direct Methods to reduce dissonance:

- **To alter the behaviour:** Other way is to alter our behaviour so it is more consistent with our attitudes—for example, we could resolve to only buy organic products *in the future* and not change our “green environmental attitudes” after we’ve made some non-environmental-friendly purchase.
- **Trivialization:** Whenever individuals face dissonance, they tend to reduce it in the easiest possible way. One method of reducing dissonance that has been studied in recent years is called as *trivialization*. It is a technique for reducing dissonance in which the importance of attitudes or behaviour that are inconsistent with each other is cognitively reduced. Research studies conducted by Simon, Greenberg and Brehm (1995) point to the overall conclusion that once individuals choose the easier or most convenient form of dissonance reduction and they tend to ignore all other alternatives.

These strategies are called as *direct* methods of dissonance reduction: They focus on the attitude–behavior discrepancy that is causing the dissonance.

Indirect methods to reduce dissonance:

Research by Steele and his colleagues (e.g., Steele & Lui, 1983; Steele, 1988) suggested that dissonance can be reduced by *indirect* means as well. That is, although the basic discrepancy between the attitude and

behavior is left intact, the unpleasant or negative feelings generated by dissonance can be still reduced by, for example, consuming alcohol. Under certain conditions, individuals experiencing dissonance may not focus so much on reducing the gap between their attitudes and behavior, but instead on other methods that will allow them to feel good about themselves despite the gap (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993).

Self-affirmation: People sometimes engage in self-affirmation—restoring positive self-evaluations that are threatened by the dissonance (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Tesser, Martin, & Cornell, 1996). This is accomplished by focusing on positive self-attributes—good things about oneself. For instance, when I experienced dissonance as a result of saying nice things about my neighbor's new SUV, even though I am strongly against such vehicles, I could remind myself that I am a considerate person. By contemplating positive aspects of the self, it can help to reduce the discomfort. However, we choose to reduce dissonance—through indirect tactics or direct strategies that are aimed at reducing the attitude–behavior discrepancy—we all find strategies to help us deal with the discomfort that comes from being aware of discrepancies between our attitudes and behavior.

6.4.3 When Dissonance Is a Tool for Beneficial Changes in Behavior:

- People who don't wear seat belts are much more likely to die in accidents than those who do.
- People who smoke are much more likely to suffer from lung cancer and heart disease than those who don't . . .
- People who engage in unprotected sex are much more likely than those who engage in safe sex to contract dangerous diseases, as well as have unplanned pregnancies . . .

Most of us know these statements are true, and our attitudes are generally favorable toward using seat belts, quitting smoking, and engaging in safe sex (Carey, Morrison- Beedy, & Johnson, 1997). Despite having positive attitudes, they are often *not* translated into overt actions. Research suggests that dissonance can be used to promote beneficial behaviour change.

Let us consider some daily life situations. Some people continue to drive without seat belts, to smoke, and to have unprotected sex. To address these social problems, we do not need to change people's attitude, rather, a change in overt behaviour will be beneficial. The question is can dissonance be used to promote beneficial behavioral changes?

Research suggests that it can (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & Wilson, 1997; Gibbons, Eggleston, & Benthin, 1997), especially when it is used to generate feelings of hypocrisy— publicly advocating some attitude, and then making salient to the person that they

have acted in a way that is inconsistent with their own attitudes. Such feelings might be sufficiently intense that only actions that reduce dissonance directly, by inducing behavioral change may be effective. These predictions concerning the possibility of dissonance-induced *behaviour change* have been tested in several studies. Stone, Wiegand, Cooper, and Aronson (1997) asked participants to prepare a speech advocating the use of condoms (safe sex) to avoid contracting AIDS. Next, participants were asked to think of reasons why they themselves hadn't used condoms in the past (*personal reasons*) or reasons that people in general sometimes fail to use condoms (*normative reasons* not involving their own behavior).

The researchers predicted that dissonance would be maximized in the personal reasons condition, where participants had to come face-to-face with their own hypocrisy. Then, all persons in the study were given a choice between a direct means of reducing dissonance—purchasing condoms at a reduced price, or an indirect means of reducing dissonance—making a donation to a program designed to aid homeless persons. The results indicated that when participants had been asked to focus on the reasons why they didn't engage in safe sex in the past, an overwhelming majority chose to purchase condoms, suggesting that their behavior in the future will be different—the direct route to dissonance reduction. In contrast, when asked to think about reasons why people in general didn't engage in safe sex, more actually chose the indirect route to dissonance reduction—a donation to aid the homeless project—and didn't change their behavior.

These findings suggest that using dissonance to make our own hypocrisy salient can indeed be a powerful tool for changing our behavior in desirable ways. For maximum effectiveness, however, such procedures must involve several elements: People must publicly advocate the desired behaviors (e.g., using condoms), they need to be induced to think about their *own* behavioral failures in the past, and they must be given access to direct means for reducing their dissonance (i.e., a method for changing their behavior). When these conditions are met, dissonance can bring about beneficial changes in behavior.

Check Your Progress

Short Notes

Cognitive dissonance

Less-leads-to-more

Trivialization

Self-affirmation

Cultural tightness versus looseness

6.5 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US.....

Different cultures have different norms according to which people are expected to behave in ways that are in accordance with prevailing social norms. This is known as cultural “tightness versus looseness” (Gelfand et al., 2011). If a culture is characterized by pervasive norms and sanctioning of deviance from norms, it is a tight culture. In a tight culture, people’s values, norms, and behavior are similar to each other, while loose cultures have weaker social norms and a higher tolerance for deviant behavior. In cultures such as the United States, which is a relatively loose one, because there is a lower emphasis on self-regulation and fewer situational constraints on behavior, personal attitudes are quite good guides for behavior. On the other hand, in cultures such as India, Pakistan and Malaysia which are relatively tight cultures, personal attitudes are not much related to behaviour.

Rierner et al. (2014) reviewed cross-cultural research on attitudes and behaviour in Western and non-western contexts. He studied whether

beliefs about personal attitudes and behavior *should* be consistent or not, and whether attitudes and behaviour *should* differ across time. Following points were studied by Riemer and his colleagues:

- The extent to which cognitive dissonance is experienced when attitudes and behavior are inconsistent.
- Having strong and clear attitudes is less important for effective functioning in non-Western context than in Western contexts.
- Being influenced by what others expect when making choices “feels” right in non-Western contexts, but is seen as a struggle for personal control in Western contexts.
- Successful persuasive advertisements in Western contexts often emphasize personal uniqueness, whereas they are likely to emphasize being appropriate for one’s social position in non-Western contexts.
- Whether people who “do it their way” are considered good and normal, or immature and unwise for not considering the consequences of their actions for others.

It can be concluded that many attitude processes differ when closely examined in Western compared to non-Western contexts. Accordingly, how we attempt to change attitudes—particularly those of relevance around the globe such as climate change, and what to do about it, may require different approaches in Western and non-Western settings.

6.6 SUMMARY

In this unit we discussed concepts like how persuasion can change attitudes, how people resist persuasion attempts and cognitive dissonance. We may be able to change attitudes by using persuasive communicators who deliver persuasive messages to message recipients. In general, persuasion will be greater when the communicator appeals to our self-interest. Thus attractive, trustworthy, and expert communicators, who present their messages confidently and fairly and who do not appear to be influenced by situational forces, are most effective.

Persuasive messages may be processed either spontaneously or thoughtfully. In some cases the spontaneous and emotional processing of messages may be effective because the positive or negative affect makes the message more salient, causing it to grab our attention. We are more willing and able to process information thoughtfully when the information allows us to meet underlying goals—for instance, when the message is personally relevant to us. We also process more thoughtfully when we have the ability and motivation to do so.

Sometimes people develop resistance to persuasion by using various techniques. These techniques are called forewarning, reactance, selective avoidance, counter arguments etc respectively.

Sometimes self-perception occurs when individuals use their own behavior to help them determine their attitudes toward an attitude object. That is, we may use our own behavior as a guide to help us determine our own thoughts and feelings, based on the assumption that our thoughts and feelings should be consistent with our behaviors.

The discomfort that occurs when we behave in ways that we see as inappropriate, such as when we fail to live up to our own expectations, is called cognitive dissonance. Dissonance can be reduced by changing behavior, by convincing ourselves that the behavior was not so negative, or by creating new consonant cognitions. Persuaders may use principles of attitude-behavior consistency to create attitude change.

6.7 QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time you were successfully persuaded by others. What persuasion technique did they use?
2. What are the elements of persuasion? Explain with an example which is not given in the text.
3. Credible communicators are more persuasive than the ones who are not. Discuss.
4. Are you more likely to be persuaded by someone who is physically attractive or someone who is from your social network?
5. Do you agree that messages that are designed to change our attitudes are likely to be less persuasive?
6. How effective is the role of fear in persuading someone?
7. Define reactance. Why do hard-sell attempts at persuasion fail in the presence of reactance?
8. Explain selective avoidance as a strategy to resist persuasion. Give examples when you tried selective avoidance.
9. How does exposure to arguments that are opposed to our attitudes strengthen the views we already hold and make us resistant to efforts to change them?
10. Discuss strategies that you would employ to resist persuasive messages?
11. Why do people suffering from ego-depletion fail to differentiate between strong and weak arguments and are likely to be persuaded by both?
12. Define the term *cognitive dissonance*? Cite an instance from your own experience when you felt like this.
13. When is change in attitude likely to occur, when there are enough reasons to engage in attitude-discrepant behaviour or when one lacks the justification to do so?

14. Discuss two direct methods aimed at reducing dissonance ? When is one likely to engage in indirect methods of dissonance reduction?
15. If you are experiencing dissonance, what strategies would you use to reduce it?
16. How can dissonance be used to bring about beneficial behavioral changes? Give some real life examples.
17. Explain the concept of cultural tightness versus cultural looseness. Is your culture relatively tight or loose?

6.8 REFERENCES

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LIKING, LOVE AND OTHER CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS - I

Unit Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Internal Sources of Liking Others: The Role of Needs and Emotions
 - 7.2.1 Importance of Affiliation Need
 - 7.2.2 Role of Affect
- 7.3 External Sources of Attraction: The Effects of Proximity, Familiarity and Physical Beauty
 - 7.3.1 Power of Proximity
 - 7.3.2 Physical Beauty
- 7.4 Sources of Liking based on Social Interaction
 - 7.4.1 Similarity
 - 7.4.2 Reciprocal liking or disliking
 - 7.4.3 Social skills
 - 7.4.4 Personality and Liking
 - 7.4.5 Characteristics desired in others? Gender differences and Changes over Stages of relationships
- 7.5 Summery
- 7.6 Questions
- 7.7 References

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading the chapter, you should be able to understand the following

- Affiliation and Affect as the internal factors that influences our liking for others.
- Understand the influence of External factors like Proximity and Physical Beauty on Interpersonal Attractions
- Understand the influence of factors related to Social Interaction (Similarities, Reciprocal liking or disliking, Social skills, Personality, Gender differences and stages of development) on interpersonal attractions.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the process of interacting with people, human beings also form relationships with the people with whom they interact. Some relationships may be temporary in existence while others may be relatively long lasting. Some of the relationships may be trivial while others may play very important role in our lives. The various relationships also vary along the dimensions of duration and importance. All our close relationships are based on liking and love for another person. **Liking, in psychological terms is referred to as 'Interpersonal Attraction'**. This chapter involves understanding the nature of 'liking' and the different factors that influences our liking for others.

Liking or Interpersonal attraction for another person is very important factor that determines our relationship with that individual. All our close relationships are based on our likes and dislikes. Social psychologists and sociologists have tried to understand the basis on which we like, dislike or remain indifferent to another individual. The various researches in Social psychology indicates that our liking for an individual may be traced to three sets of factors –

- (1) **Internal Factors** – Factors related to our basic internal needs, motives and emotions
- (2) **External factors**– Factors related to the characteristics of the environment and the person towards whom we get attracted to
- (3) **Factors based on Social Interaction** – Factors related to events that take place when we interact with others.

This chapter will discuss the internal factors in the section 7.2, followed by External factors in section 7.3 and the Factors based on Social Interaction in section 7.4

7.2. INTERNAL SOURCES OF LIKING OTHERS: ROLE OF NEEDS AND EMOTIONS

Whether we will like others or not depends partly on our internal conditions. Two important factors related to internal conditions that determine interpersonal interactions are our needs and our emotional states.

7.2.1 The importance of affiliation in human existence: the need to belong:

One internal source of liking is linked to human need to affiliate with others. Human beings have a social motive of affiliation. **The need for affiliation refers to the need to be with others and to be accepted by others.** Psychologists have traced our need for affiliation to the following factors-

- (1) **Neurobiological basis-** Our need for affiliation is traced to its neurobiological basis (Rowe, 1996). Biologically human infants are said to be born with the motive and the ability to seek contact with people around them.
- (2) **Evolutionary basis-** Evolutionary psychologists have suggested that need for affiliation in human beings is the result of survival value of affiliation. Since being with others and living in groups was important for the survival against threatening forces of the environment, human beings developed the need to be in company of others.

Individual differences in the need to affiliate:

All individuals differ in the level to which they desire the company of other people. According to O'Connor & Rosenblood (1996) human beings seek the amount of social contact that is optimal for them. The optimal level that produces satisfaction varies from one individual to another.

People not only differ in the extent to which they desire interpersonal contact, they react negatively when the desired level is not satisfied. When people are excluded from social interaction or are ignored by others, they show negative emotional, cognitive and social effects-

- (1) **Social effects:** Social effects include increased sensitivity to interpersonal information (Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000).
- (2) **Emotional effects:** Emotionally, individuals who are left out experience feelings of loss of control, sadness and anger (Buckley, Winkel & Leary, 2004).
- (3) **Cognitive effects:** Cognitively, social exclusion is also associated with reduced effectiveness in cognitive functioning (Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002).

All this suggests that social contacts are important for the development of human beings.

Several individuals express little or even no strong desire for social interactions. Some people state that they do not have the need to relate and interact with others. However researches in social psychology indicate that this need exists in all human being at least to some extent. Even individuals who state to have low need for affiliation show that they feel better about themselves and even experience positive emotions when accepted by those whom they claim not to need.

Are there people who don't need other people?:

All human beings have a need to be connected to others but they may differ in the levels of the need for affiliation. One's need for affiliation may be influenced by certain **internal factors as well as situational factors.**

Our need for affiliation is influenced by internal factors like attachment style. Attachment style refers to the ways in which human beings form emotional bonds and regulate emotions in close relationships. It has a strong influence on our thinking about others and our relationships with them (Gillath et. al., 2005). For example, individuals with a secure attachment style have a positive self-esteem and are also high on interpersonal trust. This influences their tendency to seek others' support and engage in self-disclosure.

Accordingly individuals with secure attachment style actively seek support from others and trust others and are more likely to engage in self-disclosure. This helps them to form strong and lasting interpersonal relationships with others. On the other hand individuals with fearful-avoidant attachment style, have a low self-esteem and are low on interpersonal trust. This makes it difficult for them to develop and maintain relationships with the underlying lack of confidence and difficulties in trusting others.

Attachment styles influences the cognitive processes and also the neural process. Individuals with high levels of fear of rejection show higher level of activation of the brain areas associated with emotions when they think of negative aspects of relationships like conflicts, break- up, etc. (Gillath et al., 2005).

Attachment style of an individual thus influences the affiliation need of an individual through its underlying cognitive and neural processes.

Situational influences on the need to affiliate:

The need for affiliation is also influenced by environmental factors. Human beings show an increased desire for interpersonal interactions when exposed to negative situations like being reminded of one's own mortality (Wisman & Koole, 2003). Individuals who had experienced natural disasters too show higher desire for social contacts (Benjamin, 1998). During natural disasters and unusual events, very often even strangers come together and interact in a friendly manner. All this suggests that negative and disturbing environmental situations increases an individual's need for affiliation.

The underlying reason for responding to a stressful situation with friendliness and affiliation was first identified by Schachter (1959). He observed that during such disturbing situations individuals prefer contacts, specifically being in contact with those having similar problems. In Schachter's experiment, participants who were expecting to receive an electric shock showed a preference to spend time with others facing the same situation.

This suggests that human beings prefer company of people with similar problems. Company of such kind is sought for the following reasons-

- (a) **Social Comparison:** Company of others provides an individual with the opportunity for social comparison - to communicate about what is going on, compare their perceptions and make decisions about what to do.
- (b) **Cognitive Clarity:** When exposed to a distressing situation, human beings make an attempt to understand the situation. Talking to others enables them to develop a better understanding of the situation (Cognitive Clarity)
- (c) **Emotional Clarity:** Under a distressing situation human beings also have a need to understand their own emotional reactions that results from the negative situation (Emotional Clarity). The desire for cognitive and emotional clarity determines the individual's need for affiliation (Gump & Kulik, 1997)

Thus human beings seek company of others and this seeking out company is beneficial. Study by Kulik, Mahler & Moore (1996) with individuals hospitalized for no emergency cardiac surgery showed that they spent more time with their roommate (who had or was expecting cardiac surgery) talking and seeking cognitive clarity and emotional clarity. This cognitive and emotional clarity was associated with ability to leave hospital more quickly after the surgery. This indicates the rewarding effects of the affiliation motive.

All of the above indicates that although people differ in the level of need for affiliation, it is present in every individual and this motive is one of the factors that underlie our interpersonal attraction.

7.2.2 The role of affect: do our moods play a role in liking others?:

Another internal factor that influences our liking for another individual is our mood. Our emotional state affects several cognitive processes like perception, motivation, decision making and interpersonal attraction. Moods have a strong influence on the way in which we evaluate others. A positive affect often leads to positive evaluations of other people and a negative affect often leads to dislike or negative evaluations of others. Thus moods have an impact on our likes and dislikes for another individual.

Moods and emotions influence our likes and dislikes in two ways-directly and indirectly.

- (1) **Direct effects:** We like someone who makes us feel good and dislike someone who makes us feel bad (Ben-Porath, 2000). This is the direct effect. Thus direct effect takes place when another person says or does something that makes us feel good or bad.

- (2) **Indirect effects:** Sometimes like or dislike for an individual occurs only because the person is present at the time when we experience the emotional state. For example, if we meet a stranger immediately after being scolded by the teacher, we are less likely to like him or her.

The influence of affective states have been demonstrated in various experiments with diverse external cues like pictures, music and even reported emotional states by the participants. For instance, a research study showed that students liked the experimenter better if he had administered rewards rather than punishments (McDonald, 1962). Similar results were found with subliminal presentation of pleasant versus unpleasant pictures, background music and room lighting.

The indirect effect of the emotions may be explained by Classical Conditioning through which a neutral stimulus (person) is paired with the unconditioned stimulus (Situation producing the emotion) and hence produces the same emotional state. Consistently it has been shown that positive affect results in positive evaluation (liking) while negative affect results in negative evaluations (disliking).

This factor has been used by advertisers and politicians to influence our liking for their product or candidates. Advertisers and Politicians influence our liking for products and candidates by associating it with pleasant experiences. Research suggests that irrelevant affective states (induced by factors unrelated to the candidate or product) can influence our liking and hence our overt action of whether we will actually vote or buy the product. Thus attempts made by advertisers and politicians are successful in influencing our likes and dislikes. Affiliation and affect are internal factors that influence our liking for others.

Check Your Progress:

1. How do our needs influence Interpersonal Attraction?

2. How does affect influence interpersonal attraction?

7.3: EXTERNAL SOURCES OF ATTRACTION: THE EFFECTS OF PROXIMITY, FAMILIARITY AND PHYSICAL BEAUTY

Two individuals may come in contact with each other accidentally. The first contact with classmates, colleagues, playmates are always accidental. Their closeness (proximity) brings them in contact with each other. Sitting together or working together brings them in contact with one another. Once in contact, other external factors like physical attractiveness and similarity plays an important role in their liking for each other. This shows that proximity plays an important role in interpersonal attraction. This section of the unit covers some of the external sources of interpersonal attraction – proximity and physical beauty.

7.3.1: PROXIMITY: Unplanned Contacts:

The initial feeling of liking for another individual is based on our physical contact with that individual. Contact with another individual enables us to form our likes or dislikes for them. Social networking has enabled us today to form contacts without direct face-to-face contacts. While some people feel that virtual physical contact is important for developing close relationships, others feel that strong close relationships may also be formed on social networking sites.

Several studies have pointed out the importance of proximity in interpersonal attraction. Many researches in United States and Europe have suggested that students are most likely to know each other if they sit close to each other (Bryne, 1961). Also people who live or work in close proximity are likely to become acquainted, form friendships and even marry one another (Bossard, 1932).

Why does proximity matter? repeated exposure is the key:

The influence of proximity could be explained by repeated exposure effect. Proximity increases the frequency of our exposure with the stimuli and more the exposure to the stimulus, more favorable is our evaluation of such a stimulus. Research suggests that this occurs for people, places, words as well as objects.

Repeated exposure to a new stimulus (a stranger's face, an abstract drawing, a product) results in positive evaluation of that stimulus (Zarjonec, 1968). Even infants tend to smile more at a photograph of someone they have seen before but not at a photograph of someone they are seeing for the first time (Brooks-Gunn & Lewis, 1981).

Moreland & Beach (1992) conducted an experiment in a classroom setting. In their experiment one female assistant attended class 15 times, second assistant attended the class 10 times, third assistant 5 times and

fourth assistant did not attend any class during the semester. With no interaction with the students by any of the assistants, at the end of the semester students were asked to indicate the extent to which they liked each of the assistants. It was found that more the frequency of exposure, more the liking for the assistant.

The increased liking due to frequent exposure is explained by **Zajonc (2001) with the feeling of comfort** that develops when we are repeatedly exposed to the stimulus. We experience discomfort when facing a new and unfamiliar stimulus. However repeated exposure helps in reducing the discomfort and also produces more comfort.

In an experiment conducted by Reis et al., (2011) pair of individuals met and discussed several topics. They discussed two, four or six topics after which they had to rate their partners' attractiveness. It was found that greater the number of topics discussed, the higher the ratings. In another similar study by Reis et al., (2011) involved students engaging in unstructured internet chats with a stranger (for 10 to 15 minutes) for two, four, six or eight times. Feedback of the participants indicated that increased interaction made them feel more familiar with them and hence develop more comfort with the partners.

Thus repeated exposure enhances attraction due to the comfort and familiarity that it produces about the stimulus.

Whether repeated contacts will produce liking or not depends on the nature of initial reaction. Initial negative repeated contacts leads to reduction in attraction, since repeated meetings tend to strengthen these negative feelings (Swap, 1977).

The effects of social media on proximity and repeated exposure:

Modern technology has altered the effects of proximity and frequency. In a way it has brought people closer and has facilitated interpersonal relations. Psychological studies show that it has positive as well as negative effects on relationships.

Some of the positive effects are:

- (1) **Increased satisfaction:** Status updates on the social networking sites plays an important role in the emotional life of an individual. It gives people an opportunity for emotional disclosure. This helps in enhancing the satisfaction level of the individual (Mango, Taylor & Greenfield, 2012)
- (2) **Social support:** With the emotional disclosure there is greater social support received by the individual.

However technology also produces **negative effects**. Some of the negative effects are:

- (1) **Depression**: Frequent use of Facebook is associated with depression and lowered subjective feelings of well-being (Kross et. al., 2013)
- (2) **Comparison**: Studies have shown that greater the number of friends with whom an individual can compare and especially when they present themselves favorably, it makes one feel sad.

Thus modern technology has positive as well as negative effects on relationships.

7.3.2: Physical Beauty: Its role in interpersonal attraction:

Another external factor that plays an important role in interpersonal attraction is the physical attractiveness of the person. In many situations our liking for the person could be because we found the person attractive at the first sight itself.

Physical Beauty:

Although different individuals may have differences in what they may consider as attractive, physical appearance often plays a strong role in interpersonal attraction (Vogel et al., 2010). The criteria for beauty may differ from one culture to another. For instance, in India fair complexion and well carved figure are some of the physical features that are preferred.

Beauty may be skin deep, but we pay a lot of attention to it:

Although we understand that physical appearances are superficial, it strongly influences our liking for others (Collins & Zebrowitz, 1995). It has an impact on how one is evaluated. We are more likely to perceive attractive individuals positively. Attractive individuals are more likely to be seen as having desirable social characteristics like kindness, generosity and warmth. (Lemay et. al., 2010) Attractive defendants are less likely to be found guilty by judges than unattractive defendants. (Downs & Lyons, 1991)

The “ What Is Beautiful Is Good “ Effect

Individuals who are physically attractive are considered to be possessing socially desirable characteristics. This is known as the “ What is beautiful is good” effect. Some of the reasons for this effect are -

- (1) One reason why attractive people are viewed as possessing desirable characteristics, is the stereotype belief that we possess for people who have good looks (**Physical Attractiveness Stereotype**). Stereotypically we believe that beauty is associated with characteristics like kindness, warmth and other positive characteristics. Possession of such stereotype shapes the way in

which we think and perceive people and thereby determines our likes and dislikes. Several studies have supported this view. (Snyder et. al., 1977)

- (2) Lemay et. al. (2010) proposed a 3-step theory to explain why attractive people are viewed as possessing desirable characteristics. According to them, when people find someone attractive they have a desire to form relationship with that individual. Thus it begins with our **desire to form relationship with attractive people**. This desire leads us to perceive them as interpersonally positive even on dimensions which may not even be directly connected to physical beauty.

Several studies conducted by Lemay et. al. supported this theory. In their experiments they asked individuals to rate strangers on the level of physical attractiveness. Then the participants were asked to rate the extent to which they would like to form relationships with that person. The participants were then asked to rate the strangers on other socially desirable characteristics. They found that attractive people were viewed more favorably and it was mediated by participants' level of desire to form relationships with that person. Since we have a desire to develop relationship with such an individual we see them in a more favourable manner.

Sometimes the association between attractiveness and socially desirable characteristics may **not be a bias, but a reality**. Individuals who are physically attractive may demonstrate desirable characteristics. For instance study by Diener et al., (1995) showed that attractiveness is associated with popularity, high self-esteem and good interpersonal skills. Physically attractive individuals experience positive reactions from others and this may perhaps build positive characteristics like high self-esteem and confidence in them.

However sometimes attractive people may use their looks for their own benefit- like persuading or influencing others. Their desirable behaviour could be their **attempt at manipulating others** to get whatever they desire. However it is not necessarily only beautiful people are manipulative. But it is important to understand that associating beauty with desirable characteristics may not always be realistic and accurate.

What makes a person physically attractive?:

Researchers have tried to identify the characteristics that are considered as attractive. There are some characteristics that are consistently been regarded as attractiveness across several different cultures. (Cunningham et al., 1995) Psychologists use **two approaches** in identifying the cues that determine attractiveness of the stimulus.

The first approach involves finding out the characteristics that are commonly possessed by people regarded as attractive.

Cunningham (1986) asked male undergraduates to rate photographs of young women who were considered as attractive. Analysis of characteristics commonly possessed by them showed that these women fell into one of the two groups- 'Childlike features' and 'mature features'. The same general categories seem to exist even for men.

The **Second approach** in determining what is attractive was undertaken by Langlois & Roggman (1996). They created **composite faces by using computer digitizing to combine multiple facial photographs into one photo**. It was found that composite faces were rated as more attractive than most of the individual faces used to make the composite. (Langlois, 1994) This could be because each person's schema of women and of men is created in our cognitions in the same way that the averaged face is created. Faces that most closely match the composite are perceived as attractive.

Beauty is defined differently by different individuals. However certain features have been found to be consistently associated with beauty. **Child-like and mature features-** Studies suggests that certain characteristics like child-like and mature features are found to be associated with being considered as beautiful.

RED REALLY IS SEXY- AND ATTRACTIVE Beauty is also influenced by other environmental cues. Many ancient cultures as well as modern cultures have shown red color to be associated with increased attractiveness at least for women. Many female primates display red on their genitals, chest or face during ovulation. This has led social psychologists to suggest that perhaps the color red increases women's attractiveness for men.

In a study by Elliot and Niesta (2008) male and female participants saw photos of strangers standing against a red background or other backgrounds (white, gray or green). The stranger wore either red or blue shirt and the participants rated their attractiveness and sexual appeal. It was found that when the photo of female strangers were shown against a red background, male participants assigned higher ratings than when the same women were shown against a white background. For women, the background color or shirt color did not make a significant difference. Thus red color has an influencing effect on men's attraction to women.

Other aspects of appearance that influences attraction:

Another factor related to appearance that influences attraction is the **physique or body built**. People generally associate round body with an easy going, relaxed personality while muscular body is perceived to be indicative of high energy. Angular body is seen as a sign of intelligence. (Gardner & Tuckerman, 1994)

In many cultures overweight is viewed negatively in terms of attractiveness. However in many other cultures overweight is considered as attractive. In countries like Mauritania young women are encouraged to eat and gain weight. Yet in most societies being overweight reduces attractiveness.

Thus liking for an individual is also determined by external factors like proximity and physical beauty of the person.

Check Your Progress-

Discuss the influence of Proximity on liking.

How does beauty or physical attractiveness affect interpersonal attraction?

7.4: SOURCES OF LIKING BASED ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

Apart from the internal and external factors attraction and liking for an individual also depends upon factors that are related to social interactions. Our liking for an individual depends upon our experiences on interacting with them. Some of the factors related to this are –

- Similarities that we share with the person
- The extent to which the other person like us
- Social skills
- Aspects of Personality
- Stage of relationships and Gender

7.4.1: Similarity: Birds of the same feather actually do flock together
The Similarity hypothesis states that similarity is the basis of interpersonal attraction.:

Sir Francis Galton's findings indicated that friends and spouses expressed a greater than chance degree of similarity. However it is difficult to state whether similarity leads to liking or liking leads to similarity.

The role of similarity was studied experimentally by Newcomb (1965). He believed that if people find after interacting with each other that they have similar attitudes, their liking for each other increases. To test this assumption, he studied transfer students, i.e., the students who had not met each other before coming to campus. He measured their attitudes about various issues such as family, religion, race relations, etc. via mail. Their liking for one another was then assessed weekly after they came to campus. Results showed that more the similarity in their attitudes, the more they liked each other by the end of the semester. Many later studies also confirmed this finding.

However at times people find those who are different from themselves attractive. This suggests that complementarities attract each other. **Complementarities are those differences which when combined help to make the individual participants work well together.** For example, dominant individuals would be attracted to submissive one. It was felt that complementary characteristics would be mutually reinforcing and benefitting each other.

However there is no direct evidence for attraction for opposites. The only complementarity that is associated with greater attraction is male-female interaction with one showing dominant behavior and other showing submissive behavior. In all other conditions opposite styles are associated with incompatibility and are more likely to lead to rejection and avoidance than liking. (Swann et. al., 2003)
Thus consistently similarity is found to be the basis of attraction in many kinds of relationships.

SIMILARITY – DISSIMILARITY EFFECT: A CONSISTENT PREDICTOR OF ATTRACTION:

Encountering similarity produces positive emotions while dissimilarity produces negative feelings in us. This is called as ‘Similarity-Dissimilarity effect’. Although earlier work emphasized on similarity in thinking and feeling towards things and persons, it was later expanded to include even similarity of beliefs, values and interests.

In laboratory experiments to study this, the participants’ attitudes are first assessed and then they are asked to evaluate a stranger, whose attitudes, beliefs, values and interests they are exposed to (Byrne, 1961). It was found that participants not only liked a stranger when similarity is found between the stranger and oneself, but also they tend to judge such strangers as possessing positive traits.

Research studies suggest that attraction is determined by the proportion of similarity and its effect on attraction can be precisely calculated. When the number of topics on which there is similar views is divided by the total number of topics discussed, the resulting proportion may be inserted in a simple formula which allows us to predict attraction. (Byrne & Nelson, 1965)

This effect holds true for males and females regardless of age, educational and cultural differences (Byrne, 1971). It also holds true with respect to smoking marijuana, religious practices, self-concept, being a 'morning versus evening person' and being aroused by same jokes.

Do we seek similarity even with respect to physical attractiveness? :

Researchers have also attempted at understanding the role of similarity in choosing partners. With respect to similarity in physical attractiveness, it is found **that people tend to choose marital partners who are similar in physical attractiveness, even though we would prefer to be friends with very attractive ones (Matching Hypothesis)**. This view was first proposed by Bercheid et. al., (1971). However some evidence indicated that people sometimes try to obtain the most attractive partners available (Kalick & Hamilton, 1986).

Van Straaten et. al. (2010) had male and female strangers interact briefly with each other. During this videotaped interaction, the attractiveness of the participant and the extent to which they engaged in efforts to make favorable impressions on each other was rated by the observers. Each participant also rated his or her interest in dating the stranger. Results showed that men invested more efforts in building relations with strangers when they were more similar in attractiveness. However this pattern was not found with women. Since women are less willing to express overt interest in opposite sex, they do not put in efforts to press the partners.

Thus most of human efforts are directed towards obtaining partners who closely match one's level of attractiveness, since it has a better chance of survival and prosperity.

Do Even Trivial Similarities Generate Attraction?:

Sometimes our attraction for others may also be due to similarities in trivial matters like names starting with same letters. **Our positive feeling about things like our name may spill over and may make us like those who have same name. This is called as 'implicit egotism'**. Research by Pelham et. al., (2005) examined records of marriages in different states from 1823 to 1965. They found that last name with same first letter to be significantly more than chance amongst couples. Similar effects were seen with respect to the number on jerseys. Thus such similarities have a strong influence and may occur even when we do not pay careful attention.

Why do we like others who are similar to ourselves but dislike those who are different?:

Researchers have made an attempt to put forth theories to explain why similarities elicit positive feelings and dissimilarity elicits negative

feelings. Two theories put forth to explain this are –The Balance theory and Social Comparison theory.

(1) The Balance Theory by Newcomb (1961) & Heider (1958) suggests that people naturally organize their likes and dislikes in a symmetrical way. Similarity with others produces a state of balance, which is emotionally pleasant while dissimilarity produces imbalance, which is emotionally unpleasant. When in state of imbalance, individuals strive to restore balance by making either of the two changes—Underestimating or Ignoring the dissimilarity or deciding to dislike one another. Disliking involves non-balance, which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant.\

This theory fails to explain why similarity matters to individuals.

(2) Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) states that we evaluate the accuracy of our views by comparing it with others. When our view does not match with others, the odds are that our view is incorrect. Since we do not want to be in a ‘wrong’ position, we turn to others to obtain ‘consensual validation’- evidence from others who share our views. Knowing that someone else has similar view suggests that we are in contact with reality and have a sound judgment. Dissimilarity creates negative feeling. However it is less uncomfortable when it comes from out-group members since we expect them to be different from ourselves. (Haslam,2004)

7.4.2: Reciprocal Liking Or Disliking: Liking Those Who Like Us:

Almost everyone desires to be liked and we like those who like us. Even in case of false flattery, people perceive it as accurate (Gordon, 1996), unless and until it is totally obvious. Research also suggests that we have tendency of reciprocal liking, means we have a tendency to like those who express liking towards us and disliking those who express dislike for us (Condon &Crano, 1988).

7.4.3 Social Skills:

Individuals’ likelihood of being liked also depends on the extent to which they possess ‘**social skills**’- **a combination of aptitudes that help individuals who possess them to interact effectively with others.** Social skills have been found to be important in various settings – politics, medicine, romantic relations. Defendants high in social skill are declared innocent more often. Doctors high in social skills are more popular and people high in social skills have more success in romance.

Social skills includes **4 aspects**

- (1) **Social astuteness:** The capacity to perceive and understand others accurately.
- (2) **Interpersonal influence :** The ability to change others attitudes or behavior by using variety of techniques.

- (3) **Social adaptability:** The capacity to adapt to a wide range of social situations and interact effectively with a wide range of people.
- (4) **Expressiveness:** The ability to show emotions openly in a form others can readily perceive.

Social skills may be used by some individuals to manipulate others. However it still plays an important role in liking. Individuals who are high on social skills are likely to be found desirable due to their ability to understand others and the flexibility demonstrated by us.

7.4.4 Personality & Liking:

As we interact with others, we form impressions about others, which may range from accurate to very inaccurate. Studies have been conducted to understand the impact of different personality traits on being liked by others. Some of the personality factors associated with liking are as follows-

1) Agreeableness & Extroversion:

The Big Five Model of personality describes personality on the basis of 5 traits – Neuroticism (Emotional Stability), Extroversion (Outgoing and warm), Openness to Experience (Imaginative and seeking new ideas), Agreeableness (Co-operative), Conscientiousness (Being organized and ‘on time’)

People high on agreeableness and extroversion receive higher ratings of interpersonal attractiveness from others (Zhao & Seibert, 2006)

2) Narcissism:

Another personality characteristics associated with interpersonal attractiveness is narcissism. (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2011) which is characterized by inflated view of themselves, who focus mostly on themselves and ignore the needs and feelings of others. Such individuals seem likable in the beginning. However with repeated interactions their belief that they are superior and others should admire them, makes them unlikable.

In a study by Back et. al., (2011) students were asked to introduce themselves to the group. Later the students were asked to rate them on narcissism and their liking for the individual. Research showed that the narcissism is associated with higher rating on likability and popularity. In the initial part of the interaction, narcissism is desirable since such individuals appear charming, extraverted and friendly. However later when they are seen more frequently, they are disliked.

7.4.5: What do we desire in others? gender differences and changes over stages of a relationship:

Psychologists have tried to identify what characteristics we would prefer to have in a perfect person or an ideal partner. The characteristics we seek and prefer may change depending upon our gender and the stage or length of our relations with them. The traits that we look for, in an ideal partner undergo changes over the period of time. It may change after getting acquainted with the person.

Most of the research related to the identification of characteristics desired in a partner has been conducted in the context of romantic relationships and it has been seen that the characteristics desired in the partner changes as the partners get acquainted with each other.

Many studies have investigated the characteristics that men and women desire in others. **Cottrell et. al. (2007)** asked students to create an ideal person by rating 31 positive characteristics in terms of importance for the ideal person. **It was found that trustworthiness and cooperativeness were the most important traits followed by agreeableness and extroversion.** However this study did not find whether the desired characteristic changes with different type of relationship – friends, employee, lover, etc.

1) Type of relationships: The above question was studied by asking male and female students to imagine creating an ideal member of different groups and relationship – work project team, final exam study group, golf team member, sorority members, fraternity members, close friends, employees. Students rated 75 different traits for each group. Trustworthiness and co-cooperativeness were rated as most important on all relationships. This was followed by agreeableness followed by extroversion.

Thus research suggests that certain traits (trustworthiness, cooperativeness, agreeableness and extroversion) are valued across all relations. However there are also differences in the valued traits depending upon the kind of relationship. For instance, **intelligence was rated high for project team and study team while humor was rated as important for close friends.** This suggests that the desired traits differed for different types of relationships.

2) Gender: Researches have also been conducted to identify whether women and men desire different qualities in potential romantic partners. **It is found that men focus more on physical attractiveness than women,** while women weigh this variable as less important than other characteristics. **Women assign greater importance to traits related to forming stable relationships such as partner's potential future earning.** Two theories have explained the gender differences in desired traits in the partner----

- a. **Sociobiological theory:** suggests that women seek mates (at least long-term ones) who could potentially support them.
- b. **The Parental Investment Theory (Boeklund & Kipp, 1996) :** states that the one who invests and risks the most in reproduction, will be the most particular when selecting the mate.

Today despite of increased financial status of women, meta-analysis of hundreds of studies on gender differences in ideal romantic partners suggests that there are gender differences (although small) related to financial support (Eastwicket.al., 2014)

- (2) **Stage of relationships:** The characteristics sought in an ideal partner is also determined by the stage of the relationship. Before the relationship gets formed, physical attractiveness may predict the choice of the partner. As the relationships develops, other factors like intelligence and stability becomes important characteristic sought.

Thus the characteristics desired in an ideal partner vary depending upon factors such as type of relationship, gender and stage of relationship.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the role of similarity in interpersonal attraction.

2. Discuss the importance of Reciprocal liking and Social skills in liking.

3. How does Personality influence liking for the person?

7.5 SUMMARY

Interpersonal Attraction refers to the evaluations made by human beings regarding another individual. The positive or negative evaluations made by human beings may be influenced by three sets of factors- Internal, External and Social Interaction

Internal factors includes the influence of factors such as the need for affiliation and affect of the individual. Need for affiliation refers to our need to interact with others in a co-operative manner. This need forms the basis of our interpersonal attractions. Affect may directly or indirectly influence our liking for others.

External factors includes the influence of proximity and physical attractiveness of the person in determining interpersonal attraction. The initial contact with one another is most commonly found among those sitting or living close to each other. Physical features like- attractiveness, color like red, physique are some of the observable characteristics that determines our liking for others.

Another set of factor that determines our liking for others is those based on social interactions. This includes our similarity with the individual, social skills and personality traits of the individual. We like those who are similar to us in terms of attitude, beliefs, values and sometimes even if there are similarities on trivial matters. Possession of social skills increases an individual's likelihood of being liked. Similarly personality factors like Big 5 factors and narcissism also determine our liking for an individual.

7.6 QUESTIONS

- Q1) Discuss the different Internal Sources of Liking Others.
- Q2) Explain the importance of different External Sources of Interpersonal Attraction
- Q3) Explain the different Sources of Liking Others based on Social Interaction

7.7 REFERENCE

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LIKING, LOVE AND OTHER CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS - II

Unit Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Close relationships: Foundations of Social life (Introduction)
 - 8.1.1 Romantic relationships and the (Partially solved) Mystery of Love
 - 8.1.2 What do we seek in Romantic Partners?
 - 8.1.3 Relationships with Family Members: Our First and Most Lasting – Close Relationships
 - 8.1.4 Friendships: Relationships Beyond the Family
- 8.2 What research tells us about dramatic differences in appearance between partners: Is love really blind?
- 8.3 What research tells us about two factors that may destroy love- Jealousy and Infidelity
- 8.4 Summary
- 8.5 Questions
- 8.6 References

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, one should be able to understand

- What is love and what are the basis of romantic relationships
- Nature of family relationships- Parent-child relationship, relationships with other adult family members and relationships with sibling
- Basis of relationship with close friends
- Why sometimes people choose partners who are dramatically different
- What are the effects of jealousy and Infidelity on love

8.1 CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL LIFE (INTRODUCTION)

Throughout our life, we develop close relations with different individuals - spouse, family members, friends, etc. Some of these close relationships are involuntary (blood relations) while others are voluntary. These voluntary relationships are based on interpersonal attractions or liking for the person. Social psychologists have tried to understand

different aspects of these relationships like- its formation and development, significance and functions, factors affecting its survival. In this unit we will understand the nature of three important social relationships- Romantic relationship, relationships with family members and relationships with friends.

Romantic relationships is covered in unit 8.1.1 followed by Close relationships in the family (parent- child, other adults in the family, sibling relationships) which is covered in 8.1.2. Section 8.1.3 of the chapter covers another close relationship- friendship. Section 8.2 and 8.3 includes certain additional aspects of close relationships- dramatic differences in appearance between (Section 8.2) and two important factors (Jealousy and Infidelity) that affect relationships (Section 8.3)

8.1.1 Romantic relationship and (partially solved) mystery of love:

This is one of the important close relationships formed by us. Romantic relationships are based primarily on love. Love is a combination of emotions, cognitions and behavior that plays a crucial role in close relations.

Love: Its basic nature:

In a way love may be regarded as one of the basic emotions like sadness, fear, etc. (Shaver et. al., 1996). It has a positive impact on personal happiness and on psychological adjustment since it is associated with increase self-efficacy and self-esteem. Very often, people mistake sexual attraction as love, but it is much more than that. Though love is a universal experience but the specific details of love varies from culture to culture. (Beall & Sternberg, 1995)

What is the origin of love:

The origin of love may be speculated to be due to pleasant fantasy that people share with another person at a certain time in life. Another explanation for the origin of love can be traced to its association with reproductive success. According to evolutionary theory, it was necessary for the survival of early humans that they reproduce off springs successfully. Buss (1994) suggested that reproductive success is more likely if the couple is erotically attracted to one another and are willing to invest time and energy in nourishing and protecting their off springs. This indicated two basic features of love, i.e., desire and commitment.

Components of love:

Sternberg conceptualized various components of love and explained them in the form of a model called as Sternberg's Model of Love. This model suggests that each love relationship is made up of 3 components- Intimacy, Passion and Commitment.

- (1) **Intimacy:** It is the closeness that two people feel and the strength of the bond that holds them together. Partners high on this are concerned with each other's welfare and happiness. They value, trust, understand and like each other.
- (2) **Passion:** It is based on physical attraction and sexual excitement associated with the relationships.
- (3) **Commitment:** It represents the cognitive factors such as decision to love and commitment to be with the person on a permanent long term basis.

Each of these components is present in varying degrees for different couples. Although lovers subjectively experience these three components as overlapping and related, psychological study suggests that any given relationship is characterized primarily by one or two components.

Depending on the presence of the 3 elements in the relationships, love may be classified into different types.

Consummate love: When all three components are present in equal strength and are balanced, it is called consummate love. Sternberg believed that consummate love is the ideal form of love but it is often difficult to achieve and maintain.

Companionate love: Love based on care for each other, mutual liking and respect is known as Companionate love (Caspi&Herbener,1990). According to Sternberg, it involves the combination of intimacy and commitment. Although this form of love is not as exciting as passionate love, it is very important for lasting and committed relations. Hatfield(1988) described this type of love as “the affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined.” This type of love is the foundation for long lasting committed relationships, such as marital relationships.

The role of passionate love in romantic relationships:

This kind of love involves sudden, overwhelming and all-consuming positive reaction to another person, which is often described by the individual as beyond his or her control. Researchers have tried to understand the components of this form of love, i.e., passionate love.

According to Meyers and Berscheid (1997) **sexual attraction** is an important component of this form of love. However sexual attraction is not the only factor responsible for this kind of love. One may be sexually attracted to someone, without the feeling of love, but one is not likely to be in love without sexual attraction. For many individuals sex becomes

more acceptable because they are in love. In such cases sexual activity gets romanticized (Baumister, 2005).

Another component of passionate love is **emotional arousal**, the desire to be physically close and an intense need to be loved as much as he or she loves the other person. Loving and being loved are positive experiences that are often accompanied with the fear that relationship may not last.

Very often when love at first sight happens and a person falls in love with a stranger, it happens only to one person and is not mutual. Such a love, where a person's feelings are not returned by the other person is known as **unrequited love. It is a one way love and** is most common among people who have conflicts about attachments. They want them, but are afraid of them too (Aron et. al., 1998).

According to Hatfield and Walster (1981) passionate love requires **3 basic factors-**

- (1) Having a concept of passionate love
- (2) An appropriate love object
- (3) State of physiological arousal

Passionate love happens when an individual believes that such a love exists, comes across a physically attractive individual of opposite sex, who is not married at present (this condition of marriage is culture specific) and he or she is in a state of physiological arousal like sexual excitement, fear, anxiety, etc. that can be interpreted as the emotion of love. All these factors together produce passionate love.

Love, intimacy, close relationships and marriage are influenced by several factors- endogamous and exogamous. Endogamous refers to practice of marrying within a specific caste or ethnic group and religion and rejecting people for marriage from other groups. Exogamous, on the hand, refers to the social norm of marrying outside one's own social group. Both these factors, put together determine the cultural norms. In Indian culture especially, marriage is more of a social phenomena rather than an individual phenomena. In India, arrange marriages are more common than love marriages and the cultural ethos are that marriage takes place not just between two consenting individuals but between two consenting families. Research has indicated that in Indian culture religion, caste, ethnicity, family attributes and the gender discourse followed by physical appearance are the primary deciding factors for marriage to take place.

8.1.2. What do we seek in romantic partners?:

Another factor that determines romantic relationship is the characteristics desired in the partner. Psychologists have tried to identify

the factors that are sought by people in romantic relationship. Some of the important factors are as follows:

1) Physical Beauty & Youth:

Physical beauty and Youth have been found to be important characteristics sought in potential romantic partner. Evolutionary psychologists suggest that these are important since they are associated with reproductive potential. Youth and attractiveness are associated with health and fitness. Even today these qualities play a stronger role in men's preference than women's choice of romantic partners (Scutt et. al., 1997).

2) Goals and Social Circumstances:

Another factor that determines mate selection is one's goal and social circumstances. Eagly et. al., (2009) stated that social roles people are expected to play in life would be important in determining what they sought in their future mate. For example, if individual planned to pursue a career outside the home, they may seek a mate with skills necessary to be a homemaker.

3) Social Role and Gender:

The social roles that people expect to play in life also determine what they look for in future mate. Eagly et.al. believed that social roles are more important than gender in determining the choice of future partner. They conducted a study in which they asked male and female participants to imagine themselves to be married with children and also as either provider for the family or a homemaker. They were then asked to indicate the extent to which different mate characteristics would be important for them. The findings of their study were as follows-

- It was found that for both men and women, roles influenced the importance of characteristics in the mate. When participants were expected to be provider, they rated homemaker skills as more important in potential mate. They sought someone with whom they could readily divide key home tasks or responsibilities.
- Regardless of the role, women valued good provider skills.
- Also women expressed a preference for older men while men expressed preference for younger ones.

This study suggests that social role and gender influences the preference of a mate.

Thus romantic relationship may be understood in light of the nature of love and the characteristics desired in the romantic partner.

Check Your Progress:

1. What are the different types of Love?

2. What are the different characteristics desired in romantic partner?

8.1.3: Relations with family members: Our first and the most lasting close relationships:

Another close relationships that we develop are family relationships. Our relationship with family members is one of the first and most lasting close relationships. Although family structure has changed over a period of time, relationship with family members are still important. Within family there are generally three important close relationships that are formed-

- Parent -child relationship
- Relationship with other Adults
- Sibling relationship

Relationships with parents :

One important relationship in the family is that with the parents. Parent-child interaction is usually the first contact of a child with other people and plays an important role in our interpersonal behavior. The relationship that the child has with parents is a learning experience that helps the child to learn about relationships with other people. These experiences enables the child to develop an understanding of different social situations, relationships and Social norms and desirable social behaviour like co-operation.

The nature of relationship that may develop between parents and children during childhood has a strong influence on the social relationships that they develop throughout their lives. This is evident in the effects of the different attachment styles suggested by Bowlby(1969,1973).

Bowlby (1969) developed the concept of attachment style – **the degree of security an individual feels in interpersonal relationships.**

According to him, early interaction with the adult help in acquiring two basic attitude in the child –

- Attitude about self (Self-esteem) – emotional reactions of the caregiver gives him/her the information that he/she is loved, valued, important.
- Attitude concerning other people (Interpersonal trust)- child considers caregiver as trustworthy and dependable.

Based on these two attitudes, he suggested 4 attachment styles :

1) Secure attachment style:

This is an attachment style in which a person has high self-esteem and high trust. Individuals who experience this style have a positive attitude towards themselves and even towards others. This results in formation of lasting, committed and satisfying relationships in life.

2) Fearful-attachment style:

This is an attachment style characterized by low self-esteem and low trust. Individuals with such an attachment style feel low about themselves and also negative about others. It results in difficulties in formation of close relationships and tend to have unhappy relations and the person is more likely to avoid others.

3) Preoccupied attachment style :

This is characterized by low self-esteem and high interpersonal trust. It results in formation of relationship where individual desires closeness, cling to others and expected to be rejected eventually because they consider themselves to be unworthy.

4) Dismissing attachment style ;

This is characterized by high in self-esteem and low in interpersonal trust. It results in people believing that they deserve good relations but due to difficulties in trusting other they fear genuine closeness.

Thus attachment styles influences future relations developed by an individual. **Although the attachment styles are formed in the early part of an individual's life, it may be changed by later life experiences of an individual.** For example, a broken relationship in later life may make an individual with secure attachment style develop insecurity. The kind of attachment style affects several aspects of an individual's life. For example, individuals with insecure attachment styles show poor academic performance, fewer friends, experience higher stress when experience interpersonal conflicts and are more likely to commit suicide.

Thus this first formed relationship by the child has a lasting impact not only on the development of the child but also on the other relationships that the child forms throughout his or her life.

Relationships with other adult family members:

In a family a child is exposed to many adults apart from their parents. These may include adults like grandparents, uncle, aunt, etc. These other people differ from child's parents in their personalities. Many of these adults have a strong influence on the child's development and other interpersonal relationships developed by them. Some of the effects of these relationships are as follows-

1) Nullifying effects:

Sometimes it may help in nullifying the negative effects of parent's personality. For instance, if the mother has a withdrawn personality, it may generally have a negative impact on the personality and development of the child. However in the presence of a caring other adults like grandparents or aunt at home may help in reducing the negative impact on the child.

2) Formation of attitudes:

Every interaction of the child is a determinant of attitudes formed by him or her. The way in which other elderly person relates to the child has a strong influence on the child's self- concept. When other adults praise the child and recognize the child's achievements, it helps in developing trust and affection in the child. Children develop meaning and value of factors like self-worth, competition, humor, trust, etc,

3) Other interactions:

Interactions with adults teaches children not only about the game but also about how to interact in a social situation, follow a set of rules and how to deal with disagreements. Talking and negotiating with grandparents may help the child to know how nature of interaction with friends and parents is different than interacting with grandparents. This in turn helps the child in dealing with elders outside the family. Thus it determines how an individual interacts with others.

Relationships with siblings:

Another relationship in the family that has a strong impact on the development of an individual is sibling relationship. Generally relationships between siblings may be described as filled with affection, concern and care. However it is also filled with experiences of hostility, rivalry, fights and conflicts.

The effect of sibling relationships is generally studied by comparing children who are the only child and those having siblings. Conclusions of such studies have shown that the relationship that one has with the sibling influences their interpersonal behaviour in the following ways

1. Learning experience:

Events like fights, sharing, negotiations between siblings helps the children by providing interpersonal learning experiences. It equips them with skills that help them to deal with other relationships outside the home.

2. Social Interactions:

Children with no sibling are less likely to be liked by their classmates and are likely to be either victimized by others or they themselves are likely to be aggressive towards others. Having siblings helps the child to develop interpersonal skills which enhances their ability to deal with negative social behaviour like bullying in a constructive way.

3. Unique experience:

The relationship that one has with their siblings is very different and provides a unique experience to the child. Sibling relationship is different than parent-child relationship since it has a combination of affection, hostility and rivalry (Boer et. a., 1997). All this makes it a very different relationship which has a strong impact on the development of the child.

4. Shared experiences and affection:

Living in the same environment, many of the positive and negative experiences are shared by the siblings. Going through the same experiences makes it easier for them to relate to each other. This makes it easier for them to grieve for losses and also empathize with each other. Such sharing strengthens the bond between the siblings and aids emotional venting.

Most siblings get along with each other despite occasional fights and competition. However in rare incidences sibling relationship may also be marked by sibling rivalry and jealousy amongst siblings.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss the important close relationships in the family?

8.1.4: Friendships: relationships beyond the family:

The relationship that one has with friends is another very important influencing factor on our development.

Formation of friendships may be traced in the following manner:

1. Childhood:

Early childhood stage is referred to as the 'pre- gang' age while late childhood stage is called as 'gang age'. The early interactions with friends generally begin during the childhood stage. At this stage it is based on proximity. Children generally make friends with those living close to their family or those sitting close to them.

2. Adolescence and Adulthood stage:

As a child enters adolescence stage some of the friendships formed earlier continue while others may fade away. Friendship with mutual interests and shared positive experiences are maintained and grows in strength. Some friendships in childhood continue even into adolescence and sometimes even the entire life.

Close friendships:

An individual may have many friends but fewer close friends. The nature of interaction that takes place between friends who are only friends is different than those between close friends. Some of the important characteristics of interactions in close friendship are:

- (1) **Modesty** - Tice et.al. (1995) suggested that a person may engage in bragging with others but with close friends they are more modest in their behaviour.
- (2) **Less likely to lie** – A person is less likely to lie to close friends (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998.) and if they lie, it would be with the intention of making the friend feel better.
- (3) **'we' ness**- Conversations amongst close friendship is more inclusive and involves talking in terms of "we" and "us".
- (4) **Nature of interaction**-The nature of relationship with close friends is quantitatively and qualitatively high. Not only the frequency and length of interaction is high with close friends but qualitatively also there is greater sharing, support and self- disclosure.

All of this suggests that close friendship is important since it provides mutual emotional support. An individual is able to relax and become comfortable with a close friend. These benefits make close friendship very important for the development of an individual.

In general people admire characteristics of generosity, sensitive nature and honesty in friends. They value friends with whom they are able to be themselves and are able to relax (Urbanski, 1992)

Although the above characteristics are desired in friends in general, the desired characteristics may vary depending upon the **culture** that an individual is exposed to.

What an individual expects in a close friend differs from one culture to another. Japanese college students emphasized characteristics like easy to get along, not bragging, considerate and not short-tempered (Maeda & Ritchie, 2003). American students also emphasized on spontaneity along with being active in close friends.

Gender and friendships:

Gender also influences characteristics desired in a close friend, although in a very minor way. While women place importance on intimacy by expecting to share and discuss emotions and experiences and receive emotional support from them, men tend to form friendship based on activities like sports, projects or shared hobbies (Fredrickson, 1995)

Is Similarity the basis of friendship?:

Another factor that plays an important role in close friendship is similarity. Study by Selfhout et al., (2009) involved making freshmen complete personality questionnaire for themselves and other student they had recently met. They then completed the questionnaire once in a month for several months. The study tried to understand the importance of actual similarity and perceived similarity in close friendship. It was found that perceived similarity was able to predict friendship formation while actual similarity could not.

The relationship with friends is also a very important relationship in an individual's life since friends boost one's self-esteem and help in coping with Stress. These positive effects are possible only in the presence of positive friends. However if the friends are unsupportive, antisocial and overcritical it may lead to negative effects on the individual.

Check your progress

1. Discuss the nature of relationship with close friends.

8.2 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT DRAMATIC DIFFERENCES IN APPEARANCE BETWEEN PARTNERS: IS LOVE REALLY BLIND?

Similarity and Physical attractiveness plays an important role in interpersonal attractions. These factors also play an important role in romantic relationships. While thinking of marriage or romance, people generally choose partners who are similar to them and whom they find attractive.

The criterion for beauty or physical attractiveness differs from one individual to another. As a result what may seem attractive to one individual may not appear attractive to another individual.

The differences in preferences may sometimes makes some individuals choose partners who may be considered as a mismatch by others. For instance a very young person choosing a partner who is very old or a tall women choosing a very short man. When we look at them, we may wonder about the basis on which they chose each other. It also makes us wonder whether love is blind towards things that others perceive as obvious.

Researches in Social psychology have tried to understand whether romantic partners see each other realistically or do they have an overly positive perception of each other. Is it that love makes them blind and they are not able to see things which are seen by others. **Studies show that realism and positivity co-exists in romantic partner's perception.**

Although people may have their own individual ways of thinking and perceiving their partners, there are two types of partner knowledge that they have-

- Insight in to how their partners see them (**Identity Accuracy**)
- Insight into how others see their partners (**Reputation Accuracy**)

Solomon & Vazire's study in 2014 demonstrated this paradoxical effect with physical attractiveness, which is a highly evaluative trait and which is especially important in romantic relationships. Their study involved understanding the cognitive process of couples with mismatched or contrasting features.

Solomon & Vazire's (2014) research was undertaken to know whether such mismatched partners show **realism** (see each other realistically) or **positivism** (are overly positive in perceiving their partners). They found that both may co-exist in mismatched couples. They perceive their partners as more attractive (positivism) and are also aware that their perception does not match with the perception by others (realism).

In their study participants were asked to answer a questionnaire regarding their perception of their own physical attractiveness. The questionnaires were sent to the participant's friends and romantic partners regarding their perception of the participant's physical attractiveness and their perception of participant's self- evaluation. For the romantic partners, an additional questionnaire was given regarding their perception of the participant's friends' evaluations. Correlations were found between the participant's self, partner's and friend's perception.

Two main findings of their research with mismatched couples were-

- (1) Such couples do tend to **perceive their partners as more attractive** than other people. They see their partners very positively.
- (2) Such couples are aware at least to some degree of their tendency to perceive their partners as more attractive than other people. Thus although they may find their partner attractive, they are also **aware of the fact that they view the partner more positively in comparison to how others view them.**

Thus their research suggests that romantic partners have some awareness of each other's identity and reputation for physical attractiveness.

Thus such partners perceive each other more attractive than other observers. This suggests that perhaps love makes people blind –each partner may be partially blind towards the discrepancy between them, which is considered by others as very important. These individuals are also aware how other people view their partner and know that they consider their partners more attractive in comparison to others. Although they recognize the differences with each other, it is perceived by them as insignificant. Although others may perceive the contrast, they themselves may find the difference unimportant.

According to Solomon & Vazire, people are more positively biased towards their partners in comparison to everyone else, but they are also consciously aware of their own bias.

Solomon & Vazire argue that people are able to maintain an overly positive and realistic view of partners in three major ways-

- (1) Everyone will rate their significant others as more attractive than average rating from other friends.
- (2) People make overly positive global evaluations of their partners, but more realistic evaluations of specific traits and abilities (My spouse is great but is not very patient)

- (3) People have a more biased judgment for relationship- relevant dimensions and more realistic judgment for dimensions related only to their partners (My spouse is really attractive but is not good at soccer)

Another study related to couples with differences in physical attractiveness by **Hunt et al., (2015)** which studied 167 couples. This study suggested that couples who began dating immediately after their meeting are more closer in the level of physical attractiveness than those who decide to marry after knowing each other.

According to Hunt et al., when couples decide to get married soon after their first meeting, it is more likely to be based on physical attractiveness. However when people get married after knowing each other, physical attractiveness is considered as less important and hence there may be more differences in their level of physical attractiveness. Getting more time to interact with each other helps the couple to develop unique impressions, which makes them see beyond physical appearance.

The above study also involved understanding whether there is a difference in the happiness level of the couples who matched in physical attractiveness and those who did not match. They also found that there was no differences in the level of happiness experienced by couples who matched in physical attractiveness and those who did not match.

8.3 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT TWO FACTORS THAT MAY DESTROY LOVE- JEALOUSY AND INFIDELITY

Love is a strong element involved in close relationships. There are certain barriers that prevent love or may even destroy the love that once existed between people. In this section we will study two important factors that destroy love- Jealousy and Infidelity.

Jealousy refers to concerns that a romantic partner or other person whom we care deeply might, or has already, transferred their affection or loyalty to another individual.

Social psychologists have attempted to understand the factors contributing to jealousy. Some of the important factors are:

1. Threat from Rival:

Jealousy may occur in situations where an individual perceives threat to the valued relationship by some rival. For example, a wife may be jealous of her husband's close female colleague whom she considers as a threat to her relationship with the husband.

2. Threat to self-esteem:

Sometimes people may experience jealousy because they anticipate social rejection that threatens their self-esteem. For example a man may be jealous of his wife's close male friend with whom he thinks she is sexually involved. This produces jealousy since her sexual attraction to another person is a blow to his self-esteem.

There are also **gender differences** in what may produce jealousy, with men experiencing jealousy over partner's sexual attraction to others, while females experiencing jealousy due to partner's emotional attraction to another person.

Feelings of Jealousy have **negative effects** on interpersonal attractions. Some of the negative effects includes :

1. Stress:

Negative elements in a relationship produce stress. Jealousy is one of the negative elements which produces stress in all individuals involved in the relationship. The person who is jealous is stressed due to the anticipated effects on marriage. The person who is the target of jealousy too undergoes stress due to strained relationship that results out of jealousy.

2. Affects evaluations:

Research by Chan et al., (2013) involved making participants think of a situation when they experienced jealousy. Followed by this they were asked to taste two products. In the next part of the experiment, participants were asked to think of a situation when they experienced love and then again taste the same two products. The products were evaluated and rated sweeter when thinking about love. This suggests that jealousy affects our evaluations of things around us.

3. Homicide:

A common reaction to jealousy is anger and aggression. This often results to attacking and striking at the person. Statistics suggests that jealousy is a major factor in homicide against women.

4. Declined love:

Another negative effect of jealousy is declined love between the partners. Jealousy results to lowering of love and at times even complete loss of love for the person.

Thus jealousy is an important source of destroyed relationship.

Another factor that threatens relationships is- **infidelity**. It refers to a partner's betrayal through intimate relationships with others.

Infidelity occurs across different cultures, socio-economic status and gender. However, powerful people engage in such behavior more frequently than less powerful individuals (Lammers et. al., (2011). Research by Lammers et. al., (2011) suggested that this was primarily due to their confidence about their ability to engage in infidelity.

Infidelity **negatively affects** the relationships in different ways:

1. Divorce:

Infidelity by a partner destroys the bonding and emotional attachment for the person engaging in such relationship. In fact infidelity is the most frequent reason for divorce (Previti & Amato, 2003)

2. Mental & Physical health:

Dealing with unfaithfulness by the spouse is often traumatic. Infidelity produces depression in the partner affecting his or her physical and mental health (Gordon, Baucom& Snyder, 2004)

3. Media attention:

When infidelity occurs among powerful individuals, it receives widespread public attention. This may result to tarnishing the image of people involved.

4. Stress:

Infidelity involves secret romantic relationship. Individuals engaging in secret relationship undergo stress (Lehmiller, 2009). They may be stressed about the consequences when people come to know of it. Sometimes they may even be stressed thinking about the future of such relationship.

Thus infidelity although seems to be exciting, has negative impact on love and marital relationships

8.4 SUMMARY

Interpersonal Attraction forms the basis of all our relationships. Close relationships that we form have a common element of love.

Love is a combination of emotions, cognition and behaviour. It may take different forms like- Passionate love and Companionate love in romantic relationship between partners.

Relationship with family members (parents, children and siblings) is another close relationships formed by human beings. Relationship with parents is governed by attachment style and interpersonal trust. These family relationships have an impact on our attitude towards oneself.

Friendship is another close relationships although initially begins through proximity, later on develop through other factors like similarity.

Although similarity is generally the basis of choosing a partner, sometimes people choose partners who are considered by others as mismatch. Studies with such couples shows that they are aware of the difference in their perception but consider the differences as unimportant.

Jealousy and Infidelity are two important factors that destroy love amongst people. Both these factors may produce stress in the relationships and reduce the love between partners.

8.5 QUESTIONS

- (1) Discuss the nature of love and the characteristics sought in Romantic relationship.
- (2) Evaluate the nature of different family relationships.
- (3) Discuss the basis for close friendship.

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Analysis address	rajashree.unimu@analysis.arkund.com

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